

Living in an Epistemic Culture: (Yet) Another Facade of Contemporary Human Resources Management

S. L. Wimalasena
R. S. Gunatunga

Abstract

The attempts to understand the employment relationship continue as this phenomenon of employment relationship keeps on posing different meanings whenever such an attempt is made, implying its meaning cannot be 'fixed'. Understanding the nature of the employment relationship is the basis of managing people. The central focus of this paper is to uncover yet another prototype of employment relationship that prevails in an 'epistemic culture' enriching the discourse on Human Resources Management (HRM). The worker in an epistemic culture would build intimate relationships with 'epistemic things' and these 'post-social relations' influence our general understanding of the employment relationship. We attempt to unveil the concealed effects of 'post-social relations' found in an 'epistemic culture' in understanding employment relations in the Sri Lankan milieu. Further we argue such 'post-social relations' make the term 'HRM' merely symbolic, generating a need to re-examine what happens to the 'real' employment relationship under the banner of 'HRM' in an 'epistemic culture'.

S. L. Wimalasena is a lecturer, Department of Human Resources, Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka. The article is based on a research paper submitted by him in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the MBA degree of the Postgraduate Institute of Management (PIM), Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Dr. R. S. Gunatunga is Professor of Business Administration, Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka.