

Management systems - Introduction¹

The aim of this webpage is to enrich and further the knowledge of management systems, particularly including the enterprise as a category of acting systems.

Both the management system and the enterprise are considered categories of systems. This means that the object of interest is not some chosen management system of a given enterprise (for example, selected on the basis of the industry or strategic situation). We focus our attention on categories understood as types of system, with appropriate attributes, i.e. essential properties which lend them classifiable in a given class (type). Therefore, the management system perceived as a type serves to execute management processes, regardless of the material scope of management (enterprise, church as an institution, one-off undertaking, etc.). Likewise, the enterprise is a specific category of acting systems, distinct from the others. Thus, it is enough to identify the attributes of the enterprise to consider managing it and its management system. In this approach, one expects management system theorems of category-level generality, i.e. universal with regard to any management system of any enterprise.

In this sense, the formal focus of this webpage is on the management system, whereas the material focus is on the enterprise. The space-time range is universal, i.e. it applies to any place and time.

With regard to the enterprise management system (hereinafter: EMS), three kinds of problems can be identified and solved: cognitive, axiological and decision (normative) problems.

A cognitive problem is a difficulty in identifying and dealing with a given state of ignorance. Sometimes, simply defining a problem, opening a problem, realising that there is a state of ignorance, constitutes a problem in itself. A cognitive problem is ignorance rooted in explorative, classificatory and explanatory questions regarding EMS in historical space-time (...was there an EMS? ... is there an EMS?... will there be an EMS?). To put it simply, exploration means we ask what the EMS is, classification means we want to find out what makes it different from other systems, while explanation means we try to determine why it is and why it is different. The nature of axiological problems is different. In this case, we recognise, evaluate and assess the EMS, as well as define the evaluation and assessment processes themselves. Ultimately, axiological problems related to the EMS concern the values that the EMS serves as well as the evaluation and assessment of the significance of the EMS in the context of the values it serves. Lastly, decision (normative) problems question what the EMS should be like in a given space-time. The entity studying the EMS here plays a role of a causative and authoritative maker.

This Webpage does not tackle the axiological and decision (normative) problems of the EMS. Our interest is focused on cognitive problems which underlie the others. For it is impossible to evaluate and assess the EMS using certain criteria (axiology), and decide what it should be like, not knowing it well enough (cognizance). One cannot build a house to one's liking, if one does not know what a house is and what its structure relies on and, likewise, the management system of a given entity cannot be defined if one does not know what a management system is.

Certainly, it can be said that if one perseveres, everything is possible. Indeed, but will the resulting structure match our needs? Will it be operational? Will it be coherent, balanced, orderly and flexible? Will the risk of unnecessary costs be acceptable? The answer to the

¹ On the system-based approach see: H. Witczak, Przedmiot zarządzania strategicznego, in: E. Urbanowska-Sojkin, P. Banaszyk, H. Witczak, Zarządzanie strategiczne przedsiębiorstwem, PWE, Warsaw 2004, pp. 23-34.

above questions must be “no”. Thus: the more we know about the nature of the EMS – the higher the chances of improving it, and vice versa.

Undoubtedly, this leads to the emergence of an explicit, though not exclusive, academic profile of this Webpage. Yet, there is nothing more practical than good theory.

The structure of the Page, following the Introduction (subchapter 1), starts with a preliminary definition of the EMS (subchapter 2). It is meant to provide a starting point and build a frame of reference for cognitive activities. The tabula rasa approach would not be as beneficial by far. Next, one must define the assumptions for recognising the management system (subchapter 3), i.e. choose the theorems providing the foundations for cognisance. Some of these assumptions will be made a priori, i.e. without prior demonstration, and treated as axioms. Other shall be discussed and, following reconciliation, they will be included in the set of assumptions. The core of the Page shall include subchapters 4 and 5 under the following preliminary titles: 4) The nature, structure and role of the management system. 5) Shaping the management system. They will contain the fundamental knowledge about the management system.

This platform is run by its author, and thus to a certain extent in an arbitrary manner. Claiming authorship brings with it prerogatives as well as obligations, of which I am aware. I am prepared for merciless criticism. I welcome all to send any content-related opinions and comments, taking into account the above criteria, to the email address provided. For now, the existence of this Page is not limited in time.