

Ant versus lion How students on different levels perceive employee-employer relationship

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One of the several roles of management education is knowledge transfer and shaping students perception of their future workplace (2001). To fulfill this goal universities/business schools has to prepare graduates to act as employee and manager so they could effectively implement the objectives of the organization they work for. In this respect graduates must get acquainted with the employee - supervisor relationship. If the individuals' ideas of these relations are in line with reality they act efficiently, if not they are counterproductive. From this perspective it can be concluded that good education prepares new managers to the labor market. The aim of this paper is to analyze a perception of employers' and employees' social role (Goff-

man, 1959) by diverse social groups (Kostera, 2012) and its consequences for the psychological contract which is a significant relationships factor in working environment (Makin, Cooper, Cox, 2000).

Metaphors – “basic structural form of experience, through which human beings engage, organize, and understand their world” (Morgan, 1997: 231) were used as a main method. First-year and last-year (five) students from Polish universities/business schools took part in this research. In order to recognize ideas of respondents projection techniques with metaphors where used. Than interpretation of metaphors followed.

For implementing the purposes of the research I assumed that the nature of the relationship between employer and employee derives from the psychological contract. For the first time this term was used by Chris Argyris (1960) and in the field of the theory of organization by Edgar Schein (1965). For the purpose of this study definition of Denise Rousseau and Martin Greller (Wellin, 2007) was accepted. According to the authors the psychological contract “refers

to the mutual expectations people have of one another in a relationship, and how these expectations change and impact our behaviour over time” (ibidem, p.17). Basically, psychological contract describes the expectations an employee has of the organization and the expectations and the expectation the organization has of the employee. The idea could be apply in the wider perspective - to any other relationship.

Students used animal metaphors of their own choice for describing workers and employers and explained them shortly in written form. Answers varied from ant, mouse, fox or dog describing workers in students perspective up to lion, shark, elephant or spider for employers. Results of this research indicated contemporary attitude of students to the employee-employer relationship and the imagination of the market as a whole. I analyzed students’ ideas and expectations and related the result to the process of management education. It led to reveal how the management education affects the elements of the psychological contract? And does it help students to find their roles in their workplace?

Keywords

Psychological contract, employment, student

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