PRAGMATIC CONSTRUCTIVISM AS A SOFT-METHODOLOGY OF THE HRM CONCEPT

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A R T I C L E I N F O

A B S T R A C T

The development of methodological foundations of the human resources management (HRM) concept in a modern organization is carried out via the philosophical approach. The appeal to Soft-methodology is caused by the need to solve new management problems, inevitably accompanying post-industrial society, from the position of flexible and rapid response to the challenges of the external environment.

The identification of the essential features of radical constructivism as the epistemologically and ontologically most viable direction in the framework of the general constructive movement and the classical American version of pragmatism and their generalization in the context of the HRM concept allowed justifying the appeal to the integration of these approaches, implemented in pragmatic constructivism. In addition, the appeal to pragmatic constructivism as a methodological basis for the human resources management concept took into account the western practice of implementing this approach to risk management, management accounting, bank lending.

It is established that pragmatic constructivism is a subject-based approach, indicating the subjective-value active perception and transformation of reality, aimed at achieving useful results for the organization. Subject-designer has certain value ideas about the world, based on their own experience and reflection on it and adjusted taking into account new impressions. In accordance with these guidelines, organizational reality is constructed, not reflected. The truth of this design determines its practical usefulness for the organization. Taking this into account, pragmatic constructivism is Soft-methodology of human resource management concept. This methodology is a flexible, instrumental, contextual practical use of the system of methods and principles, which is designed to ensure effective human management in the organization. The key principles of pragmatic constructivism as Soft-methodology are the principles of communication, design, criticality and creativity, and the meritocracy of ideas.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of post-industrial society in the understanding of its consistent developer D. Bell, suggests that "in the economy there is a shift from manufacturing industries to services; in technology, the leading role of science-based industries is affirmed; in the sociological dimension, new technocratic elites are formed and a new principle of stratification arises". In addition, D. Bell further stressed that "any significant social changes create new management problems for society" [1, p. 661].

The realities of modern society – the transience of changes, the short-term relationship between the person and the organization and the persistence of organizational migration of personnel – determine the instability of organizational reality and require changes in the system of "principles, methods of organization and construction of theoretical and practical activities in the field of HRM" [2, p. 218]. Under these conditions, the so-called Soft-methodology is needed – a methodology that allows flexible and timely response to the challenges of time.

2. RECENT RESEARCH REVIEW

The value of constructivism for modern epistemology, philosophy, and science is analyzed, the question of the ability to construct as a unique property of a person realizing the indissoluble unity of consciousness and activity is identified [3]. The conceptual content of the radical constructivism doctrine is investigated, the insufficient radicalism of constructivism in relation to the classical theory of cognition is criticized [4]. The analysis of constructivist practices of cognition is carried out, the difference between classical and modern constructivism is revealed [5]. The ideas of radical constructivism are critically reconsidered; the problem of correlation of illusion and reality is designated [6].

In modern western studies, the explication of the methodology of constructivism to the management of the organization is the trend. Glasersfeld's radical constructivism as a viable research decision is identified as a component of HRM model in the project-oriented organization serving as construction [7]. The use of a combination of constructivism and pragmatism, implemented in pragmatic constructivism, in relation to management and management accounting [8; 9], to study the problem of joint presence of different cultures in the organization in the context of bank lending is studied [10].

The novelty of this study is the application of a philosophical approach to the development of methodological foundations as sufficient conditions, systems of ideas and principles of substantiation of the human resources management concept in post-industrial organization. The Soft-methodology is pragmatic constructivism, the necessary elements of which are the provisions of radical constructivism and pragmatism in the classical American version, the clarification of the essential features of which is required in the first place.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

The methodological basis of the human management concept in a modern organization defined pragmatic realism as a method that avoids dogmatism, "takes into account the human interest and

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insists on philosophical groundlessness and deliberate doom of attempts to highlight any single "veritable" undertaken by "metaphysicians") the relationship of conformity between the terms and referents", a method that refuses to "oppose the objective to subjective, actual to conventional, empirical to theoretical" [11, p. 115]. Pragmatic realism emphasizes the interdependence of objective reality with subjective experience. Constructivism as a general methodological concept serves as the basis for the justification and development of methodological foundations of the human management concept in the organization – viable in a changed environment of communication. To assess the problems of human management in the organization at the level of grounds led to the necessary appeal to the method of critical analysis. The development of methodological foundations of the HRM concept, integrating the provisions of pragmatism and constructivism, is carried out from the position of a systematic approach, taking into account the integrity of interrelated elements, objects, relations. Communicative-active approach is necessary for the consideration of the HRM concept in the context of the theory of the postindustrial society with the aim of identifying the grounds for the reflection and revision of the relationship between man and organization.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In general, the viability of constructivism provides, on the one hand, its substantive aspect as an interdisciplinary direction, integrating the ideas of modern ideas about man and social values, on the other hand – instrumental philosophical and methodological installation of designing reality as opposed to the idea of its reflection.

In the social and humanitarian knowledge, the concept of "constructivism" gained popularity since the Seventies of XX century. Meanwhile, the philosophical origins of constructivism can be found in the idea of the emerging and changing reality of Heraclitus, in the Protagoras's concept of man as a measure of all things, in the dialogical interpretation and contextual-experimental construction of knowledge of Socrates, in the Sextus Empiricus's antidogmatism, in the G. Vico's idea of constructing rational knowledge by man himself, man's knowledge of the world of experience created by him, in view of the experience as the totality of internal sensations by George Berkeley, in the anthropological paradigm and the transcendental subject of Kant, in the I. Fichte's concept of "I" creative force, in the skepticism of David Hume concerning experienced limitations of the ideas, in the H. Vaihinger's theory of fiction expressed through design "as if", the K. Marx's idea of transforming the world, in D. Dewey's instrumentalism, in the F. de Saussure's iconic theory and the process of signification as a construction of reality, in the methodological anarchism of P. Feyerabend, G. Bachelard's rationalist constructivism and the corresponding task of explaining the knowledge based on its own elements etc. Currently, the ideas of constructivism are basic not only in philosophy but also in psychology, sociology, anthropology, technical sciences, art, and mathematics. Researchers within a constructivist paradigm [12] distinguish a phenomenological constructivism (E. Mach), biological constructivism (H. von Foerster, H. Maturana, F. Varela), cognitive constructivism (J. Piaget, W. Nasser), radical constructivism (E. von Glasersfeld).

Radical constructivism based by E. von Glasersfeld given direction of the general design movement is more viable in the epistemological and ontological aspects. And it is not just that the

pioneer of this direction defines it as the only one actually constructivist in philosophy, rejecting the concept of reflection of reality. For Glasersfeld radical constructivism is "post-epistemology" [13, p. 24], free from metaphysics. Defining constructivism as "radical" is not synonymous with "extremist", most likely, it means "thoroughly consistent" [12, p. 246]. From the Glasersfeld's point of view, radical constructivism is an unconventional approach to the problem of knowledge and cognition. "It starts from the assumption that knowledge, no matter how it be defined, is in the heads of persons, and that the thinking subject has no alternative but to construct what he or she knows on the basis of his or her own experience. What we make of experience constitutes the only world we consciously live in. It can be sorted into many kinds, such as things, self, others, and so on. But all kinds of experience are essentially subjective, and though I may find reasons to believe that my experience may not be unlike yours, I have no way of knowing that it is the same" [14, p. 1].

The focus of radical constructivism is on epistemological problems, the solution of which is assumed within the framework of two basic principles of constructivism, which were formulated by Glazersfeld, based on the J. Piaget's ideas, who applied the biological concept of adaptation to epistemology. According to the first principle, "knowledge is not passively received either through the senses or by way of communication, but it is actively built up by the cognizing subject", in accordance with the second principle, "the function of cognition is adaptive and serves the subject's organization of the experiential world, not the discovery of an objective ontological reality" [15, p. 83].

Radical constructivism excludes the so-called "objective" reality. There can be no reality beyond human experience: ontological reality cannot be verified, hence it does not exist. The constructivists oppose a constructed reality that represents the interpretative world of possibilities in which man lives "in a world created by its interaction with the objective world", consisting "of the capabilities, which a man opens by his activity" to the denial of this physical world [16, p. 38]. An active subject-constructor (or creator) of reality is a person.

Denying the existence of ontological reality as inexperienced, constructivists also argue that knowledge does not correspond exclusively to objective reality. Knowledge is the result of a coherent reality that, according to Glasersfeld, "made up of the network of things and relationships that we rely on in our living, and on which, we believe, others rely on, too" [17, p. 7].

Constructivists proclaim personal experience as the basis of knowledge. Own living situation and reflection on the experience allow a person to build their own idea of reality in the consciousness: "all that is said – is said by the observer" [18, p. 25].

The perception of the world is active: all our knowledge of the world is a structure – a certain structure that represents the mutual arrangement of the elements of experience and reflection on it, created and evaluated from the standpoint of viability and significance for the community, and not revealed in existence. The process of construction is a creative process that involves the creation of something new: "in the course of this activity, something arises that was not known; at least, to the subject himself or that has not been in reality yet. This "something" is a construction in the most general sense of the word" [3].

However, the construction determines the issue of the relationship of illusion and reality, marked

by V.A. Lektorsky as a problem of the continued existence of the designed artificial world as a special reality. "The activity of designing and using such representations involves the participation of consciousness. But they themselves, as were created, form a special sphere of reality, because they exist regardless of their awareness and knowledge by separate individual. At the same time, the latter may not know everything and understand everything in their ideal content. But the meaning of such representations is not that this kind of independent reality existing by itself, and that they represent reality external to them", said V. A. Lektorsky [6, p. 18].

The principle of reality construction in comparison with the principle of its reflection, undoubtedly, provides wider prospects for understanding the nature, essence, and development of reality. However, taking into account that constructivism "focus on self-referential and organizationally closed systems. Such systems strive for control over their inputs rather than their outputs. Cognitive system (mind) is operationally closed" [19, p. 4], it should be clarified that, in fact, the possibilities for design are not unlimited. On the contrary, they appear to be limited by the limits of individual experience and a certain community, in which the produced collective constructions are divided: "not everything can be implemented, constructed, built, but only what is consistent with internal trends" [20, p. 78]. In principle, it is recognized by Glasersfeld in the historical review, devoted to the 30th anniversary of radical constructivism: "we can only check the coherence of our constructs with other experiences, … as our thinking, our conceptualizing, and our language are developed from and in the domain of our experience, we have no way of incorporating anything that lies beyond this domain" [21, p. 11].

The existence of an infinite number of experiments denies the existence of a single reality, as well as the explication of the only adequate methodology of its study. Taking into account the above, let us generalize the essential characteristics of constructivism in the context of the conceptual foundations of the methodology of human resources management.

The organization does not exist as an objectively perceived reality. This is a subjective, creatively built in the consciousness the construction of reality, based on the individual experience of the subject, both ordinary and organizational. In the process of communication in the organization, a collective structure is created between the subjects, shared by the participants of a certain community and limited by the limits of their experience. At the same time, this coordinated intra-organizational collective structure may not correspond to the ideas about it in the external environment.

The appeal to pragmatism, first of all, a method of solving problems will allow assessing the usefulness of the various agreed organizational structures. From D. Dewey's point of view, one of the founders of the philosophy of pragmatism, pragmatic method implements the logic of research in relation to the possible consequences of social decisions and actions, represents the "the rule of referring all thinking, all reflective considerations, to *consequences* for final meaning and test", which by nature can be different – aesthetic, moral, political – or religious – theory requires only that "they be in some way consequences of thinking" [22, p. 330].

The theory and methodology of pragmatism in its classical American version are analyzed and justified as a methodological basis for the concept of human resources management [23]. The HRM

concept is a human resource management tool in an organization. It is established that the true criterion of the HRM concept is efficiency in solving organizational problems and promoting the company. The truth of the HRM concept is determined by the results of organizational experience. It makes no sense to say anything hypothetically about the effectiveness of this concept, regardless of the opportunities to implement it in practice. The only basis for determining the truth of the HRM concept in the context of pragmatism is its effectiveness: "no matter what theory or theories of management the HRM concept is based on, no matter what authoritative dogma it refers to, including the experience of other organizations, its truth can be determined only in practice and relevant to the experience of a particular organization and belonging HR company" [23, p. 111]. The concept of human resources management cannot be considered either true or false until the result of its effectiveness, expressed, in particular, in increasing the productivity and quality of customer service, and, consequently, in increasing customer satisfaction and reducing the number of complaints, in increasing the level of sales, leading to a higher level of profit of the company and an increase in the price of shares, is recorded in practice.

From the point of view of pragmatism, the value of human resource is determined by its functional significance – benefit for the company. HR is a tool to solve problems and improve the competitiveness of the organization. The value of HR has a short-term value, limited by the period of staff contribution to the achievement of business goals of the company.

The integration of pragmatism and constructivism makes it possible to take into account the priority of experience and practice and the resulting values, to evaluate the designs developed by the community in terms of their organizational usefulness. Conceptually, this combination of concepts is realized in the concept of "pragmatic constructivism", in the structure of which from the ontological point of view, based on the position of G. Frege, the component "pragmatic" indicates the meaning of the subject, "constructivism" – denoter. Performing the way of description of denoter, the "pragmatic" defines the aspect of constructivism consideration, pointing "the way of entity [denotatum]" [24, p. 26] and is not identical to subjective views about the content of the sign.

Pragmatic constructivism emphasizes the role of actors in the construction of an ordered reality and the successful functioning of the structure. This is a "an actor-based approach that accounts for the subjective, value-laden nature of human perception", an approach that "causes a shift from deterministic management and control toward actor-based leadership, in which actors co-create their managerial reality" [8, p. 74]. Recognizing the special role of the subject-designer – active, cognizing and transforming reality – pragmatic constructivism does not limit it to the individual. Rather, the subject-designer represents the community consisting of representatives of various departments of the organization. Organization is the necessary intersubjective environment that creates the conditions for the construction, operation, and adjustment of an effective coordinated design.

Pragmatic constructivism, as a methodology aimed at achieving practical useful results, should first of all be applied in determining and clarifying the problems that may arise in the process of constructing reality, in terms of how their solution affects the usefulness of the concepts developed. The construction of organizational reality is carried out in accordance with the value concepts of the subject of the world, based on experience and reflection on it and corrected in the context of new impressions received in the process of communication. In principle, the construction of reality is the

result of inter-subject relations and relations between subjects and the world. It is an intersubjective world whose actors share a common understanding of reality.

Pragmatic constructivism allows assessing the truth of the relative design, determined by its practical usefulness for the organization. The truth of this agreed design is beyond doubt as long as it benefits the company. Therefore, the pragmatic constructivism focuses on the creation of well-functioning structures of reality. This perspective involves the integration of experience, reflection, values, capabilities, and communication, and allows for the organization to be seen as a coherent set of multiple individual realities.

The above allows us to determine the pragmatic constructivism as Soft-methodology of the concept of human resources management in the organization.

In defining the Soft-methodology of the HRM concept, we proceed from the explanation of the modern American philosopher of science M. Thompson, who believed that the methodology "is based on the arguments of mind and experience, and is not guided by political or economic considerations" [25, p. 271]. Soft-methodology is a flexible, variable system of methods and principles used for human management in the organization, allowing dynamic perception of the world. Based on the meaning of the subject and denoter of a certain Soft-methodology, the appropriate methods are the method of sequential (radical) constructivism, pragmatic method, method of critical and contextual analysis, system and communicative-activity approaches.

HRM Soft-methodology is designed to provide an effective solution to the problems of human management in the practice of the organization on the basis of interrelated principles: communication, design, criticality and creativity, meritocracy of ideas.

The principle of communication points to interaction as a necessary condition for the construction of a collectively agreed design. Communication, in this case, is understood as a meaningful rational multidirectional interaction, involving mutual understanding between community members and understanding of the meaning of the transmitted and received message, as well as effective management of this interaction.

The principle of construction – the active construction of reality by the cognizing collective subject – allows designing organizational reality, including the relationship between human resources and the organization as a whole, and between people in the organization. The implementation of this principle assumes the adaptability of the projected reality in relation to the rapidly changing environment and confirms the viability of the new reality.

The principles of criticality and creativity determine the features of the design process: the ability to identify problems and non-standard approach to their solution, to evaluate and improve business projects based on their practical usefulness for the organization.

The principle of meritocracy of ideas ensures the implementation of the mechanism of effective decision-making. In this case, we rely on the successful implementation of meritocracy of ideas in the investment company Bridgewater Associates, the main meaning of which was expressed by its founder R. Dalio. "The essence of the meritocracy of ideas", explains Dalio, "is to bring together

smart, independent-minded people, to allow them to express openly different points of view, to formulate the best collective decision and to resolve differences based on the competence of the participants" [26, p. 348].

5. CONCLUSION

Pragmatic constructivism is the methodological basis of the concept of human resources management in the organization. It is Soft-methodology of the concept of human resource management that does not contradict well-established in the theory and practice of management "soft dimension" of HRM, "emphasizes communication, training and development, motivation, culture, values and involvement" [27, p. 11;28]. Moreover, pragmatic constructivism as a Soft-methodology is characterized by instrumental suitability and usefulness, which allows building the most adaptive as an effective design of organizational reality, especially valuable in an unstable society.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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