

A Critical Evaluation of the Applicability of Unitarism Perspective in Contemporary Employment Relations

Abstract:

Employment relation is concerned with generally managing the employment relationships which deal with the agreement of terms and conditions of employment and with issues arising from employment. It is evident that successful organizations apply a coherent set of people management and development practices appropriate to their needs. Such organizations are increasingly those which have a constructive relationship with employees and a management approach which enables them to develop and draw on the full potential of their people. There is thus a positive relationship between managerial strategies on employment relations and employee's identification with, and support for performance improvement and organizational change. Industrial relation scholars have identified several perspectives but this paper focuses on unitary which is a major perspective used in the analysis of workplace relations. It adopts a paternalistic approach where employees are expected to be loyal to the management which must do everything within their powers to uplift the wellbeing of the employees. This article examines the extent of applicability of unitary perspective in contemporary employment relations. The paper concludes that paternalistic family-oriented businesses and voluntary organizations tend to be unitary organizations. However, wide variations are still found within the unitary approach. As part of the effort to generally improve performance and welfare of stakeholders, business organizations are adopting a pluralist view in their employment relations with some process for reconciling different interests. This is achieved through formal agreements where there are recognized trade unions or staff associations, and in the absence of these, it indicates that management adopts a unitary philosophy.