

Changes in Perceptions About Working Life Throughout History and the Rise of Managerialism Approach

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Extensive Summary

Introduction

Making sharp distinctions among historical periods and isolate them from each other is not an appropriate approach to adopt. Under the light of this idea, the paper focuses on historical periods reflecting different perspectives towards working life. It has been found that each of these periods experienced certain changes in point of views about working life. To illustrate with, “labor” was exalted during Golden Era, which defines the earliest periods of history. During the following period, which was characterized by the spread of slavery, labor started to lose its importance. Although there are certain exceptions in this overall framework, this is the general perspective observed throughout history.

Methodology

Overall framework regarding the changes in point of views working life throughout history was explained in detail in “*Giriş*” section of the paper. Accordingly, the historical periods in history can be listed in general terms as follows:

1) Golden Era: Mentioned in ancient mythology – the earliest references in history-, this period is characterized with the exaltation of “labor” starting from the earliest ages of humanity.

2) Slavery and Casts Period: This era represents a period when the importance of working life was shaken to a certain extent, slavery become widespread and caste system emerged.

3) Trading and Colony Era: This period refers to “early managerialism” in management sciences and international business administration literature and defines an era which involves both trading and colonization periods. Managerialism has its roots in this era and new areas of applications emerged accordingly.

4) International Period: Managerialism has strengthened its effects and become widespread till present time. This situation reflects a significant change in perceptions

about working life. The most important date in this era is 1929, when managerialism emerged and spread later on and continued to survive even today thanks to the updates and changes.

The developments in this fourth era called International Era are the main focus of this paper. In order to reveal the characteristic features of this era, the term “managerialism” was introduced in the first section of the paper, and the overall framework about the practices contribution to these development was explained. The next section presents the philosophical critique of managerialism, which is followed in the next section with the modern criticisms made regarding the issue. The following sections deal with human resources and performance evaluations, which are criticized by being a part of managerialist practices. By doing this, a certain part of the issue was explained in a general to specific format.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Revised managerialist efficiency techniques, especially seen after the 1980s in business life, spread very rapidly around the world. Even organisational democracy, distribution of shares to employees, empowering employees, and efforts to increase synergic power practices, that just provided a temporary relief and did not produce a fundamental solution.

Increasing concerns for future due to capitalist system cause a sort of pressure to increase the quality of labor, which are accompanied by advancing technology, productive and efficient labor force, being innovative and rapid adaptation to developments. Emphasis on uncertainty and flexibility by employers are justified as disguised under the concept “liberalization of labor force”. In today’s working life, where competition is exalted, certain complaints are made about the negative effects of managerialist approaches on employees. Being a chronic problem in modern working life, this situation leads to confusion, uncertainty and unpredictability, and working life becomes almost impossible to manage. Following the spread of neo-liberalist practices as of 1990s, changes have been more apparent. Considering that rationalist and positivist approaches of modern mentality have been replaced by certain postmodern approaches such as indefiniteness, uncertainty and flexibility, it is possible to claim that new perspectives about working life will be available in the future.

This paper deals with the variations in perspectives regarding working life throughout history. Focusing on the process from mythological eras to the present, this study sticks to commonly accepted eras stated in international business administration literature to have a strong theoretical background. Since international business administration literature involves such historical periods only as of 14th century, two more periods were added to the list to obtain historical unity since they are also characterized with noticeable changes regarding perspectives about working life. The distinctive characteristics of each era were explained in the paper as well.