

## Traditional Management Philosophies and Practises: The Case of the Esans of Edo State of Nigeria

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### Abstract

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This study examines the traditional management philosophies and practices of the Esans which are similar in approach to some contemporary management theories, concepts and principles. This study uses primarily secondary data from a carefully organised survey of articles, supported by personal observations and interactions with some elders of the Esan community. It adopts the matching concept method in comparing the similarities. It submits that the age-long traditional Esan management beliefs and principles have similarities in practice with many contemporary management principles and concepts, particularly with the administrative management school of thought. These though are not documented in writing, but are passed down through generations by oral tradition. Also, the concepts of esprit-de-corps, hierarchy, discipline, scalar chain, seniority, stability of personnel and authority are germane to the Esan tradition and would not be totally alien if adopted in contemporary organisations in Nigeria. This study is imperative considering that studies on the Esans as a people group in Nigeria, are few and studies on their management philosophies, styles or practices, almost non-existent.

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**Keywords:** Esans, Akugbe-ole-awhu, Onojie, Edion, Omijogbe, Hierarchy, Management, Administrative School

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### 1.0 Introduction

The concept of management has been practiced for thousands of years, albeit since the dawn of human history (Koontz & O'Donnell, 1974). Smith, (2003); Inyang, (2008) are both in agreement as to the origin of Management. They posit that it is a field of study that is as old as civilization as it has been evident in history ever since man began to exist. It is a human natural sense of duty and system that has driven the development of economies and its activities for as long as the existence of human history. Osuntokun in Muo & Oghojafor (2012) stated that it is assumed that before the recent development of management theories in contemporary present-day countries, particularly the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, the world "merely muddled through without much thought about means and ends of human endeavours as well as goals and aspirations and a strategy to attain them". This assumption/belief is worse in relation to the part of Africa that is south of the Sahara Desert where studies on management theories and philosophies are few compared to other regions of the world (Steers, Sanchez-Runde & Nardon, 2010). This is due to the fact that until recent years, the thinking of African managers and academics has been saturated and influenced by western management concepts and writings (Gbadamosi, 2003). This by inference meant, there was no presence or practice of management in Africa.

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Osuntokun in Muo et'al (2012) however argues against this by pointing out the fact that, the earliest universities in the world were built in the African countries of Morocco and Egypt in 859AD and 970AD respectively, 200 years before any was built in the western world in Italy. Also, George (1968) observed that some modern textbooks written on the history of management, mentioned the construction of the historical pyramids in Egypt built around 2900 B.C.

These are a reflection of the fact that there were early management activities in Africa. Societies organised, led and managed themselves in every sphere of life, socially, politically, militarily, economically and otherwise, long before the advent of modern management theories (Wren, 1994). However, the concept of management gained importance as mankind progressed into the Industrial Revolution era and was assumed to be a new phenomenon in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Redding, 2002). In recent years, studies on indigenous African traditional management practices have been on the increase and there is evidence that they precede modern management theories and philosophies. Muo et'al, (2012) argue that indigenous people in Nigeria and Africa had their own management philosophies and strategies by which they were able to manage themselves and survive, in pre-colonial times. It is a well-known fact in African history, that men have always associated with one another and combined efforts in hunting, building and agriculture as well as in many other activities. Such associations or co-operations to achieve a common purpose presupposes that, there was a form of leadership (a leader) –someone who organised and co-ordinated the activities of the other members of the group or society, therefore, management. These early management activities in Africa and Nigeria were no doubt based on sound principles, which serve the foundation for management theories and practices (Inyang, 2008).

In most traditional African cultures including Nigeria, the leadership styles employed are two-fold – Centralised (chieftaincy-based) and decentralised (consensus-based) traditional systems. In the Centralised system, leadership is “organised under well entrenched highly structured political authority, a political sovereign backed by law enforcement agency and habitually obeyed by the people”. In the Decentralized system, control is by the dynamics of clanship where there is the existence of a complex set of rules of conduct which have been long in existence and enforced by heads of fragmented units or sections and in very serious cases, by unprompted community action (ECA, 2007; Otumfuo, 2004 in Muo & Oghojafor, 2012). The Esans of Ekpoma in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State, with the existence of an organised “well-entrenched highly structured political authority” under a political sovereign is one of the peoples who practise the centralised (chieftaincy-based) system of management leadership. Here, there are customary laws that govern the people. Everyone is expected to abide and offenders are punished in line with existing criminal, social and economic laws of the land( Esan Voice, 2014).The Chief law-enforcement Officer is the King, known as the Onojie. Esan is an Edo word, describing the people living in a land about eighty kilometers north East of Benin City. By this factor of nearness and the fact that they share a basic traditional foundation, they are regarded as neighbours to the Bini (Bradbury, 1973 in Okoduwa, 2006).

Esan is located at Longitude 60o5' and Latitude 60o5'and has boundaries on the North West with Owan and Etsako on the North-East; on the South-West with Orhionwon and Ika, while on the South and South-East with Aniocha and Oshimili. These are all areas that were under the control of the ancient Benin from the 15th century (Patridge, 1967 in Okoduwa, I. (2006). Thirty-five kingdoms (large villages/communities ruled traditionally by kings known as Onojies) make up Esan, in Edo State (Esan Voice, 2014). These independent kingdoms are currently administratively grouped into five local governments namely, Esan North-East, Esan Central, Esan West, Esan South-East and Igueben. This study is aimed at identifying and defining important characteristics of some contemporary management principles and concepts, which are similar to the traditional philosophies and practices of the Esan people of Ekpoma, in Edo State. The study will also endeavour to find solutions to the questions– Is the Administrative management school similar in practice to the Esans in the principles of Akugbe-ole-awhu(Unity is strength, Espirit de corps),Okpamakhin (we are the same, Equity),Discipline and Authority? Are the following management concepts of Seniority (Odion, Omijogbe), Conflict Management, Stability of Personnel (Succession Planning) and Scalar Chain advocated by management theorists relevant in the day-to-day lives of the Esans? Are these principles applied in the same way in practice by the modern management theorists and the Esans? The study is shared into five distinct parts: introduction, literature/conceptual reviews, methodology, results and discussions and conclusions.

## 2.0 Literature/Conceptual Review

It is difficult to give a precise definition of the term management as different scholars from different disciplines view and interpret the term from their own perspective. Management could be defined as the “process of getting activities completed efficiently and effectively with and through other people” (Koontz, 1961). It is also seen as the “process of planning, organizing, leading and controlling an organization’s resources, to achieve organizational goals in an efficient and effective manner” (Fayol, 1949). Traditionally, the term “Management” referred to the activities and sometimes, also the group of people involved in the four general functions of Management –planning, organising, co-ordinating and controlling.

Management is defined as “the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals working together in groups efficiently accomplish selected aims” (Wehrich and Koontz, 1983). Oshuntokun (2000) sees Management as meaning “matching resources with manpower to achieve a beneficial goal for society”. Stoner et al, 1995 in Olum, 2004 see theories as the viewpoint from which people look at their world experiences. It could also be defined as “a set of statements or principles devised to explain why things happen or exist, especially one that has been repeatedly tested to make predictions about natural phenomena”. All put together, Asika (2007) believes that each management theory results from attempts to address a management or business challenge by investigating the issues surrounding the management problem. According to Nwachukwu 1992 in Inyang, 2008, management theory “is a synthesis of the concepts and principles of management. Management theory attempts to present in a concerted manner those facts about human behaviour in organization”. Kootntz (1961) in the study he termed “The Management Theory Jungle”, commented that there were many varying and diverse schools of management thought but he identified and recognised only six (6) of them. In more recent times however, Modern management theories in the Western world have identified the following - Scientific Management, Bureaucracy, Administrative Management, Human Relations, Quantitative Management, Systems, Contingency, Total Quality Management, Learning Organisation and Re-engineering theories.

### 2.1. Selected Management Concepts, Theory and Practices for Consideration

#### 2.1.1 The Administrative Management School

The Administrative management school is interested in the design and management of an organisation and focuses on efforts to find a sensible way to design the entire organisation as a whole. The scientific management school on the other hand, concentrates on the efficiency of the individual worker and how much he is able to produce. Among the well-known contributors to this theory are Lyndall Urwick, James D. Mooney, Luther H. Gulick, but the most outstanding of them all was Henri Fayol. In his book *General and Industrial Management*, he discussed 14 general principles of management, which had and still has a significant influence on the field of management, even today? Fayol believed the manager’s job could be divided into five functions or areas of managerial responsibilities which are planning, organising, command, coordination and control. These classical functions still represent the most useful way of conceptualizing the manager’s job, especially for management education. This perhaps is why it is still the most favoured description of managerial work in current management textbooks (Kreitner, 1995).

These principles or concepts have been broadly grouped into three, which are –

- Formalized administrative structure:**- This theory suggests a formal hierarchical structure where lines of authority are clearly defined to flow from the top down –Superior to subordinate.
- A clear division of labour:** This theory also advocates a clear division of labour between the organization’s departments. Each department is saddled with responsibility for a particular aspect of the organization’s activities, directed towards achievement of its goals.
- Delegation of power and authority:** Here, administrators are delegated with the power and authority, relevant to their areas of responsibilities in the organisation. This is to aid them in achieving specific objectives necessary, in meeting the overall goal of the organisation. (Grimsley, 2014).

In this theory of management also, team spirit (*esprit de corps*), discipline, as well as adequate compensation for work done were regarded as key to the success of any organisation (Olabode, 2008).

#### 2.1.2 *Esprit de corps*/Conflict Management

This principle of management advocated by Fayol (1949) is translated from a French phrase meaning “group spirit”. It advocates that the organisation must make every effort to maintain group cohesion, noting that allowing divisions within its team, would amount to a serious error (Grisley, 2014).

Dictionary.com defines it as a feeling of pride, fellowship and common loyalty shared by the members of a particular group. Managers are advised to encourage the development of teamwork, proper interpersonal skills and harmony among the workforce (This is harmony of interests). This is in recognition of the fact that in the workplace or even in families and communities, there can be conflict of interests. Conflict is defined as the "process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party" (Wall & Callister, 1995), and "the interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities" (Rahim, 1992).

Putnam and Poole (1987) posit that for there to be a conflict, there must be at least two independent groups which interact with each other in some way and perceive some incompatibility between them. When conflicts are not properly managed, there can be divisions leading to weakness that can be capitalised on by opponents. Conflict management is an important issue in organisations which management cannot afford to ignore, but have to deal with effectively. Conflict has a significant impact on employee morale, turnover, and litigation, and this in turn affects the prosperity of the company or organisation, either constructively or destructively. (Lang, 2009).

### 2.1.3 Discipline/Equity

The management principle of discipline is defined as a procedure that corrects or punishes a subordinate because a rule of procedure has been violated (Dessler, 2001). Rue and Byars (1996) see it as a situation within an organisation whereby the employees know and understand the rules, standard and policies guiding the organisation, how they apply to them and what consequences to expect when they flout them. The above definitions bring into focus the facts that, there are laid down rules and regulations in every human group or organisation and there are attendant consequences for offenders. It is important to note that for there to be effective discipline, these rules and regulations must be clearly spelt out and understood by the employees or members of the group; and enforced without discrimination by management. Equity is brought into play here, where employees are expected to be treated as equally as possible. This principle is double-edged as employees are bound to respect the rules that govern the organization; while management is expected to provide good leadership. There are four main known forms of discipline in organisations for infractions of laid down rules and regulations, and these are –verbal counselling, written warnings (like queries), suspension and termination of appointment or membership.

### 2.1.4 Authority/Scalar Chain /Seniority

Authority as seen by Henri Fayol is the right to give orders and the power to exact obedience. It is an essential ingredient in carrying out managerial responsibilities. The principle of hierarchy by the Bureaucratic theory of Management developed by Max Weber, which advocates each lower office being subject to a higher one and having clearly defined regulations and lines of authority as posited by Stoner, Freeman & Gilbert (1992), relates to the concepts of Seniority and Scalar Chain. Fayol's principle of Scalar chain advocates that the line of authority should flow from the top to the bottom of the organisation. This flow of authority fulfils the unity of command principle and encourages the systematic flow of information. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines Seniority as the fact of being older or of a higher rank than others. Business Dictionary defines it as a privileged status attained by an employee because of the length of continuous service with the same employer, and which usually determines the order of promotion, benefits, or layoffs. Wikipedia sees it as the concept of a person or group of people being older or in charge or command of another person or group, or taking precedence over them. In most cases, control is granted over others to such people by virtue of age in years or length of service. Such employees enjoy greater work privileges than others.

### 2.1.5 Stability of Personnel (Succession Planning)

This principle stresses that for a firm to be successful, it should have a stable group of employees. In practise, this is only possible when structures are put in place for grooming a successor to a leadership position to aid continuity or passing the torch, more formally known as succession planning or succession planning and Management (SPM). Succession planning and Management is defined as a purposeful and systematic effort made by an organisation to ensure, retains and develops knowledge and intellectual capital, for the future and encourages individual employee growth and development (Schein 1997, in Caruso, Groehler & Perry, 2005).

Charan, Drotter & Noel (2001), see it as “a process for identifying and developing internal people with the potential to fill key business leadership positions in the company”. By this method, employees are recruited and developed to fill each key role within the company. In some organisations, when a position is declared vacant, adverts for successors are made both internally and externally. However, some other organisations believe in filling such vacancies from within the organisation only. Researchers according to Zhang & Rajagopalan 2004, in Berke, 2005 lean towards supporting the latter position stating that, successors from within the organisation tend to perform better on the job than those brought in from outside to fill vacancies. This assertion however will only “hold water” where the insider/insiders have been adequately prepared to fill the existing role or vacancy. That means having ‘the right people in the right place at the right time’ (Rothwell, 2005). According to Page-Up People (2008), “forty-nine percent of Australian companies believed that retention and succession were their biggest talent challenges in 2008/2009”. This is likely to be the greatest challenge in organisations all over the world where there is lack of an adequate succession planning strategy in place.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This paper is a theoretical research work based on literature appraisal. The information used is primarily from secondary data, gathered through an organised survey of articles, spanning the past fifteen years. According to Ember & Levinson (1991), this method of data collection without direct contact with the subjects involved, is permitted. However, some information was also gathered through observations and personal interactions with some elders of the Ihumudumu-Ekpoma community in Esan-West. This paper employed the matching concept method by identifying and defining important characteristics which compare the resemblances in the selected western management concepts, theory and practices, with the traditional philosophies and practices of the Esans of Ekpoma in Esan-West, Edo State of Nigeria.

### **4.0 Results**

#### **4.1. Administrative Management School**

The Administrative Management School unlike the Scientific Management School is concerned with the management of an organization as a whole rather than on the individual. That presupposes that it is interested in designing ways, by which a group or groups of people in an organization or environment can work together as a team, with clearly defined roles for each member to fulfill a group purpose or goal. Its principles are summarized in the following –a formalized administrative structure with a hierarchy and clearly defined lines of authority flowing from top to bottom, clear divisions of labour and delegation of power and authority. This approach to management is similar in practice to what operates in certain African settings and among the Esans of Edo state. Like what operates in most traditional settings in Nigeria according to Iwuji (1968), the system or governance among the Esans is highly structured hierarchically. At the top of the hierarchical ladder in each of the kingdoms in Esan is the king known as the Onojie. He is compared to the manager in a modern organisational setting. His administrative organisational structure consists of chiefs and elders known as Ekhaemolen Enedion- traditional council of chiefs (Esan Voice, 2014). These are in turn followed by Communal/Village heads known as the Odionwele -the eldest male in the Village made up of many quarters (Okoduwa, 1960). Next in line on this hierarchal ladder is the Odion, which is the head or leader of each quarter known as Idumu making up the village, followed by the Omijogbe (eldest male in an extended family setting comprising of aman, wife/wives, children, brothers, unmarried sisters and their families) and at the bottom of the ladder is the father in a nuclear family known as Aba (father). Sometimes, the Omijogbe could also be called Aba mai (our father). In the typical Esan village, there are different groups based on age (otu) and there is also a clear division of labour among the different groups. The group of elders known as Enedion constituted both the executive, legislative and judicial arm of the community. They were responsible for determining and educating the members of the community on the traditions and customary laws that govern the people, enforcing these laws and punishing offenders in line with existing criminal, social and economic laws of the land (Esan Voice, 2014). The next in the age grouping are the igene. This group controls the communal works department, maintains the internal security and defense of the community from peripheral hostility. The least in the age groupings are the Egbonughele, who are responsible for maintaining environmental sanitation in the community (Okoduwa, 2006). Power and authority are delegated to the Odionweles/Enedions by the Onojie to act on his behalf, in ensuring that the customary laws and traditions governing the people in the land, were adhered to and offenders punished (Aimienwalan, 1990)\*\*\*.

#### 4.2. Esprit de corps/Conflict Management

The Esans of Edo State are communal in nature. They believe in community of people and a person in Esan ontology, is referred to as *Oria no ri wi usuagbon* (one in the midst of many people); that is a communal being with others. This means individualism is alien to the Esan culture. The extended family system operates largely here. Everyone from the same community is one's brother or sister as there is no separate esan word for cousins, nephews, nieces, clansman but the general word *omion*, meaning my brother or sister. No one could perform any ceremony like a burial or traditional marriage ceremony alone, without getting the entire community involved. Group rotational labour known as *irogan* (working together in turns) in cultivation of farmlands and building is also common among the esans (Azaka, 2015). This indicates the fact that that their expectations, ambitions and associations are observed in communalistic terms and the value of unity amongst kith and kin cannot be overemphasized. This is reflected in an ancient Benin philosophy quote *Akugbe é'óh é'tin* which translated means Unity is strength.

To the Esans, it is stated as *Akugbe-ole-awhu*. This is also emphasized in the saying *Aa mi egbe na lu eyan* meaning, he who has a kin to quarrel/fight with is better than he who stands alone. This is displayed in practice in the mode or pattern of conflict resolution among them. The *Omijigbe* (eldest male in the extended family setting) was the arbiter in cases of disputes within the family. He also reserved the right to punish any erring member of the family. Where the dispute was between his family members and outsiders, he adopted a 'protective position for his family by soliciting for peace or asking for compensation' on their behalf and in cases where it was difficult to arrive at a compromise with an out-going or out-group, the matter was then referred to the highest person in the gerontocratic ladder. This was the *Odionwele* or eldest of the elders (Okoduwa, 2006). It is a common belief exhibited in practice among the Esans of *Ihumudumu-Ekpoma* that no matter how much members of a family or clan (*Idumu*) disagree or quarrel with one another; arbitration should not be taken outside the clan. When there are intra family/clan differences, it does not give an "outsider" (someone from outside the family or clan) the opportunity or impetus to quarrel or fight with any of them, as differences would then be put aside to jointly combat the outsider first, then resume intra family/clan differences. Also, when there are differences within and a party disregards a communal resolution, he is seen as quarreling with the whole community and treated as such. All the above support Mbigi's (2002) concept of Ubuntu advanced in the African humanism and peculiarity belief in harmony of interests rather than individualism. This concept stipulates "how can one of us be happy if all the others are sad" and "I am because we are" which means, without others, the individual is a nobody (April & Ephraim, 2010; Nussbaum, 2003).

#### 4.3 Discipline/Equity

The management principle of discipline is defined as a procedure that corrects or punishes a subordinate because a rule of procedure has been violated (Dessler, 2001). Rue and Byars (1996) see it as a situation within an organisation whereby the employees know and understand the rules, standards and policies guiding the organisation, how they apply to them and what consequences to expect when they flout them. Equity is a management principle which advocates friendliness with, kindness, fairness and justice to subordinates by managers. It does not support preferential treatment of one employee above another. The Esans with an organised "well-entrenched highly structured political authority" under a political sovereign is one of the peoples who practice the centralised (chieftaincy-based) system of management leadership. Here, there are laid down rules and regulations or laws that govern their various communities and these are based on the customs and traditions of the people. These customs and traditions are binding on every member of the community and offenders are punished in line with existing laid-down criminal, social and economic laws of the land (Esan Voice, 2014). The elders were the main repositories of power (Okojie, 1960) and as custodians; they pronounced what penalties awaited those who violated any of these laid down rules and regulations. There were various penalties for not participating in communal activities; for infidelity of a wife; for violating communal agreements; even for an *odion* (elder) failing in the duties conferred on him by his position, among other offences. These varied from verbal counseling and warnings; to fines (*ive-emi*) which could be monetary, drinks, animals (especially goats); to suspension from participating in communal ceremonies; to suspension in relationship with the other members of the community-that is the offender could not visit or be visited by any other member of the community (*imu-ole-obiro*); or swearing before a shrine or the community (*ive-ewo*).

The penalty depended on the gravity of the offence. Nobody was above the law as even an odion (an elder) would not be spared if he violated any of the laws. Also, within the nuclear family, there were laws and a husband could fine his wife for violating a known traditional law. For example, the Esans of Ihumudumu-Ekpoma believe a wife should not serve her husband food in an upswept place. If this law is violated, the husband could reject eating food cooked by her until a chicken is cooked for him to appease him.

#### 4.4 Authority/Scalar Chain /Seniority

Authority as seen by Fayol is the right to give orders and the power to exact obedience and his principle of Scalar chain advocates that the line of authority should flow from the top to the bottom of the organisation. Seniority on the other hand, is seen in various ways as the fact of being older or of a higher rank; a privileged status attained because of length of continuous service or one being in charge of a person or group. Among the Esans of Edo State, the council of elders known as the Enedion or Eko-Edion wields a lot of authority and control over the other members of the society and they attain this privileged status by reason of their ages. This form of social organisation is described by Webster, 1990 in Okoduwa, 2006, as gerontocracy. The Enedion are the custodians of the laid down rules and regulations based on the customs and traditions of the people governing Esan communities (Okojie, 1960).

Traditionally, the Esans accord a lot of respect to elders beginning from the extended family where the eldest male, the Omijiogbe is regarded as the Aba (father) to not his own immediate nuclear family alone, but to all within his extended family circle. He was seen as the person in control of all affairs and "the orbit around which all other things revolved" (Okojie, 1960). By his position, he is in charge of the daily supervision of the family, controlling the religious and political activities of all the members of the family, as well as ensuring the maximum security of all members. He acted as an arbiter in family disputes and had the authority to punish erring members. He was the spokesman for the unit and was in charge of the ancestral shrine (Umobuarie, 1976 in Okoduwa, 2006); acting as the mediator between them and the ancestors in all necessary capacities. The Odionwele (eldest male in a village) attained this position as the eldest male by age in the village. Seniority could also be determined by the Esans along the lines of Otu (the age grade system) and which grade one belonged to. The three main age grades were the Edion, Igene and Egbonughele. Traditionally, membership was determined by age and one became a member through an initiation process known as Irhuen. With the advent of civilization however, one started climbing the ladder of seniority at whatever age, from when one got initiated into the least group of the egbonughele. Seniority measured along these lines, conferred seniority on a younger person who had gone through the initiation process of irhuen before an older person by age. One could not become an Odion without having gone through the irhuen ceremony (Azaka, 2015). The scalar chain principle is exhibited in the hierarchical structure of authority flowing from the Onojie (supported by the Ekhaemolen- Enedion) at the top, followed by the Odionwele, then the Odion. Next in the line of authority is the Omijiogbe and at the bottom, the Aba.

#### 4.5 Stability of Personnel (Succession Planning)

This principle stresses that for a firm to be successful, it should have a stable group of employees. In practice, this is only possible when structures are put in place for grooming a successor to a leadership position to aid continuity or passing the torch, more formally known as succession planning or succession planning and Management (SPM). Among the Esans, the position or office of the Onojie is hereditary and patrilineal just as it is among the Yorubas of Nigeria. The Onojie as the ruler of the kingdom, became one by virtue of being the first son in the royal lineage (Okoduwa, 2006). The office of the Odionwele was attained by reason of being the most elderly of the male elders by age, in a village made up of various quarters. This was not hereditary. The position of the Omijiogbe as the head of the family was also held by the eldest male in an extended family. What is important to note is that in all of the cases, structures are already in place for grooming successors to these leadership positions, by known customs, traditions and participation and there was no room for confusion as successors to vacant posts were already known. This aided continuity and stability in leadership and governance.

### 5.0. Discussion and Conclusion

From the study, it is evident that there are similarities in the management principles and classical functions of management as advocated by Fayol (1949), a major proponent of the Administrative management school and the indigenous management practices of the Esans of Ekpoma in Edo State of Nigeria. These principles broadly grouped into three –Formalised administrative structure, delegation of power and authority and division of labour; and the concepts of esprit-de-corps, discipline and equity are evident in the esan traditional kingdom system with the Onojie at the top of the hierarchy.

Power and authority are delegated by him to the Odionwele, through to the Edion and Omijiogbe. The traditional duties (labour) are divided amongst the different Otu (age groups) of Edion, Igene and Egbonughele. There are also similarities in the practices of the management principles of Akugbe-ole-awhu, Okpamakhin, (Unity is strength, Esprit-de Corps, Equity, we are the same) and discipline. Discipline in modern management practice is seen by Dessler (2001) and Rue & Byars (1996) as a procedure for correcting or punishing subordinates/employees for violating an organisation's rules, standards and policies. The methods used in modern management could be by verbal counseling, written warnings (like queries), suspension and termination of appointment or membership. The Esans use verbal counseling and warnings (no written warnings), fines (ive-emi), two types of suspension -from participating in communal ceremonies and suspension in relationship with the other members of the community -that is the offender could not visit or be visited by any other member of the community (imu ole obiro), and swearing before a shrine or the community (ive-ewo). The management concepts of seniority, conflict management, stability of personnel (succession planning), and scalar chain advocated by management theorists are evident in the day-to-day lives of the Esans.

To a very large extent, many modern management thoughts, principles and practices are similar in application and practice to that of the Esans of Nigeria and would not be totally alien if used in contemporary organisations in Nigeria.

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