

Psychological Contract and Transparent Leadership in Organisations

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Abstract— *Leadership in organizations has been a topic of discussion in management circles for some time now and the discussion will remain open for a long time to come. The role and importance of Psychological contract in recruitment and placement as also in Organization Development has also been discussed in management literature elaborately. The present topic of investigation and research is concerned with the impact of organization leadership on the psychological contract between employer and employee as the organizations develop and progress to meet the growing needs of the new millennium. Leadership styles have changed and evolved with the changing requirements of the business environment and what needs to be understood is whether the psychological contract is keeping pace with the developments to enable a transparent leadership. Transparency demands an equal if not more in the interaction between the employer and employee and the understanding of mutual roles in enhancing the psychological contract between the employer and employee. This article will review the current situation as it exists in business organizations today.*

Keywords— *Transparency in leadership, psychological contract, new millennium, leadership styles and mutual roles.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Psychological Contract is a fascinating subject because it offers so many different perspectives and different reasons for them. It's not just a tool or a process. The Psychological Contract is a business model and a philosophy which can direct and lead us in the same way we structure and manage organizations, and deal with employees within them. It helps us understand more about the 'give and take' at a basic level between management and employees of an organization that describes working for an organization, and more specifically leading an organization. Understanding why employees are 'difficult to motivate', or 'difficult to manage' is the challenge of the psychological contract; especially when this is an ongoing challenge. The Psychological Contract helps leaders understand better how to align their people's needs with those of the organization, which at best is a very elusive notion.

At a deeper level it becomes increasingly complex and significant to manage workers and in particular change management. 'The Psychological Contract' is an increasingly relevant aspect of workplace relationships and wider human behavior. Theories and explanations of the Psychological Contract first emerged in the 1960s, notably in the work of organizational and behavioral theorists Chris Argyris and Edgar Schein. Many other experts have subsequently contributed ideas to the subject since then, and continue to do so, either specifically focusing on the Psychological Contract, or approaching it from a different perspective. The Psychological Contract is a deep and broad concept and is

subject to a wide range of interpretations and theoretical studies.

Primarily, the Psychological Contract refers to the relationship between an employer and its employees, and specifically concerning mutual expectations of inputs and outcomes. The Psychological Contract is generally seen from the point of view or feelings of employees, although a full appreciation requires it to be understood from both sides. Simply put, in an employment context, the Psychological Contract is the fairness or balance (typically as perceived by the employee) between: how the employee is treated by the employer and what the employee brings into the job. The words 'employees' or 'staff' or 'workforce' are equally appropriate in the above description.

In management, economics and human resources the term 'the Psychological Contract' commonly and somewhat loosely refers to the actual - but unwritten - expectations of an employee or workforce towards the employer. The Psychological Contract represents, in a basic sense, the obligations, rights, rewards, etc., that an employee believes he/she is 'owed' by his/her employer, in return for the employee's work and loyalty. This notion applies to a group of employees or a workforce or just as it may be seen applying to a single employee. This article refers to 'the organization' and 'leaders' and 'leadership', which broadly are the same thing in considering and describing the Psychological Contract. Leadership or 'the leader' is basically seen to represent the organization, and to reflect the aims and purposes of the owners of the organization. Leaders and leadership in this context refer to senior executive leaders or a chief executive, etc., not to team leaders or managers who (rightly) aspire to be leaders in the true sense of the word (covered under leadership, separately).

Obviously the relationship between employer and employee depends on the style of leadership by the management. In the leadership literature there is more research and discussion about how transparent leaders contribute better for the growth and development of organization. This paper will attempt to review the impact of current leadership style on the Psychological contract.

II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

As mentioned in the introduction both the psychological contract and leadership are topics of discussion and review in modern management literature and forums of discussion. While plenty of literature is available on the print and electronic media like web there is a growing interest area as to how Leadership styles can be fine tuned to achieve the

objectives of a psychological contract. This paper would analyze the various literatures available on the subject to and the following specific Objectives have been identified

1. A critical review of psychological contract in Indian industry
2. Status of psychological contract in Indian industry
3. The Contribution of Human Resource Development in this area
4. How leadership styles are affected by psychological contract
5. Impact of transparency in leadership on the Psychological Contract
6. Suggestions and recommendation

On a preliminary examination of available literature and a web survey, it was observed that adequate literature is available through earlier research work and publications on the subject. So, it was considered prudent to do a thorough desk research to compile the required data and analyze thoroughly to arrive at the answers to the research questions as mentioned above.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Despite the availability of many theories of Management and Organization behavior, the ideas and concepts are not fully recognized and used in organizations. Even less understood are the concepts of psychological contract, in parts of society where people and organizations are connected despite its significance and potential usefulness. The author hopes that you will be encouraged by what follows to advance the appreciation and application of its important principles, the way it makes sense to you. It is a very fertile and potentially beneficial area of research and study.

Within the various definitions referenced (see Reference list) you will see already that the concept is open to different interpretations, and has a number of complex dimensions, notably:

1. There are a series of mutual obligations on both sides (which include, crucially, intangible factors that are impossible to measure conventionally).
2. It is a relationship between an employer on one side, and on the other side an employee and/or employees (which by implication distorts the notion of a formal contract between two fixed specified parties).
3. The obligations are partly or wholly subject to the perceptions of the two sides (which adds further complexities, because perceptions are very changeable, and as you will see, by their subjective 'feeling' and attitudinal nature perceptions create repeating cause/effect loops or vicious/virtuous circles, which are scientifically impossible to resolve).
4. Overall the Contract itself has a very variable nature (being such a fluid thing itself, and being subject to so many potential influences, including social and emotional factors, which are not necessarily work-driven).
5. An obvious point often overlooked, within any organization, the Psychological Contract is almost never written or formalized, which makes it inherently difficult to manage, and especially for employees and managers and

executives and shareholders to relate to (the Psychological Contract is almost always a purely imaginary framework or understanding, which organizational leadership rarely gives priority as more real or manageable issues.

Work which used to be a relatively simple matter of hours or piece-rate in return for wages is a lot more complicated now and so inevitably are the nature and implications of the Psychological Contract. The concept; is better explained with the help of diagrams. Given below is a Venn diagram representing quite a complex view of the Psychological Contract, significantly including external influences, which are often overlooked in attempting to appreciate and apply Psychological Contracts in operating in the Human Resources Department. Venn diagrams (devised c.1880 by British logician and philosopher John Venn, 1834-1923) are useful in representing all sorts of situations where two or more related areas interact or interrelate. The Venn diagram below provides a simple interpretation of the factors and influences operating in Psychological Contracts.



Fig. 1. Psychological Contract Venn diagram.
(For referencing purposes this diagram is an original interpretation Of the Psychological Contracts concept and was published First the website – businessballs.com in May 2010.)

VC = visible contract - the usual written employment contractual obligations on both sides to work safely and appropriately in return for a rate of pay or salary, usually holidays also, plus other employee rights of notice and duty of care.

pc = psychological contract - which is hidden, unspoken, unwritten, and takes account of the relationship references (r) between employee and market (which includes other external factors), also the employer's relationship with the market (also r), and the visible contract (vc). Note that only the visible contract (vc) element is written and transparent. All the other sections are subject to perceptions until/unless clarified.

The concept of the Psychological Contract within business, work and employment is quite flexible and somewhat difficult (if not practically impossible) to measure in usual ways, as we might for example salaries and pay against market rates, or responsibilities with qualifications, etc. The Psychological Contract is quite different to a physical contract or document - it represents the notion of 'relationship' or 'trust' or 'understanding' which can exist for one or a number of

employees, instead of a tangible piece of paper or legal document which might be different from one employee to another. While each individual certainly holds his own view of what the Psychological Contract means at a personal level, in organizational terms the collective view and actions of a whole workgroup are usually more significant, and in practice the main focus of leadership is towards a group situation. This is particularly necessary in large organizations where scale effectively prevents consideration of the full complexities and implications of the Psychological Contract on a person-by-person basis.

The Psychological Contracts 'Iceberg' Model

This Psychological Contracts 'iceberg' diagram below is a useful way to illustrate some of the main aspects and influences within Psychological Contracts theory. An iceberg is said to be 90% hidden beneath the water. Analogy of this fits the Psychological Contract very well, in which most of the Contract perceptions are unwritten and hidden, consistent with its definition. This is especially so for junior workers in old-fashioned 'X-Theory' autocratic organizations, where mutual expectations typically have little visibility and clarity. In this case the iceberg is maybe 95% or 99% submerged. In contrast the Psychological Contract between a more modern enlightened employer and its employees, especially senior mature experienced and successful staff, is likely to be much more clearly understood and visible, with deeper inputs and rewards, formally and mutually agreed. Here the iceberg might be only 60% or 70% submerged. These percentage figures are not scientific - they merely explain the way the model works. The example of iceberg extends conveniently that the 'sky' and the 'sea' represent external and market pressures acting on employee and employer, affecting the balance, and the rise or fall of the iceberg. The iceberg rises with the success and experience of the employee, so does the contract value and written contractual expectations on both sides. Inputs and rewards become visible mutual contractual agreement above the water-line or confused perceptions below from the water-line.

(For referencing purposes this diagram is an original interpretation of the Psychological Contracts concept and was published first on this website- businessballs.com in May 2010.)

Left side of iceberg = employee inputs (and employer needs).
Right side of iceberg = rewards given by employer (and employee needs).

Above the water level: factors mostly visible and agreed by both sides.

Work / Pay = visible written employment contract.

Black arrows = mostly visible and clear market influences on the work and pay.

Red arrows = iceberg rises with success and maturity, experience, etc., (bringing invisible perceived factors into the visible agreed contract).

Below the water level: factors mostly perceived differently, or hidden, and not agreed.

Left side of iceberg = examples of employee inputs, which equate to employer expectations - informal, perceived and unwritten.

Right side of iceberg = rewards examples and employee's expectations.

Blue arrows = Outside influences on employee and employer affecting perceptions,

The Increasing Complexity of the Psychological Contract

The complexity of a Psychological Contract is determined by the nature, extent and variety of people's needs at work. Work needs are increasingly impacted by factors outside the field of work as well as those we naturally imagine arising inside work. People's lives today are richer, more varied, and far better organized and connected than ever. They are aware of have more, and want still more from life - and this outlook naturally expands their view of how work can help them achieve greater fulfillment. The employer/employee relationship - reflected in the Psychological Contract - has grown in complexity, since workers have become more mobile and enabled by modern technology, and markets are globalized. These changes began seriously in the 1980s. Many modern dimensions of work - such as mobile working, globalization, speed of change - were unusual, where as now they are common.

Given below (Table I) is an example of how work has changed. The turning point might have been the 1980s, or maybe the 90s, it depends on interpretations; but the point is that sometime in the last two decades of the 20th century the world of work changed more than it had changed since the Industrial Revolution. Globalization and technology in the late 20th century shifted everything we knew about organized work onto an entirely different level - especially in terms of complexity, rate of change, connectivity and the mobility of people and activities. There are also significant changes specifically in attitudes to traditional corporations, markets and Governance. Extremely potent and 'community' driven enterprises are emerging.



Fig. 2. The Iceberg Diagram.

TABLE I. Complexity of changes.

up to 1980s	after 1980s
work teams	virtual teams
factory/office working	home/mobile-working
line management	matrix management
customer service	call centers
in-house services	outsourcing and off-shoring
job for life	job for 2 years
a life's work	a career for 10 years
onsite services	online services
few employee rights	many employee rights
low employee awareness	high employee awareness
employees isolated	employees connected
reliable pensions	unreliable pensions
other issues: equality, discrimination, training, qualifications, share save, pensions, buy-to-let, 4x4s, telephone, letters, mainframe computers and terminals, sub-contracting, employment contracts	other issues: life-balance, sabbaticals, lifelong-learning, employee ownership, community, social enterprise, email, social networking, mobile web, globalization, the psychological contract

Social connectivity and technological empowerment pose a real threat to old-style corporate models. Younger generations have seen the free market model and traditional capitalism fail, and fail young people particularly. Certain industries no longer need a massive hierarchical structure to connect supply and demand.

When comparing the 'before-and-after' grid above with reference to the Psychological Contract initial reaction can be to focus on the erosion of traditional outputs (benefits, rewards, etc) accruing to employees, such as job and career security, pensions, etc. This need not necessarily be so. The shifting world of work (and life beyond work) presents some threats to employers, and erosion in the employee inputs traditionally taken for granted by employers. The changes in work and life that continue to re-shape the Psychological Contract have a two-way effect; they present risks and opportunities (and advantages and disadvantages) to employers and employees alike. Notably, workers are increasingly mobile, flexible and adaptable - they no longer work for the same employer for long. Good workers can easily find alternative employment than twenty years ago. Modern technology and shrinking distances have made geographical location irrelevant, and will become more so.

The connectivity of workers today is awesome, thanks to the internet and modern social networking, which enable awareness and mobilization of groups of people on an awesome level of sophistication and scale, the effects of which we are only beginning to witness. Modern technology, which the younger generations understand and exploit better than older people, is fantastically liberating for employees. Historically workers relied on employers for access to technology. In the future, employers will progressively depend on employees for accessing technology and innovation. Training and development used to be a big aspect of employer control. Dependence on their employer to advance their learning and skills, and thereby their value in the employment

market is no longer the case. Employees are increasingly able to control their own learning and development, through modern technology, and a new attitude of self-sufficiency is emerging, never seen before.

The significance and complexity of Psychological Contract have grown in response to all effects as mentioned above, and given that the world of work will continue change in big ways, the significance and complexity of the Contract will grow even more. This would dramatically shift backdrop of people's relationships with their employers a great deal. Just one of these factors would be sufficient alone to change substantially how employees relate to employers, and vice-versa - but all these together, and more to come, are potentially more impacting. The above dimension of organized work is a fundamental driver of the nature of the Psychological Contract, and its significance for employers, particularly during economic growth and buoyancy, when employees have more choice and flexibility compared to the power of employers during periods of recession.

Leadership Transparency

Lack of leadership transparency results from one or more reasons given below:

- Assumption by leadership that employees already know
- Assumption by leadership that employees are incapable of understanding
- Leadership not considering transparency to be a possible issue
- Firm belief of leadership that employees have no right to know
- Policy of secrecy - to hide facts for one reason or another

A leadership intentionally withholds facts and operates secretly because it has something to hide. A healthy Psychological Contract will neither be an aim or a possibility for such employers. Lack of transparency exists due to leadership negligence, fear or insecurity, or simply a lazy old-fashioned 'X-Theory' culture. All of this can be resolved with effort, and can produce dramatically positive results, because Leadership transparency has a huge influence on two major factors within the Psychological Contract and its effective management:

- Employee trust and openness towards the employer
- Employee awareness of facts - enabling employee objectivity in judging the Psychological Contract

If leadership is not transparent, employees have no reason to trust the employer, and human nature, will tend not to be open and trusting in return. Trust is crucial for a healthy Psychological Contract.

Where leadership fails to inform and explain itself openly and fully to employees, they will form their own ideas, which tend to be not very accurate or complete. Wrong perceptions, thrive in an information vacuum, when we add misinformation, rumor, etc., Faulty beliefs become hidden factors (among the blue arrows in the iceberg diagram) which influence the Psychological Contract negatively. Non availability of leadership transparency is a failing where clear explanation of organizational position provides real objective

justification for a particular organizational action. Transparency helps to kick-start a 'virtuous circle' within the Psychological Contract, as well as giving employees reliable facts about their situation. This enables trust, openness and tolerance to develop. Reliable facts repudiate faulty assumptions and unhelpful perceptions. Distrust fosters distrust. Secrecy fosters secrecy. Employer/employee communications will tend to be closed, not open. Fear and suspicion on both sides increase, particularly in employees, whose perception of the Contract worsens as a result, in turn increasing animosity and fear.

Transparency tends to be a matter of leadership policy and style by which clear facts about an organization's position, activities and decisions are made available to its employees and customers. Openness tends to refer to the flow of communications in all directions within the organization, here especially the feelings, ideas and needs of employees. Good general levels of openness in communications may have no influence at all on improving leadership/organizational transparency, especially if the organization chooses not to be very transparent. Transparent organizations find it much easier to foster open communications.

Psychological contracts – like the individuals connected with them – change over time and are inherently unstable. We ourselves change, as the composition of our work team changes around us and as our business environment changes, so also our psychological contracts. Even more complexity is added, because each of us tend to project aspects of the psychological contract that we think we've negotiated (but may never have checked out explicitly) on to how we think that other people should behave towards us and to each other at work. This can create huge problems. We use psychological contracts as a kind of mental map to help us to navigate our way through our working day. If we are not conscious of the existence of this mental map, it may lead us unwittingly to avoid or resist embracing necessary change.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Leaders were historically focused on retaining customers. Increasingly they will have to focus just as much on retaining staff. A new generation of workers has grown up with no expectation of a job for life. They seek variety and change, where their parents sought routine and security. Moreover they have access to, and control over, substantial modern technologies which will continue to evolve in favor of the individual, rather than the organization. Leaders must therefore lead in a different way, if they have to retain the best people, and develop better relationships and reputation among staff, customers and opinion-leaders.

Interestingly there are still plenty of leaders (in business and wider governance) whose ideas of power and authority are similar to the early industrialization of work, than to the modern world. The signs are that much of this old thinking will be forced to change - and be reflected within the Psychological Contract - as people, at the level of employees, followers, citizens, customers, etc., become more empowered. Significant contributions have been made by Human Resource scientists and thinkers like Argyris, Briner, Coyle, Shapiro,

Rousseau, Dabos, Robinson, Schein, Shapiro, Kotler, and a host of other writers and thinkers. We owe the present state of development to their work and research.

Leadership styles as seen from the management literature, have influenced the psychological contract. The participative and human resources approach have empowered employees and increased their sense of loyalty to organization. Employee trust and belongingness has improved due to change of management attitude since the days of theory X.

Transparency in leadership is the inescapable way for leaders to take the organization forward. With the globalization and its impact on working teams, we have seen that the challenge of management has shifted from employees getting involved and serving organizations for a long period to a new age employee who chooses where he will work and for how long. The challenge for organizations and human resource managers is how to attract and retain the new generation of informed, skilled and talented employees for a sufficient time to gain corporate advantage. (Gone are the days of Life time employment!)

As the outlook of global work force is changing due to better communication and contact facilities, so also the management approach to attract and retain skilled employees through Talent Management and Training. Continuous and two way nonstop communications with employees can contribute to this effort! Management cannot be secretive; they cannot be even if they wish, due to the information age where Technology has enabled the educated employees to acquire global information in a jiffy!

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