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The “Exit Voice Loyalty Neglect Silence”(EVLNS) Options as a “frame in use” for the Human Resources – or: How to master manifold paradoxical requirements and tensions in crafting organizational change. -A practitioner’s case study

The objective is to investigate the usefulness of the EVLS frame from the perspective of a practitioner of HRM in the private sector. In different roles and functions HR management is assigned or at the least is involved to bring about continuous improvements focusing on business processes and to foster service mindedness among middle management and employees. Once charged with this mission HR is confronted with multiple resistances of different stakeholder which defend their status or their vested interests may it be for the status quo of a given balance of power, by micro-political gambling or just defending the status quo for the sake of inertia in general. The cases presented will describe approaches to institutionalize new forms of internal co-operation in the context of co-determination (works agreements) in Germany. Mobilizing suggestions, fostering bottom up and top down as well as vertical communication are the desired results/outcomes of the agenda of “day by day stand up meetings”. In the second case the setup of an “internal labor market” will be briefly described. The third case refers to the implementation of a dispute resolution system. The question each time is about the utility of the EVLNS frame. In answering this question, I will refer to criteria whether it is pragmatically of use and whether it helps to explain sufficiently the nuances of organizational reality.

Based on the applications of the EVLNS frame of these two cases of meaningful organizational change it can be demonstrated that it serves as a compass bearing to map the forces in a given period which determine an organizational field. So, this frame provides a heuristic tool not only to anticipate and to deal with resistance before internal blockades are raised or HR change agent’s credibility has eroded but EVLNS may be useful for HR to sharpen its professionalism in implementing long lasting improvements by initiating promising virtuous circles of internal co-operation. These contributions to continuous or even radical organizational change are crucial because the HR function itself is questioned as being considered merely as a cost driver. The panacea to renew the HR function in splitting up different functions like HR Business Partner will be questioned. It will be argued that the chances for HR to initiate “virtuous circles” of organizational change including the main stakeholder internally have a fair chance to happen only when HR is equipped with a solid power base. Overall this paper is a small contribution to A. O. Hirschman’s prospect of “possibilism’s”.

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