The focus on employee commitment and loyalty in hrm

Introduction

During the 1990s, there has been a considerable degree of interest in the notion of " commitment" (see Ichniowski et al., 1996; Kochan and Osterman, 1994; Locke et al., 1995) contrasted with the writings of the 1980s when many predicted the transformation of industrial relations and human resource management in response to such trends as more intense competition, the fragmentation of markets, new production technologies, new employee values and new management ideas and techniques(see Kern and Schumann, 1984; Kochan er al., 1986; Piore and Sabel, 1984; Walton, 1985).

Some scholars argues that this is a process from control to commitment (see Heinsman, H. et al., 2007; Boselie et al., 2004; Turss et al., 1997). As Heinsman (2008) assumes that commitment and control represent two distinct approaches to shaping employee attitude and behaviour at work. Commitment is characterized by winning hearts and minds (Guest, 1997) and is aimed at increasing employee loyalty by means of training, education, communication, knowledge sharing, and coaching (Boselie et al., 2004)While the control-approach, as opposed to the commitment-approach, the employee is managed on a much more instrumental basis (Turss et al., 1997), characterized by the wish to establish order, to exercise control and to reduce labour costs (Walton, 1985). And the power is in the hands of management definitely, important decisions are made top-down (Koopman, 1991). In opposition, some claim the focus on employee commitment and loyalty in HRM is a form of manipulative control (Friedman, 1997; Purcell

1993). As Purcell (1993) notes that in the model of soft HRM, control comes through commitment.

2. Soft HRM and Commitment

Many critical comments appear to explore the nature of HRM. Purcell(1993) suggests that HRM is partly about the rediscovery of management prerogative which is used to construct new meanings for organization, as well as for appropriate behaviour, the nature of employment and the obligations of the worker. Keenoy (1990) views HRM as " a wolf in sheep's colthing". By implication the rhetoric of HRM pretends to be concerned for worker well-being and other worker-relevant outcomes, but according to the available evidence, is in fact primarily a more subtle form of worker exploitation(Guest 1999). HRM as manipulation through discourse of commitment and loyalty to the organisation, team, job, profession(Wilmott, 1993).

Soft and Hard HRM are two human resource management models which are widely adopted. They are diametrically opposed along a number of dimensions, and they have been used by many commentators as devices to categorize approaches to managing people according to developmental-humanist or utilitarian-instrumentalist principles (Legge, 1995). These two models are distinctive based on opposing views of human nature and managerial control strategies. The hard model is based on notions of tight strategic control, and an economic model of man according to Theory X, while the soft model is based on control through commitment and Theory Y(Truss et al., 1997).

The soft vision suggests that employees will work best (and thereby increase organizational performance) if they are fully committed to the organization (Beaumont, 1992; Dunham and Smith, 1979; Guest, 1987, 1988; Legge, 1995; Lundy, 1994; Walton, 1985). It is noted that " the employee working under an HRM system would not merely comply with the organization's wishes, but positively and affectively commit themselves to the aims and values of their employers, and thereby give added value through their labour"(Hope, 1994: 3). Therefore, in order to achieve corporate goals employers will focus on winning their commitments. As Keenoy and Anthony (1992) put it : Once it was deemed sufficient to redesign the organization to make it fit human capacity and understanding; now it is better to redesign human understanding to fit the organization's purpose. Although soft HRM " would be more likely to espouse a parallel concern for workers' outcomes", but it is still " having business performance as its primary concern" (Guest, 1999: 5). Consequently, it requires the corporate to have a distribution and arrangement toward the staff.

It is now widely accepted that employee commitment has a multi-dimensional nature (Allen and Meyer, 1990). This multi-dimensional nature has been related most clearly in the three-component theory of organizational commitment, which are affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment (Allen and Meyer 1990; Meyer and Allen 1991, 1997). Affective commitment has been described as the employees' emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organization. As Meyer and Allen (1991) pointed that anything that increase the quality of one's work experiences, especially one's sense of

autonomy and personal competence, will enhance affective commitment. Continuance commitment comes from an employee's assessment of the respective costs and benefits of remaining with or leaving the organization. This form of commitment should increase over time as people accumulate personal investments in a certain organization. And normative commitment is the third component which is obligation-based commitment. In brief, employees with strong affective commitment remain because they want to, those with strong continuance commitment because they need to, and those with strong normative commitment because they feel they ought to do so (Allen and Meyer, 1990).

Other studies have found employee commitment to be associated with attendance at work, in -role performance, and organizational citizenship behaviour (Edwards & Wright, 2001). And the consequences of commitment refer to the outcomes, including turnover (Somers, 1993), absenteeism (Gellatly, 1995), organizational citizenship behavior (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983) and job performance (Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin, & Jackson, 1989).

3. Autonomous work team

Commitment is criticized as simply a reassertion of management control under a convenient new label in the aspect of autonomous work teams. In an autonomous work team, empowerment is a form of employee involvement, designed by management and intended to generate commitment and enhance employee contributions to the organization (Legge 1995). Direct control is replaced by responsible autonomy which is another expression of

management control. As Friedman (1997: 101) pointed:" Responsible autonomy does not remove alienation and exploitation, it simply softens their operation or draws workers' attention away from them. Its ideal is to have workers behave as though they were participating in a process which reflected their own needs, abilities and wills, rather than a process aimed at accumulation and profits". Whereas self-managed work team is viewed as an alternative to the Tayloristic position of breaking jobs down in simple tasks, aiming at providing meaningful work for employees with some degree of control and feedback on performance (Buchanan 1979), employees in a autonomous work group have to " align individual motivation with organizational objectives"(ProenÃa & TeresaÃ¯¼Å’2010). As a result, the control appears in the form of goal setting of the organization and self-control.

4. Latent Power

Rather than HC-HRM being more " human", PS sees aspects of it as more controlling because it erodes part of our human existence which we could reasonably consider to beyond the control of our employer-our thoughts, our hopes, our fears and aspirations.(Fleming & Spicer, 1993). It indicates that through this kind of management control focus on " how workers think and feel, and not just how they behave" (Willmott, 1993). This elicits a discussion of latent power on employee control.

Much of the research exploring the relationships between subjectivity and power has attempted to understand the ways workers inscribe themselves in power relations and become " the principle of their own subjection"(Foucault,

1977: 203). And there has been a preoccupation with surfacing unobtrusive control system that work " behind the back" of workers so that they unwittingly achieve the goals of superiors by their own volition (Jermier, 1998). There are also evidence show the workplace resistance toward the cultural control. Kunda (1992) and Casey (1995) claim that workers use cynicism to protect their " backstage selves" from the ubiquitous culture machine when it get a little too claustrophobic. In her book Work, Self and Society, Casey observed how a number of employees resisted the psychological" siege and assault" of the culture through a cynical detachment:" cynicism protects against both commitment to the company... and its further encroachment into the private realm of relative individual choice and apparent self-determination" (1995: 175). Du Gay and Salaman (1992) and Willmott (1993) interpret cynicism as an unplanned ideological phenomenon that unobtrusively reproduces relations of power because cynical employees are given (and give themselves) the impression that they are autonomous agents, but they still practise the corporate rituals nevertheless. When we dis-identify with our prescribed social roles we often still perform them--sometimes better, ironically, than if we did identify with them (Fleming & Spicer, 2003: 160).

5. HPWPs

Because commitment seems to predict critical employee behaviour, such as performance (e. g. Angle and Perry, 1981; Meyer et al., 1989), absenteeism (e. g. Eby et al, 1999), and organizational citizenship behaviour (e. g. Van Dyne and Ang, 1998),. The strategic importance of developing employee commitment is not new(Walton, 1985). Compared with forcing employee

compliance with organizational goals and restricting employee discretion through narrowly-defined jobs, work simplification, close supervision, standardization of processes/outcomes, and extensive rules and procedures, the high-commitment approach to HRM attempts to create the conditions necessary to facilitate voluntary employee involvement and identification with organizational goals (Gellatly, 2009: 869)

HPWPs include such practices as " rigorous recruitment and selection procedures, performance-contingent incentive compensation systems, management development and training activities linked to the needs of the business, and significant commitment to employee involvement" (Becker and Huselid 1998, p. 55). And it is suggested that HPWPs do in fact positively affect employee attitudes as well as organizational performance (Becker and Huselid 1998). " Bundles" or " sets" of HPWPs as well as individual HR practices have been investigated for their effects on employee commitment (Arthur 1994; MacDuffie and Kochan 1995). There is growing evidence for the link between HPWPs bundles and commitment (Guest and Conway 1997;. Gould-Williams 1998); what's more, Tsui discovered that employees developed greater affective commitment to employers who provided high levels of training and employment security. But if HPWPs also positively affect employee commitment? A key advantage of HPWPs is that " the employee working under such an HRM system will positively and affectively commit themselves to the aims and values of their employer"(Hope 1994)The HPWPs are assumed to develop psychological links between organizational and employee goals, which results in " committed employees

who can be trusted to use their discretion to carry out job tasks in ways that are consistent with organizational goals'"(Arthur 1994, p. 672)

6. Psychological contract

Psychological contract, defined by Rousseau (1995) and Guest (1998) as an employee's subjective belief about the reciprocal exchange between management and employee may provide employees the environment to commit themselves to the organization. Anderson and Schalk (1998) posited that psychological contract is able to reduce employee insecurity because not all aspects of the employment contract can be addressed in written form; however the implicit, unwritten contract creates an atmosphere of trust and fairness between employees and employers, increasing employee attachment to the organization and employee outcomes. Some scholars also suggested that psychological contract can be linked with employee commitment and job performance (Raja, Johns, & Ntalianis, 2004).

7. Conclusion

This essay has explored employee commitment from the perspective of manipulative control. It has been concerned primarily with the soft HRM, which is important to identify commitment. Then autonomous work team is highlighted to point that the control appears in the form of goal setting of the organization and self-control.