Philosophical Foundations of Postmodernism in Organization and Management

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Abstract
Postmodernism has been formed in modernism bed by knowing its weakness in analyzing problems. Postmodernism effects on different scientific and theorizing caused to designate a part to it in managerial theories. There are limited studies in the field of philosophical foundations of management including postmodernism. So, our goal in this paper is to know postmodernism specifications and its application in organization and management, and also in determining its philosophical foundations (namely Ontology, epistemology, methodology and anthropology).

KEY WORDS: ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY, METHODOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY, MODERNISM, POSTMODERNISM

1. Introduction
Although Peter Drucker(1996) used postmodernism for the first time in organization but its emersion is in 1980. Most of the authors believe that crisis in modernism because of loss of emotional depth in modern culture and emotional depression leaded to creation of postmodernism and also machine life helped this process. Thinkers believe that there is no exact description for postmodernism (Calas & Smiricich, 1999) but we can investigate its information and criticisms to present a rather complete description of this school of thought because postmodernism is formed in modernism bed by analyzing its weaknesses (Grice, 1997). Burrell and Morgan (1979) have analyzed philosophical foundations of management theories in their book “Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis”; this is a very important and new action in postmodernism. So, we are trying to show and discuss about the information and indicators of postmodernism and to know them and their application in organization and management. At the end we will present postmodern philosophical foundations like ontology, epistemology, methodology and anthropology.
2. Features of Postmodern School

In this era, the emersion of postmodernism is a very important challenge because it has a deep and dramatic influence on modern scientific world. All the information that had formed modern scientific thoughts and ideas are under question in postmodernism school of thought (Woller, 1997). Three specifications of postmodernism in Gergen’s point of view in his book “Organization Theory in Postmodernism” (1992) are:

First specification: postmodernism criticizes modernism because it takes indisputable values for rationality and tries to present comprehensive theories according to scientific methods. So, postmodernism calls it very unscientific. There is no value for comprehensive theories in postmodernism that have an efficient usage and universal understanding of the phenomena is called grand narrative. So we can say that postmodernists are relativist and the idea of a superior theory, realistic, and constant is rejected (Clegg, 1990).

Second specification: modernism has a positivist point of view and because of its experimental orientation, for gaining more scientific theories performs experiments. But in postmodernism we see phenomenological method (interpretational and hermeneutic) for understanding real reason of the phenomenon. It means, theory and action are not separated in postmodernism and human deed or manner is according to predetermined purpose so we must explore the hidden meaning.

Third specification: everybody for transferring concepts or presenting his/her inner state is depend on language in modernism but postmodernists believe that language cannot show inner state of the people. It means language is not under influence of personal mentality, it is shaped in the bed of society and its cultural process. So, social and cultural interactions can shape the meaning of the language. For this reason, we cannot transfer real thoughts or observation with language. In this way, we have inter-subjectivity communication in postmodernism (Gergen, 1992). Other specifications of the postmodernism include: 1- the lake of read concept; 2- analyzing phenomena at its related level; 3- variety and diversity of phenomena; 4- invalidity of meta - narratives; 5- refusing the reality; 6- human faces a constructed world in his life; 7- meaninglessness and 8- seeking diversity (Kilduff & Mehra, 1997:456).

3. Postmodernism application in organization and management

Postmodernism first pays great attention to the researcher or the manager that tries to recognize the organization and then pay attention to the organization. Postmodernism encourages organizational theory and general arrangements to rethink about fundamental information, being creative and having vast point of view (Kenneth
Nichols, 2007: 64). There are varieties of metaphors in postmodernism for coding an organization that do not have objective aspect but are general and have artistic or language aspect. Postmodernists use collage metaphor and believe that an organization is a work of art. There are several pieces of knowledge and understandings in it that must be put together to form a new point view by using old ones. According to these metaphors, manager is an artist theorizer in this collage (Hatch, 2006:43-50). Lytar(1984:9) introduces “dialogue” as a root metaphor for organizational investigations and believes that without it, organization is like a dog chasing his own tale. Organization metaphor is used for text, fable and lecture( Hatch, 2006: 54).

In the classic and modern school, social structure is static and repetitive. All duties are segregated between departments of the organization then segregated activities are integrated together (Hatch, 2006). But in postmodernism according to rapid changes of the environment (Clegg, 1990), we observe an organization or post-structuralism without a specific structure (Cooper & Burrell, 1988) or division of labor, every department focuses on proficiency which is a reflection on its surrounding social-economical conditions. It means there is no place for vantage declaration in respect to other structures in postmodernism. We can say, net structure is used in postmodernist organizations. This structure needs lateral (diagonal) interactions between organization departments. Scholars believe that in future postmodernism organizations will be less intensive, but more informal, participatory, flexible and more self-reliance. They will present their services or information by IT technologies (Hatch, 2006; Scott, 2003: 13; Boje & Dennehy, 2000).

In postmodernism, all social and physical structures are intertwined so none of them can work properly without the others. Postmodernists are interested in denaturalization of the meaning and demystification of processes to put the meanings in physical structures. It is only by deconstruction of the image of prepared space to divulge all powerful persons’ misuses or dishonest acts. In postmodernist point of view (Hatch,2006), organizational culture is incompatible, vague and very dynamic; it means it is fragmented point of view is a kind of criticism to segregation or pay attention to subcultures, exploitation of workers by managers, women versus men and so on. At last, this shows a kind of dichotomy.

Critical postmodernists are emphasizing on avoiding the concentration of power in one part and making the process of power complex. They believe that managers will impose their power just on their subordinates and it will lead to more power of capitalist dominant class. Feminists with emphasizing on Marxism critical theory believe that power is used for limiting unpowered persons (including women) and powerful persons will use power to suppress every sound against them. So, postmodernists motto is “a sound in silence” or “let a sound comes out of silence”. In general, we can say that one of the ideas of critical postmodernism is deconstruction of power in society and
organization (Hatch, 2006, calas & Smicich, 1999: 659). Postmodernism is effective on management knowledge and thoughts. According to institutional theory; accepting a new scientific method or any new formation of organization is according to organization profits. It means the organization tries to gain its legitimacy with it and then be acceptable for beneficiary groups. It can guarantee its stability in this way (DiMaggio & Powel, 1991). So, organization management must understand postmodernism presumption completely and be aware of their effects on management process (Drucker, 1996).

4. Philosophical Foundations of Postmodernism

As mentioned before, we are going to discuss ontology, epistemology, methodology and anthropology in postmodernism school of thought here:

Ontology

Ontology refers to a fact that researchers are investigating it (Keat & Ury, 1975). There is a question in ontology: what is the cognitive nature or reality? (Babich, 2003). Postmodernism tries to investigate management and organizational phenomena by challenging methods, theories, ideas, interactions and realities in an organization. In this way, all surface concepts of language and organizational phenomena will be discussed. According to post-structuralism; postmodernism empower us (Hatch, 2006; Richardson, 1994) to investigate language to describe organizational phenomena. In postmodernists’ point of view, language cannot reflect the social reality but produces meaning to create a social reality (Lather, 1990). Postmodernists use fragmented principle to recognize the world and then they suggest fragmented reality. So, there would not be a single way to recognize and understand all of it (Hatch, 2006). In postmodernism; world can be experienced in different ways and every person has a different experience of the world (Hay, 2002:228). All of these experiences are unique and different because of their unique history and culture. Generally speaking, ontology in postmodernism is nominal's and there is no unique objective knowledge or reality but there are separate and multiple interpretations. Uiry believes that a postmodern world is the one that reality is replaced with signs or presentations. So in this world everything is a copy or a text according to another one (Uiry, 1990).

Epistemology

Epistemology talks about recognition. Epistemology is a kind of scale for measuring knowledge. It is theory knowledge of and tries to obtain knowledge for knowledge and make a reality legal in a specific complex (Krogh & Roos, 1996:7, Denhardt, 2000). There is a question in epistemology: what is the relationship between researcher and the object (the phenomenon under investigation)? (Babich, 2003).
Postmodernism point of view is extremely mental so the researcher in the research process is the most important character whose knowledge and experience is just one of the social world points of views and he/she can use different kinds of arts including stories, moving pictures or dramatic representations (Richardson, 1994). Given that to postmodernism emphasizes understanding personnel mental states and having bilateral conversations for creating joint mentality; we can call postmodernism an inter-subjectivity epistemology (Hatch, 2006). Epistemology in postmodernism means there is nothing out of a text. In post modernism, different situations and subjects will lead to recognizing different recognitions; cognition arises from point of view and different points of views are not comparable. It rejects super cognition (Hay, 2002:228). Postmodern epistemology is based on variety of ideas and pluralism. Paying attention to the margins and ignored ones enables us to reach a new interpretation. In addition, increasing pluralism in thoughts, rejecting paradigm consensus and rejecting grand theories are the other points that are emphasized in postmodernism. Generally speaking, postmodernism emphasizes paradox, localism and pluralism (Kilduff & Mehra, 1997:462)

**Methodology**

The question in methodology is: what is the method used by researcher to gain the knowledge and reality? (Babich, 2003). Positivist modernism methodology is based on experiment, test and observations (Gergen, 1992). But some other tools and methods are used in postmodern methodology including questionnaire, interview, ethnography and case study and so on. There is no single best way for gaining knowledge (Kilduff & Mehra, 1997:457). On the basis of which presenting reality and truth be constructed continuously by dialogues and enriching text. The most important point in postmodernism is being inter-subjectivity research and its insight or reflective nature (Symon & Cass, 1998). In methodology, postmodernism emphasizes semiotics and deconstruction. The main goal in postmodern researches is to challenge the dominant forms of knowledge and creating new forms by deleting its borders and hearing voice of people that are not represented in the dominant discourse (Kilduff & Mehra, 1997:457, Neuman, 2000). In summary methodology of postmodernism includes: subjectivism, discourse analysis considering the world as a text, mistrust in meta-narratives and deconstruction.

**Anthropology**

Anthropology means to determine the human nature in theorizers’ point of view in different schools of thoughts. Postmodernism tries to reach a real cognition of human being by phenomenological methods (interpretational and hermeneutic) (Gergen, 1992). The human being in postmodernism is dissolved in existence, wander and upset with a multiple and fragmented identity and is familiar with some concepts like preserving environment and responsibility for life quality. Paying attention to the others and ignoring self can be the result of cutting
postmodern human being from modern artificial reason. Human understanding in postmodernism is formed by his/her role in the society according to the discourses. In postmodernism, human being is aesthetician. Postmodernism pulled the modern human out of the power gamut. Now, the persons who hadn’t any power in the past will gain power and can shout their words in the ear of powerful persons (Hatch, 2006).

5. Conclusion
As mentioned before, postmodernism is formed by recognizing modernism weaknesses. Postmodernists are relativist and try to find out the real meanings of the phenomena subjectively. In postmodernism, organizational structure is a network one and is formed according to environmental situations. In ontology, postmodernists are nominalist. It means social and organizational phenomenon is subjective for them and there is a hidden meaning inside the phenomena. Epistemology in postmodernism is inter-subjectively. It means any fact forms by interactions and dialogues. Postmodernism methodology is based on discourse analysis and deconstruction and world is supposed as a text. The human being in postmodernism is wander and upset with a multiple and fragmented identity. Postmodernism progress in denying reality has been fast so it speaks about the end of human life. Focault has a radical point of view toward human being and says: human being is an invention although there isn’t long since its making and it comes to its end.
References


