

A TYPOLOGY OF EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS: A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH

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The growing recognition over the last few years of the importance of human resources for organizational excellence has led in many cases to an increased emphasis on gaining employee loyalty. Nonetheless, not all workers have the same type of employee relationship, either due to the organization's concern for economic efficiency, or simply as a consequence of supervisors' different approaches to people management. In any case, we believe that organizations should, on the one hand, clearly define the type of relationship they wish to establish with their employees, and on the other hand, try to maintain consistency with regard to different human resource practices and their own strategy. This is necessary in order to ensure that the diverse messages individuals receive will help them to develop realistic expectations, thus lowering the likelihood of a perceived breach in their psychological contract. We have therefore reviewed the classifications of employee relationships developed by authors from different research areas with a view to proposing a synthesis that combines the most important elements of each.

Key words: Employment Relationships, Strategic Human Resources Management, Human Resources Practices.

La importancia que en los últimos años se ha otorgado a los recursos humanos como parte fundamental de la excelencia empresarial ha supuesto en muchos casos una mejora de las condiciones laborales tendentes a conseguir el compromiso de los trabajadores. Aunque no todos disfrutaban del mismo tipo de relación de empleo, ya sea porque a la empresa no le interesaba desde un punto de vista de eficiencia económica, porque aquéllos realicen aportaciones de diferente valor a la misma o simplemente consecuencia de distintos planteamientos directivos a la hora de gestionar los RRHH. En cualquier caso, pensamos que la dirección debe definir con claridad el tipo de relación laboral que quiere establecer con los trabajadores, por un lado, como forma de mantener la coherencia entre las distintas prácticas de RRHH y de éstas con la estrategia empresarial, y por otro, al objeto de mandar un mensaje claro a los individuos para que desarrollen expectativas realistas y no vean frustrado su contrato psicológico. Por todo ello pensamos que es fundamental contar con una clasificación de los diferentes tipos de relaciones de empleo y con tal fin hemos analizado las tipologías señaladas por diferentes autores desde diferentes ámbitos de estudio para tratar de sintetizarlas en una propuesta que recoja la esencia de todas ellas.

Palabras clave: Relaciones de empleo, Gestión estratégica de RRHH, Prácticas de RRHH.

Since the 1980s we have been witnessing a progressive recognition of the strategic value of human resources (HR) and an ever-greater concern, in both the academic and business contexts, with their management, in an effort to increase their contribution to the company's objectives and improve competitiveness. The current economic environment

has led many successful companies to seek new means of staying competitive, giving strategic importance to the management of HR and investing in their development as a source of sustainable competitive advantage. Many others are still not convinced, as researchers and HR managers strive to demonstrate the value and benefits of appropriate management of the people in an organization. For our part, we feel that the more clearly managers can define the type of relationship they wish to maintain with their employees, the easier it will be to develop coherently and efficiently the HR practices underpinning that relationship and to get employees to behave and perform in the desired manner.

In this work we present the employment relationship as a variable that can be of great utility in business management and in academic research. It is with this in

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mind that we set out to propose a typology that unifies the diverse classifications contributed from different approaches in the literature. In the first section we try to explain why the employment relationship is so important, arguing that it can be the key referent and starting point for defining the different HR practices, and at the same time the point of connection between organizational and individual levels, so that HR policy becomes translated into the desired behaviour or employees. In the second section we directly address the objective of our work, analyzing the various classifications proposed from different perspectives, with a view to formulating a multi-disciplinary typology that can contribute to homogenizing research in this field.

In the final section we identify a series of basic dimensions that can serve to define the type of relationship that the company wishes to establish with its employees.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL VARIABLE

An employment relationship is an exchange between employer and employee in which the former pays the latter in return for work done (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2004). The employment relationship rests on a contract that binds organization and employee; as in any other type of exchange, there are two parties which reach an agreement. In this case, however, one of the parties, the organization, constitutes the setting in which the relationship will take its course, a fact which in many cases will give the organization the capacity to make its own interests prevail.

In recent years the employment relationship has been the object of study from different perspectives: social exchange, equity, labour relations, economics, or the legal context (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2004). Research has explored its content, the exchange process, the parties involved (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2004), the influencing agents (Shore, Tetrick, Coyle-Shapiro & Taylor, 2004) and the context (Schalk, 2004), but there is still a lack, for example, of something as basic as a comprehensive classification of the different approaches and perspectives considered. And before attempting to remedy this (which is indeed the central aim of this work, dealt with in the following section), we should like to begin by asking: why study the employment relationship? Can it be a variable in its own right and of significance in both business management and academic

research?

The employment relationship as an axis of reference in strategic HR management

In spite of the widespread notion that HR constitute a company's principal asset, with a differentiating potential on which to base its competitiveness, research has found it difficult to demonstrate that this is in fact the case.

Strategic HR management has tried to show the influence of HR policies on company results (Arthur, 1992, 1994; McDuffie, 1995; Huselid, 1995; Youndt et al., 1996; Delery & Doty, 1996; Ichniowski, Shaw & Prennushi, 1997). The conclusions have been varied, and sometimes contradictory; indeed, some studies have failed to find a significant relationship between these variables (Lee & Chee, 1996; Cappelli & Newmark, 2001). Among those which confirm the effects of HR practices on results are the ones that observe this relationship to be mediated by the organizational strategy (contingent approach) (Ostroff, 2000; Lee & Miller, 1999), as against those that find support for the universalist approach, according to which the adoption of high-performance practices has a positive influence on results (Lam & White, 1998; Ichniowski & Shaw, 1999).

The response to such confusing conclusions has been the development of a research line devoted to assessing and analyzing the methods employed and the theoretical approaches considered (Delery, 1998; Gehart, Wright, McMahan & Snell, 2000; McMahan, Virick & Wright, 1999), with the aim of seeking more consistency in procedures and greater solidity in the results.

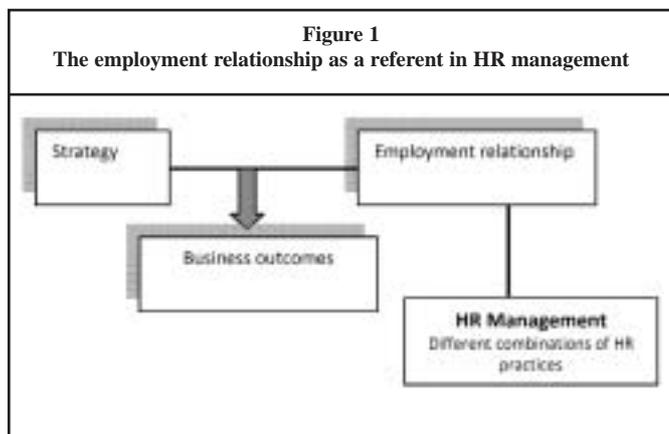
Wright and Sherman (1999) consider that the lack of empirical support for the contingent hypotheses is due not only to the models and constructs used, but also to the way the theoretical perspective is made operational. In particular, one of the problems they point out is that there has been no consensus in the literature as regards defining the HR variable with which the company strategy should be coherent. Studies have been divided among those which took as their reference HR practices, the abilities of CEOs and senior managers (in particular) and employee behaviour (Wright & Snell, 1998).

From the perspective of behaviour, Cappelli and Singh (1992) defend the proposal according to which particular strategies require particular responses from employees. The thing is that there does not seem to be a biunivocal relationship between each work-related practice and the behaviours that derive from it; rather, each HR practice can be used to obtain different types of

behaviour from employees (Huselid, 1995), and this makes it difficult to identify the best practices or delimit the most advantageous set of them according to the type of strategy the company intends to develop.

Moreover, and even if the basic assumption of the universalist approach – that there is a best way of managing HR which leads, in turn, to better performance and commitment from workers – is correct, it may be that the company is not interested in maximum performance, a merely acceptable level being sufficient for certain groups of employees. Thus, we consider that the key question would not be to try and achieve the maximum involvement of all workers in all cases and at all costs, but rather that the company knows how to choose the type of relationship it is in its best interests to maintain with each group of them. This is precisely the approach endorsed by Lepak and Snell (1999), who describe as simplistic the dilemma over the internalization or externalization of the organization's HR. Indeed, in business practice it is quite common to find in employees in different kinds of employment relationship within the same organization. This has not been taken into account by studies of the influence of HR management on business outcomes, and this may partly explain the lack of definitive conclusions in this regard (Rubery, Earnshaw, Marchington, Lee Cooke, & Vincent, 2002). Thus, the difficulty would lie not in the choice between “developing or buying” human capital, but rather in identifying the different types of employee and defining the most appropriate way of managing each one.

Therefore, and considering the limitations of research on strategic HR management and the ideas contributed by Lepak and Snell (1999), we believe that the **employment relationship** may be the variable that articulates the **link between HR practices and company strategy** (Fig. 1). That is,



management should try to identify the type of relationship it is in its best interests to maintain with the different groups of employees in the organization, and on that basis define the HR practices corresponding to such a relationship. In this way, and from a practical point of view, better coherence and efficiency in HR management could be achieved (Baron & Kreps, 1999). And from a theoretical perspective, it could be easier to identify which *employment relationship/strategy* combination were most appropriate for obtaining the best results, rather than trying to identify which HR practices are the best or which set of them combines best with the strategy for achieving the most satisfactory business indicators. Moreover, the practices suited to the management of each employment relationship need not constitute a specific and exclusive set, but could be combined in different ways as long as the combination responded to the essential type of relationship in question. Thus, a relationship based on commitment requires management which favours employees' identification with the company and their emotional involvement in it, which could be achieved with different systems of incentives and work organization.

The employment relationship as a link between the organizational and individual levels

On the other hand, the confusion and contradictions found in research in its attempts to relate HR management and outcomes might be resolved to some extent through greater knowledge of the factors linking the two variables, that is, of how HR practices influence individuals' behaviour and how this, in turn, affects business performance (Cappelli & Singh, 1992; Boudreau & Ramstad, 1999).

Wright and Boswell (2002) classify studies on strategic HR management into four types, according to level of analysis (organization or individual) and HR practices (taken overall or individually). These authors highlight the need to integrate the macro (organization) and micro (individual) levels in order to understand the true influence of HR management on employees. Specifically, they propose that the research developed at the micro level begins to move from a consideration of individual HR practices to the study of the influence of the employment system as a whole (Wright & Boswell, 2002). Likewise, they point out the need to explore how the organizational strategy translates into the appropriate perceptions and behaviours of individuals so that the

strategy can develop (Boudreau & Ramstad, 1999).

A key form of communication between organization and employees is constituted by HR practices. Through these, management sends messages to employees about what is expected of them, how they should behave and perform in the organization and what they can receive in return, thus contributing to the formation of their beliefs and expectations about the employment relationship (Rousseau & Greller, 1994).

However, HR-related decisions and actions do not always take place in a coordinated fashion or attempt to send a clear and consistent message. Indeed, management rhetoric creates certain expectations that contrast in many cases with actual decisions relating to employees, and this may serve to frustrate the psychological contract formed. Therefore, obtaining from workers behaviours that are appropriate to the business strategy requires paying close attention not only to the design of HR policy, but also to the coherence of decisions about it and to the way these are perceived by employees. Putting this into practice is far from easy when the messages and information bouncing around organizations are multiple and diverse. Nevertheless, we believe that clearly defining the type of relationship the organization wishes to maintain with its employees can make a significant contribution.

Thus, we consider that the **employment relationship** can be:

- ✓ The HR variable with which to try and **link up the business strategy** in order to check which combination produces the best results for the organization (Fig. 1).
- ✓ The variable that serves as a **link between the macro and micro levels** to enable an understanding of how HR management affects company outcomes through the perceptions and reactions of employees (Fig. 2).
- ✓ The referent for maintaining the **coherence between different HR practices**, thus sending a clear and consistent message to employees to obtain from them attitudes and behaviours that are in line with the organizational strategy and encourage realistic expectations (Fig. 3).

Thus, if the employment relationship is to become a key referent in business management and a fundamental construct for analysis in strategic HR management and in studies on organizational behaviour, we shall need a classification that clarifies the different types of relationship organizations can maintain with their employees, so that the employment relationship can

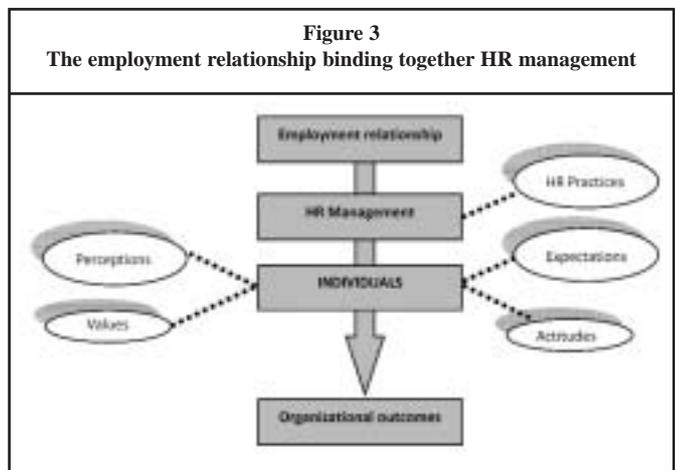
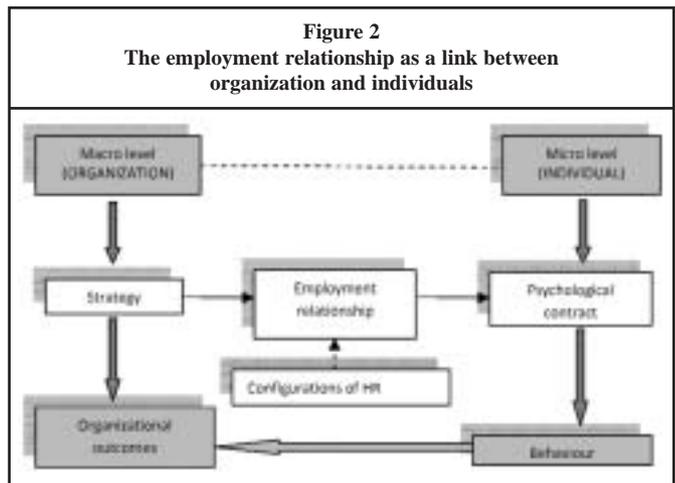
actually fulfil the functions we have assigned to it.

TYOLOGY OF EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS

Having reached this point, it is time to examine the different typologies proposed from various research fields, with a view to achieving our stated objective: to draw up a multi-disciplinary classification. Specifically, we have identified three areas of knowledge from which to approach this matter: business organization, strategic HR management and psychological contract, even though there is no consensus on a definitive classification. In this context, we set out to propose a classification that takes into account the relationships considered in the approaches cited.

Studies on business organization

Tsui, Pearce, Porter and Hite (1995), on reviewing the different classifications of employment relationships formulated in studies on business organization, argue that, conceptually, they can be grouped into two basic types. On the one hand would be the relationship in



which the company assigns a certain set of tasks to the individual, of whom is expected a specific performance that will serve as the basis for his or her remuneration, and in which the link between the two parties is confined to a series of well-defined and agreed obligations. In contrast to this would be a relationship in which the employer and employee expect greater commitment. The organization expects from employees a disposition for continual learning and adaptation to the changes demanded by their job; employees expect to see their efforts rewarded with opportunities for training and development, financial incentives, social benefits. The first group corresponds to so-called *task-oriented relationships*, and the second group to *organization-oriented relationships*.

Etzioni (1961) distinguishes two forms of employee involvement. In the utilitarian model, individuals confine themselves to doing a specific job for which they receive certain rewards. In the normative option, on the other hand, there is a psychological and social implication by virtue of which the employee would be prepared to put the interests of the organization above his or her own. Ouchi and Johnson (1978) look more toward the organization than toward individuals, distinguishing two basic types according to the type of control used. Type A organization is characterized by short-term relationships, with highly specialized tasks and a narrow assessment system. For its part, in Type Z organization we find long-term relationships, a system of control via beliefs and values, group-based decision processes, emphasis on coordination between units and a commitment to comprehensive employee training. All of this with the expectation that employees will put collective success above individual concerns.

Ouchi (1980), insisting on the control mechanism as a form of distinguishing between organizations, adds to the types A and Z already identified, and which he renames market and clan, respectively, the bureaucratic form. In the market, price acts as a regulator of

exchange, and successive contracts will be negotiated as long as the results of individuals can be clearly measured and the costs of the transaction are low. Bureaucracy, by means of authority and rules, will be the most efficient form of control when these costs increase with growing ambiguity in the measurement of performance. If this becomes even greater and tasks become complicated, efficiency advises reconciliation of the initially opposing objectives of organization and employees so that trust between the parties becomes the mechanism of control (organization Z, or clan).

Walton (1985) proposes two possible strategies for employee management, that of control and that of commitment. The former is characterized by a narrow division of labour, the exercise of authority from above to below, the assessment of individual work and a piecework pay format, the principal objective being efficiency (hence the importance of control). On the other hand, the commitment strategy is found in flatter organizations in which jobs have more content and flexibility, the work is structured around teams, rewards correspond to the achievements of the group and information is shared with the employees, who are offered security and the option of participating in the profits. All of this on the basis that greater commitment means better performance.

Lawler (1988) distinguishes three strategies with different degrees of worker participation in decision-making. In the "participation through suggestions" approach, the structure of the organization does not change; rather, a parallel structure is constituted (suggestions programmes, quality circles) that affects only a small percentage of the workforce. A change does indeed occur in the work design (job enrichment, teamwork) in the case of the task-oriented commitment strategy. But the most radical change occurs in high-commitment systems, in which employees must have the knowledge, the capacity and the authority necessary to contribute to the organization, being rewarded according to its results. The decisions in which individuals will participate relate not only to the work activities themselves, but also to the strategic nature.

Mahoney and Watson (1993), according to the degree of employee participation in the decisions that affect them, identify three models of HR management: authoritarian, collective bargaining, and participation. Such participation is minimal in the authoritarian strategy dictated by the economic theory, since it is necessary to control the agent's behaviour so that he/she acts in accordance with the principal's interests. In the

Table 1
Different classifications of the employment relationship
(Tsui et al., 1995)

Authors	Task-oriented	Organization-oriented
Etzioni, 1961	Utilitarian model	Normative model
Ouchi and Johnson, 1978	Type A organization	Type Z organization
Ouchi, 1980	Market	Clan
Walton, 1985	Control strategy	Commitment strategy
Lawler, 1988	Task-oriented commitment	High-commitment system
Osterman, 1988	Industrial model	Salary model
Mahoney and Watson, 1993	Authoritarian model	Participation model

collective bargaining model, workers will participate indirectly in HR policy decisions through union representation, and will be able to intervene in them directly on choosing the participation strategy.

Thus, it can be appreciated that the employment relationship is at once an economic exchange and, to a greater or lesser extent, a social exchange (Fox, 1974), since although each author may highlight one of its characteristics or another, there are common keys that are repeated in different classifications. When the relationship is limited and focused on the specific terms in negotiation, the tasks are clearly specified, the system of control is tight and the priority objective of the organization is efficiency without taking into account the interests of individuals, we are talking about a basically economic exchange (*task-oriented relationships*, from Tsui et al., 1995). If, on the other hand, the intention is for greater employee involvement and commitment, so that more lasting relationships, based on trust, are set up, and employees are given more scope for action and channels for participation in the management and decisions that affect them, we would be looking at an exchange of a social nature (*organization-oriented relationships*, Tsui et al., 1995).

What the two types of relationship have in common is that they can be described as balanced, insofar as the contributions of one party are in accord with the contributions of the other (Tsui, Pearce, Porter & Tripoli, 1997; Tsui & Wang, 2002). But the reality of business shows that the scales can fall either on the side of the employees, when the company offers them incentives that exceed the contributions expected of them (*over-investment relationship*) or on the side of the company, when it expects contributions that exceed what is offered to the workers (*under-investment relationship*) (Tsui et

al., 1997).

Businesses' need for efficiency as well as flexibility means that they have to combine the four types of exchange in order to achieve these objectives (Tsui & Wang, 2002). Task-oriented or *quasi spot contract* relationships permit the company to obtain flexibility with regard to hiring and firing of workers, since they are established in the short term and refer to specific tasks or objectives without any attempt to achieve employees' commitment (Tsui et al., 1997). Organization-oriented or *mutual investment* relationships give the organization the flexibility necessary to adapt to a turbulent and complex environment, insofar as it has committed employees who are prepared to defend its interests and to deal with changing situations, going beyond the strict fulfilment of their functions (Tsui et al., 1997). *Under-investment relationships* are found when the company has a privileged position in the labour market, whilst those of *over-investment* are the consequence of union action or correspond to administrative bureaucracies, in which employees enjoys security and training without making contributions over and above their actual job (Tsui et al., 1997).

Shore and Barksdale (1998) drew up a typology equivalent to the proposal by Tsui et al. (1997), according to the level of balance between the parties and the level of obligation perceived by each one. They thus identify, on the one hand, **balanced relationships**, in which the two parties coincide in the way they describe their respective obligations: *high mutual obligations* if organization and employee feel strongly obliged to one another, and *low mutual obligations*, in the opposite case (Shore & Barksdale, 1998). These would be comparable, respectively, to Tsui et al.'s (1997) *mutual investment* and *quasi spot contract*.

Table 2
Employment relationships according to Tsui and Wang (2002)

<i>Employment relationships</i>	Quasi spot contracts (Task-oriented approach)	Under-investment (imbalance in favour of the employer)	Over-investment (imbalance in favour of the employee)	Mutual investment (Organization-oriented approach)
Expected contributions	Performance in certain tasks	Performance in open tasks Contribution to the unit and the organization	Performance in certain tasks	Performance in open tasks Contribution to the unit and the organization
Incentives provided	Economic (e.g., Salary and benefits in short term) Short-term investment (e.g., job-related training)	Economic (e.g., salary and benefits in short term) Short-term investment (e.g., job-related training)	Economic and social (e.g., participation and opinion) Long-term investment (e.g., employment security and extensive training)	Economic and social (e.g., participation and opinion) Long-term investment (e.g., employment security and extensive training)

Unbalanced relationships would be:

- ✓ *Employee over-obligation relationship*: employees feel indebted to the organization because of its treatment of them in the past, and wish to satisfy their obligations to it, which will permit a restoration of the equilibrium (*over-investment relationship*).
- ✓ *Employee under-obligation relationship*: employees perceive that their current obligations are low insofar as they have already fulfilled them in the past, and perceive as high those of the organization, which has still not corresponded (*under-investment relationship*).

These classifications, proposed from the study of business organization, define or characterize types of relationship, but do not clarify how they should be managed. It is the field of strategic HR management that deals with this aspect, though there is no definition of the type of employment relationship underlying the different sets of HR practices identified by such research. Thus, the different studies, although developed independently, can be complementary: **the typologies presented so far can provide the coherence needed by the diverse people-management systems, and HR practices are necessary for articulating these employment relationships.**

Studies on strategic HR management

The main study focus of strategic HR management is the measurement of the impact of different HR practices on business outcomes. With this aim, research attempts to determine the best way of managing company personnel, whether there is a best form in absolute terms

Authors	HR Systems
Arthur, 1992, 1994	Control system Commitment system
McDuffie, 1995	Low-commitment HR policies High-commitment HR policies
Youndt, Snell, Dean and Lepak, 1996	Administrative system Improvement system
Delery and Doty, 1996	Market system Internal system
Tsui, Pearce, Porter and Hite, 1995	Task-oriented relationship Organization-oriented relationship
Ichniowski et al., 1997	Innovative system (system 1) Intermediate systems (systems 2 and 3) Traditional system (system 4)

(universalist approach) or whether HR management has to be adjusted to the organization's strategy to obtain the best results (contingent approach). The most recent studies, from either perspective, attempt to identify not the individual practices that most strongly influence outcomes, but rather the set of them that most benefits the organization. Thus, in recent years research has opted for a **configurational approach**, from which it is argued that the simultaneous use of certain HR practices (which may vary from one organization to another) contributes in greater measure to the creation and maintenance of competitive advantage (Becker & Gerhart, 1996; Delery & Doty, 1996).

Such practices are grouped in the majority of cases into two types of HR system, as shown in Table 3.

After a conceptual analysis of these HR systems, we concluded that, despite being called by different names, they correspond to two basic types, which we refer to as *efficiency-oriented systems* and *commitment-oriented systems*.

Authors	Control and efficiency-oriented systems
Arthur, 1994	Control system : The main goal is efficiency, so that it will be attempted to reduce labour costs, restricting employees' action via rules and procedures and basing rewards on results obtained individually.
Tsui et al., 1995	Task-oriented employment relationship : The output required is specified, and rewards are based on the employee's results in the assigned tasks. The two parties set the reciprocal obligations in advance, so that the employee is fully aware of the employer's expectations.
McDuffie, 1995	In mass production systems (which correspond to low-performance HR practices) no qualifications are required, since they are based on routine activities that are easy to learn, so that substitution costs are low. Effort in the job is attained not through commitment but through supervisor control and efficient salaries.
Delery and Doty, 1996	Market system : external hiring is given priority, little training is offered and evaluation is result-based, which allows retribution based on individual performance. Tasks are broadly defined and employees have no security in their job. Scarce participation.
Youndt, Snell, Dean and Lepak, 1996	Administrative system : In an efficiency-oriented production system, HRM should also contribute to it, placing emphasis on control of the performance of unqualified employees. In such a case it will not make sense to invest in an extensive selection process for choosing the best candidates or in subsequent training. In the same line of improving efficiency, performance evaluation should be oriented to results, which insofar as they can be measured individually will permit retribution based on them.
Ichniowski et al., 1997	More traditional system (system 4): this is characterized by close supervision, strict working rules, detailed description of responsibilities, incentives based on quantity rather than quality of outputs, individual work, no communication between management and employees, and the absence of a selection process and training programmes.

Systems whose priority objective is **efficiency** attempt to obtain the desired results from their employees at the lowest possible cost. To this end, they place special emphasis on control of performance by means of rules, regulations and direct supervision; for the same reason, jobs are routine, with few requirements as regards qualifications. Assessment of performance is carried out for reasons of control, and is based on individual results (Table 4).

In contrast to the previous group, HR systems oriented to **commitment** are more appropriate for flexible work environments, in which jobs are not clearly defined, and where greater participation and involvement are required of employees. Indeed, the organization trusts individuals to develop strategies oriented to quality and customer satisfaction, giving them the necessary information and authority. It is for this reason that there is investment in training, and that assessment is oriented to development rather than control (Table 5).

Thus, we consider the two basic types of HR system identified in the literature on strategic HR management to correspond to the two types of exchange, economic and social, previously described. Hence, there would be a group of HR practices that should coexist for managing either type of exchange, i.e., such practices would be grouped together around the type of exchange underlying the employment relationship.

Therefore, and despite the apparent diversity of types of employment relationships or systems, the different research lines lead to two classifications which we consider equivalent.

On the other hand, we find the typology identified by Lepak and Snell (1999), who on the basis of the theory of transactional costs, the theory of human capital and the resource-based strategic view, propose as determining factors of the employment relationship the value of the human capital and its exclusive nature for the company. They thus distinguish four types of employment relationship: oriented to the organization, symbiotic, transactional and associative (Table 7). The relationship will be long-term and based on commitment when human resources have a high strategic value and constitute idiosyncratic capital of the company. In contrast, the relationship will tend to be established in more transitory and less commitment-based terms as the human capital loses strategic importance and specificity.

In this other classification we find two relationships that are indeed novel, since the relationship oriented to

the organization involves a social exchange, whilst the transactional relationship is basically an economic exchange. We are referring to the “symbiotic” and “associative” relationships. The former case would be a relationship halfway between a social and an economic exchange, in which the two parties invest as long as it interests them to maintain it, since both have some bargaining power.

What seems to fall definitively outside of the logic we are following here is the associative relationship, and indeed we do not consider it in the classification we shall finally propose, since we understand less as a type

Table 5 Commitment-oriented HR management systems	
Authors	Commitment-oriented systems
Arthur, 1994	Control system: The main goal is efficiency, so that it will be attempted to reduce labour costs, restricting employees' action via rules and procedures and basing rewards on results obtained individually.
Tsui et al., 1995	Task-oriented employment relationship: The output required is specified, and rewards are based on the employee's results in the assigned tasks. The two parties set the reciprocal obligations in advance, so that the employee is fully aware of the employer's expectations.
McDuffie, 1995	In mass production systems (which correspond to low-performance HR practices) no qualifications are required, since they are based on routine activities that are easy to learn, so that substitution costs are low. Effort in the job is attained not through commitment but through supervisor control and efficient salaries.
Delery and Doty, 1996	Market system: external hiring is given priority, little training is offered and evaluation is result-based, which allows retribution based on individual performance. Tasks are broadly defined and employees have no security in their job. Scarce participation.
Youndt, Snell, Dean and Lepak, 1996	Administrative system: In an efficiency-oriented production system, HRM should also contribute to it, placing emphasis on control of the performance of unqualified employees. In such a case it will not make sense to invest in an extensive selection process for choosing the best candidates or in subsequent training. In the same line of improving efficiency, performance evaluation should be oriented to results, which insofar as they can be measured individually will permit retribution based on them.
Ichniowski et al., 1997	More traditional system (system 4): this is characterized by close supervision, strict working rules, detailed description of responsibilities, incentives based on quantity rather than quality of outputs, individual work, no communication between management and employees, and the absence of a selection process and training programmes.

Table 6 Employment relationships and HR systems	
Employment relationship (Studies on Business Organization)	HR System (Strategic HR management)
Economic exchange	Efficiency-oriented HR system
Social exchange	Commitment-oriented HR system

of relationship between employee and organization and more as a relationship between companies.

Research on the psychological contract

Finally, we turn to studies developed in the field of the psychological contract, in which Rousseau (1995) proposes another classification of employment relationships, taking into account the timeframe and the degree of employee internalization. There thus emerge four possible relationships: *internal*, in the short and long term, and *external*, in the short and long term.

Traditionally, the concept of internalization has been understood as the individual's involvement with and commitment to the organization, to the extent that he or she maintains a long-term relationship with it, is immersed in its internal labour market, develops idiosyncratic knowledge and skills, and in sum, feels a full-blown member of it. However, Rousseau distinguishes two types of internal employee – long-term and short-term. The former correspond clearly to that definition, whilst in the case of the latter there is an apparent contradiction, as we are describing people as internal who lack strong links to the organization. As we understand it, the commitment to the organization developed by traditional internal employees requires time and an investment in the relationship from both

parties, and this condition seems not to be fulfilled in the case of short-term internal workers. What is indeed fulfilled in the case of these workers is that they are linked to activities with high strategic value for the organization, with respect to which it wishes to conserve control. This is why they are classed, and perhaps also managed, as internal.

With a short-term internal relationship the organization gains in flexibility, this being understood in two senses (Tsui et al., 1995): on the one hand, as individuals' disposition to adapt to the changes and new demands imposed by the contracting company, since we are referring to people who, though not yet immersed in the organization's culture (as in the case of long-term internals), are still committed to their profession and to the work they do; on the other hand, the organization also benefits from the flexibility constituted by the temporal nature of the contract. Therefore, short-term internals constitute a new form of employment which arises partly from companies' need for both types of flexibility. In turn, this need of organizations must be met by individuals with the necessary profile and interest to establish such a type of relationship.

In contrast to internalization, Rousseau (1995) speaks of externalization, including in this concept not only

Table 7 Employment relationships according to Lepak and Snell (1999)
<p>Employment relationship: oriented to the organization. Employment relationship which the company should establish with people who have skills of high strategic value and exclusively applicable to it. The organization invests in the development of employees and permits a greater degree of participation in decisions, as a way of obtaining greater commitment and improving performance.</p>
<p>Employment relationship: symbiotic The relationship is based on mutual benefit. It will last as long as both parties benefit from it. Such employees are more committed to their careers than to the organization in question. Nor is it in the interests of the organization to invest in a long-term relationship, since the competences they possess, despite having high strategic value, are of a generic nature, and therefore open to being transferred to other organizations. Thus, these workers are hired for a limited time and for carrying out particular activities.</p>
<p>Employment relationship: transactional This type of relationship is established with employees with scarce strategic value and with competences not exclusively applicable to the company. The difference between this relationship and the symbiotic one is that in the latter the company seeks some degree of continuity and full-time commitment from the worker, whilst in the transactional case the company neither seeks nor obtains commitment, and the relationship revolves around the economic nature of the contract.</p>
<p>Employment relationship: associative When the competences in question are exclusively applicable to the company but do not contribute directly to the creation of value, the company should opt for their joint development on the basis of alliances. In this type of relationship trust between the parties is fundamental, in order to counteract the fear of transfer of idiosyncratic knowledge. If no such trust exists, instead of constituting an alliance, short-term contracts will be used. To avoid this, both parties should invest in the relationship and generate trust.</p>

Table 8 Employment relationships according to Rousseau (1995)	
<p>Long-term external (employees in reserve)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Substitutes, part-time staff, regular short-term workers... ✓ The greater the degree of externalization, the more specific will be the terms of the contract. ✓ A certain permanence or regularity in hiring will generate relational elements 	<p>Long-term internal (central employees)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Critical skills for the company's competitive advantage. ✓ Internalization of the company's values and beliefs. ✓ Participation in the company's internal labour market, either through hierarchical promotion or horizontal moves. ✓ Provide flexibility. ✓ Mutual loyalty and commitment between these workers and the company. ✓ Relational terms in their contracts (relational or balanced contract).
<p>Short-term external</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Seasonal or peripheral workers are not totally externalized, but rather managed by the company. Two types are distinguished: those hired directly by the company and those hired via agencies. These workers fill jobs of low complexity, technical jobs and information-related jobs. ✓ Freelancers, people who provide a service to the organization without being employed per se. They are not normally assigned central activities, unless they have previous experience, through which relational terms will emerge. 	<p>Short-term internal (careerists)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Workers who do not expect to develop their career in a single organization. ✓ The company offers them experience that will serve them for future jobs in return for work well done and flexibility (in the sense of transactional contracts). ✓ The non-externalization of these workers is due to a loss of control over their work and the possibility of developing possible competitive advantages.

those workers linked to the organization through a temporary personnel agency or an *outsourcing* arrangement, but also those contracted directly by the company, though on a temporary basis. In either case, the employees to which Rousseau refers as external are carrying out an activity of a peripheral nature, which must moreover be delimited and specified previously. In the case of temporary workers, their margin of activity is restricted to the terms set down, and in that of independent contract workers, the fact that their work is assessed by results means that the terms of these must also be stipulated in advance. Thus, external workers would correspond more to the case of economic exchange. The exchange would take on a certain relational nature as it became prolonged over time (long-term externals), but it would be basically a transactional relationship.

From all of this we can deduce that what defines the internal or external character of a worker according to Rousseau (1995) is the type of activity for which he or she is contracted – central or peripheral – and to what extent the terms on which the activity is to take place are previously delimited and specified. The more specific they are, the greater the degree of externalization.

On examining Rousseau’s proposal and comparing it with the types of relationship identified up to now, we once again appreciate an equivalence as regards what

Employment relationship (Rousseau, 1995)	Previously identified relationships
Long-term internal	Commitment relationship
Short-term internal	Symbiotic
Long- and short-term external	Transactional relationship

each type of relationship means for employer and employee. We thus have:

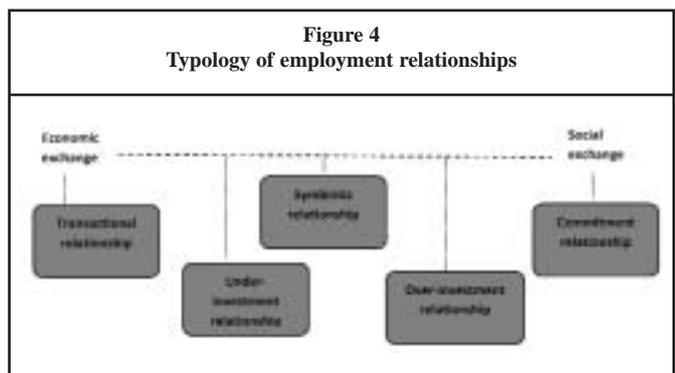
In a later work, Rousseau (2000) refers to the “Balanced Psychological Contract” on discussing short-term internals, whom she distinguishes by their need to maintain themselves employable externally at the same time as needing to make a career in the current company, it being the employer who must offer both development possibilities, in return for which the employee must respond to the continual changes required in his or her functions.

Definitively, and after the bibliographical review carried out, we propose the classification of employment relationships shown in Table 10.

What emerges from the research literature on business organization, strategic HR management and the psychological contract is that the employment relationship will lie between two basic types of exchange, economic and social. Thus, we shall be able to describe each type of relationship according to the characteristic features of each exchange and the degree to which it fits with one type or the other. We shall therefore proceed first to identify the dimensions that distinguish each type of exchange, moving on subsequently to define each employment relationship according to the combination of these dimensions.

DIMENSIONS OF THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

The point of this section is to identify a series of dimensions that permit us to distinguish each type of employment relationship more easily and objectively. To this end, and as already mentioned, we shall consider the characteristic features of the exchanges.



Type of exchange	Employment relationships
Economic exchange	Transactional relationship: Efficiency-oriented HR systems, long- and short-term external (Rousseau, 1995)
Social exchange	Commitment-oriented relationship: Commitment-oriented HR systems, long-term internal (Rousseau, 1995)
Halfway relationships	Symbiotic relationship: by Lepak and Snell (1999), short-term internal (Rousseau, 1995)
	Unbalanced relationships: In favour of the employee: Company over-investment relationship (Tsui and Wang, 2002), employee over-obligation relationship (Shore and Barksdale, 1998)
	In favour of the organization: Company under-investment relationship (Tsui and Wang, 2002), employee under-obligation relationship (Shore and Barksdale, 1998)

Dimensions of social and economic exchange

On the basis of what we have seen so far, it can be stated that employment relationships constitute at the same time, though in different combinations, a social and economic exchange. On the one hand, the actual object of exchange is a person's work, which, although a price can be agreed and stipulated for it, will mean the direct involvement of the person contributing it. On the other hand, this object is remunerated and is framed within an economic environment governed by the rules of the

Economic exchange	Social exchange
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The economic concept of contract is oriented to the short term, since it will have to be reformulated as the circumstances that affect it change. ✓ In order to limit the free action of the other party it is necessary to specify the conditions and establish some control mechanism. ✓ From the economic point of view the goal of the company is efficiency, without taking into account those of equity or justice. Hence, the fact of reaching similar terms for equivalent participants is due to market competition, and not to an express consideration of norms for promoting equity or justice. ✓ From the economic point of view the transactional costs are the key deciding element; if they are higher than the returns that one of the parties expects to receive, the transaction does not take place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The timeframe is prolonged into the long term in a relationship in which subjective and affective aspects take on importance. ✓ The social component adds to the relationship certain implicit, informal expectations, which go beyond what was strictly agreed between the parties, giving rise to a need for trust so that each of them fulfills its obligations. There thus emerges a psychological contract that does not figure in the formal economic contract. ✓ There arises, therefore, a bond oriented to the long term, which in addition to improving efficiency (highly valued by the organization), should ensure equity in the relationship, and hence the interests of the workers. ✓ Another differentiating element is the discretionality of the parties; in the economic contract it is limited, while it is to some degree inherent to the social exchange. There is trust that each party is concerned with the needs and goals of the other and with fulfilling them.

Authors	Key element on which the classification is based
Etzioni, 1961	Involvement of employees
Ouchi and Johnson, 1978	Control mechanism
Ouchi, 1980	Control mechanism
Walton, 1985	Commitment
Pearce and Peters, 1985	Rules governing the relationship: maximization of benefits, equity, equality and necessity
Blau, 1982	Specification of obligations
Osterman, 1988	Control of training by the company
Lawler, 1988	Participation of employees in decision-making
Mahoney and Watson, 1993	Timeframe, specification and explicitation of the terms, discretionality, trust, objectives

market or by business efficiency. Thus, although with different relative weights, the economic and the social components will always be present in an employment relationship. The nature of this relationship is fundamentally economic, but given the peculiarity of the object exchanged, to some extent or other it will involve some sort of social exchange (Fox, 1974). Recent empirical works such as those of Maharaj, Ortellepp and Stacey (2008), Atkinson (2007), Grimmer and Oddy (2007) or Gakovic and Tetrick (2003) utilize classifications of employment relationships which start out from this basic distinction.

The very nature of the employment relationship – at once economic and social – has permitted its analysis from this dual perspective, focusing either on its efficient management (Economics), or on the foreseeable behaviours of the individuals involved (Psychology, Sociology).

Economic Theory conceives of the employment relationship as a contract between principal and agent. The principal contracts an agent in whom it invests the authority to make decisions and whose discretionality it restricts so that it does not act in its own interest (Macneil, 1980). For its part, Social Psychology takes as its unit of analysis, instead of the contract, the exchange relationship between two persons. On the basis of these two approaches, Mahoney and Watson (1993) describe the two types of exchange (Table 11).

An economic exchange can improve with expectations of continuity of the relationship, with an increase in trust and with acceptance by both parties of obligations not expressly negotiated, giving rise to a social relationship that goes beyond the purely economic exchange, which in principle could be the employment relationship (Mahoney & Watson, 1993). This may in turn improve the efficiency pursued from the economic point of view. However, what other elements change for this type of evolution to occur? Authors in the field of business organization, in their classifications of alternatives for personnel management, highlight one or several elements which differentiate such management systems. We consider that each of these options is underlain by a type of employment relationship, so that these elements will permit us to identify the dimensions that distinguish the different types of relationship.

The employment relationship is underpinned by a contract in which company and employees agree the conditions of exchange. However, when – given the difficulty of foreseeing future scenarios (and hence the difficulty of specifying the conditions), the ambiguity of

individual results and a lack of trust between the parties – the transactional costs increase exorbitantly, it will be necessary to apply rules and regulations to govern the relationship. It is then that *bureaucracy* emerges as a **control mechanism** (Ouchi, 1980). Quasi spot contracts would be very costly, and it would be more efficient to have a more stable and lasting relationship in which the employer could control and check the employee's activities more closely. But the bureaucracy becomes inefficient when increasing task ambiguity and incongruence of the parties' objectives generates a mistrust that increases the transactional costs once more. Recovering trust and aligning the parties' interests is what permits toleration of high ambiguity levels. Such trust can emerge from shared values and beliefs (the *clan*, in Ouchi's [1980] terms, would appear) or from the parties' reciprocal perception norm fulfilment over time (Blau, 1982).

Thus, insofar as the **terms** of the contract cannot be stipulated in advance, and trust is required for each party to fulfil its obligations, the relationship becomes something more than an economic exchange, to turn into a social exchange. In this type of exchange there are diffuse future obligations that cannot be made explicit or defined, so that they cannot be negotiated in advance, and each party has to trust the other's criteria to meet those obligations (Blau, 1982). It is precisely these expectations that are not formally agreed and which are generated between the parties that lend the relationship its social nature (Mahoney & Watson, 1993).

But the increased need for trust can be explained not because it is a mechanism of control when uncertainty prevents stipulation of the terms of the exchange (Transactional Costs Theory) but also because it is a way of increasing the commitment of employees, and hence their performance (Theory of Human Capital).

In any case, in order for trust to grow between the parties it will be necessary to broaden the employee's **scope of action** and reconcile the parties' **objectives**, which are in principle opposed. Greater discretionality conceded to the individual may be perceived by him or her as a clear message that the organization trusts his/her ability to assume the responsibilities conferred. Thus, discretionality and trust would be two sides of the same coin (Mahoney & Watson, 1993), and hence, as the levels of these two characteristics increase, an initially economic exchange will acquire a greater social dimension.

The other way we mentioned of fomenting trust between the parties would be to take into account

employees' interests and objectives. Mahoney and Watson (1993), in their analysis of the evolution of HR policies, consider that the organization's introduction of criteria of **equity**, not only of efficiency, in their decisions regarding employees, has led to the development of greater involvement and commitment on the part of workers. A social exchange will not be possible if individuals do not perceive justice both in their relationship with the organization and in the decisions about other employees.

Thus, basing ourselves on the characteristics of economic and social exchanges and on the studies referred to, we can identify the terms defining an employment relationship (Table 13).

We continue by defining each of these dimensions:

Terms of the contract. We refer here to the degree of explicitness of the terms of the exchange. An economic transaction rests on a formal contract that stipulates the exact quantities to be exchanged, which is not totally possible when the object exchanged is a person's work. For Blau (1982), the basic and crucial distinction between the strictly economic exchange and the social exchange is that the latter involves *non-specific* obligations. In the social exchange there is a general expectation that a favour will be rewarded in the future, but there is no specification of the form of such recompense, which must be left in the hands of the party that will provide it.

Control mechanisms. In a stable environment, in which it is possible to specify in advance the distribution of work and the definition of tasks, the rules and regulations of the organization constitute the principal mechanism of coordination and control. But when the environment becomes more dynamic and complex, and thus more unpredictable, and the parties, moreover, have divergent interests, rules and regulations become inefficient (Theory of Transactional Costs). It is necessary in such cases to reconcile the parties, align

Dimensions	Economic exchange	Social exchange
Terms	Specified and made explicit	Diffuse and implicit expectations
Control mechanism	Norms and rules	Values and beliefs
Discretionality	Limited to the contract	Broad
Priority objective	Efficiency	Equity
Timeframe	Short-term	Long-term

their interests, and, in sum, foment trust, for which it is common to turn to a social system of shared values and beliefs.

Discretionality of action, referring to individuals' degree of freedom for making decisions regarding their work. Whilst in the economic exchange discretionality is limited, it is to some extent inherent in a social relationship (Mahoney & Watson, 1993). The employee will necessarily have greater margin for action when the unpredictability of the environment precludes the rules and regulations from foreseeing all contingencies. Or indeed, by mutual consent employees are conceded more autonomy as a form of fostering their commitment. In any case, and even when the relationship was initially purely economic, the discretionality granted to workers for making decisions lends it a social nature.

Priority objective. When trust between the parties becomes necessary, the organization must make it compatible with efficiency, safeguarding the interests of workers and the equity of the relationship, as a way of attaining such trust. The viability of a social exchange depends on the system of exchange being perceived as fair (Mahoney & Watson, 1993). That is, there will be no trust if employees do not perceive equity, and even efficiency should be sacrificed if necessary.

Timeframe. For the development of a social exchange and the exercise of the discretionality it involves, there is a need for trust, which undoubtedly requires continuity in the relationship (Mahoney & Watson, 1993). Trust between the parties is developed over time, as each party observes that the other has satisfied its obligations (Blau, 1982).

Trust between the parties. While in an economic exchange it is assumed that the parties have opposing interests and that each will act for its own benefit, in a social exchange, as it has become clear, trust impregnates all aspects of it:

When the **terms** of the relationship have not been able to be (or not wanted to be) specified there is a need for **trust** between the parties so that each one of them fulfils its obligations and does so responsibly within the margin of **discretionality** corresponding to it. In fact, trust becomes the **mechanism that regulates** the exchange. And to achieve it, the organization should introduce, and even prioritize, criteria of **equity** in its decisions and commit to a **long-term** relationship.

Definition of employment relationships through the dimensions of the exchange

As already pointed out, and insofar as employment relationships take place in the space between social and economic exchanges, the different combinations of the terms described will lead us to define each type of relationship identified (Figure 4).

Transactional relationships and those **oriented to commitment** correspond, respectively, to an economic and a social exchange, and are hence defined directly by those terms (Table 13). It should perhaps merely be pointed out that transactional agreements, limited in time and scope, likewise correspond to limited involvement of the parties, given both the scarce reciprocal investment and the absence of emotional bonds (Rousseau & Parks, 1993). In relational agreements, on the other hand, the parties are linked by affective bonds and commitments that will become fulfilled over time.

As regards the **sybiotic relationship**, the two parties coincide in their interest in establishing a relationship of defined duration and in which the terms of exchange are stipulated (there will be a specific agreement on the results the employee must contribute to the organization and what he or she will receive in return). The company expects from the employee an immediate performance (it does not invest in the employee's development, as in the commitment relationship) and a certain degree of commitment and disposition to adapt to changes that may arise in the work context, given the type of activities that will be assigned (of a strategic nature).

Table 14
Dimensions of the sybiotic relationship

Dimensions	Sybiotic relationship
Timeframe	Limited duration
Terms	Specific
Discretionality	Broad
Trust between the parties	Necessary
Priority objective	External equity
Control mechanism	Professional control

And the employee expects of the organization to obtain experience that will permit him or her to continue developing a professional career, together with a broad margin of action, in accordance with his/her qualifications and personal characteristics. Given that both parties have other options, the relationship will cease when one of them considers that it is bearing greater costs than the benefits it receives (Lepak & Snell, 1999, 2002). The symbiotic relationship combines, therefore, elements characteristic of both types of exchange, as can be seen table 14, where it is described according to the dimensions identified.

Trust between the parties becomes necessary, especially that which the management must place in these employees so that they fulfil their obligations without the close vigilance that would be involved in a more regulated and routine job. Thus, the control mechanism employed is that of professionalization, which involves less need for formal rules and procedures, since professionals will already have internalized certain norms and criteria during their training. All such elements are characteristic of a social exchange.

The equity the organization should take into account on managing symbiotic relationships must be the external type (Lepak & Snell, 1999, 2002), since, given the opportunities of this type of worker to accede to other organizations, the labour market will be the referent for setting their salary, the value place on the competences they possess.

As far as **under-investment relationships** are concerned, given that the company has greater bargaining power in the labour market, it will be in a position to set conditions more favourable to itself. Hence, the dimensions coincide basically with those of an economic exchange, though it may occur that this type of relationship is established with qualified workers occupying positions in which there is a need for more room for manoeuvre (high discretionality) and that the control mechanisms, instead of (or as well as) being based on norms and rules, consist in the actual professionalization of the subject (professional control).

Finally, **over-investment relationships** would correspond initially to a social exchange, but given that the workers' privileges are due to union presence or membership of the public administration (Tsui et al., 1997), the dimensions may differ as regards the terms of the relationship (which would be clearly defined), the trust between the parties (which would be somewhat forced), and the control mechanisms, in which rules and

regulations would prevail (as against the values and beliefs characteristic of a social exchange).

CONCLUSIONS

On approaching the study of the employment relationship one comes across research in different areas and with their own characteristic terminologies, which may lead to the conclusion that one is dealing with very different aspects, when in fact this is not the case. This is the case with the specific topic explored here, types of employment relationship, since on analyzing the typologies proposed from the diverse perspectives we could appreciate more similarities than differences, as will have become clear throughout the study. Apart from the effort made to attempt to draw up a comprehensive classification, we felt it necessary to provide dimensions that permit a more objective identification of each type of relationship. Hence, we have defined the different relationships proposed on the basis of the dichotomous nature of the employment relationship, as economic and social exchange, and using the dimensions provided by the field of business organization.

Lastly, we have set out to highlight and endorse the protagonism we feel the employment relationship should have as a **management tool**. Thus, we feel that HR variable could be what gives consistency to and binds together the different HR practices. Thus, those with responsibility in this area will be able to choose some practices or others, with the only limitation of their being coherent with the type of relationship it is wished to maintain with employees. And for their part, academics will be able to classify the type of HR management in place in the company by seeking to identify the terms of the employment relationship, which will not necessarily have to correspond to a closed set of HR practices. With the added advantage of having this variable, the employment relationship, as a referent for trying to match it with the type of organizational strategy.

We feel that before starting to specify the activities and processes of HR it is necessary to define the terms of the employment relationship, that is, decide about its timeframe, about the degree of discretionality or autonomy that will be given to workers, about the mechanisms for controlling the work done (the greater or lesser trust attained will depend on the previous terms), and about whether priority will be given to equity of treatment or efficiency of management. All of this will lend to HR management the consistency to which we referred, at the same time as allowing greater

flexibility in defining the practices it is wished to apply to employees, which can be adapted to their needs and expectations, within the type of relationship defined.

As far as limitations of the study are concerned, we should stress that in our desire to provide an integrated classification we may have excluded other possible typologies; at the same time, we should like to highlight our interest in unifying all those aspects which, despite being labelled in different ways depending on the field of study, essentially pertain to the same form of understanding the employment relationship. We believe firmly in the need to converge towards a common conceptual framework in the study of the employment relationship, and our intention has been to contribute to this.

As regards possible future research, the study of the employment relationship continues to be totally open, given the dynamism that characterizes it. Work conditions change according to the demands of business and of society, so that there is a need for ongoing review of employment relationships. Given the generic nature of our proposal, it would be advisable to try and confirm its validity by comparing the relationships proposed with the types of relationship current in the Spanish context and identifying how one may be associated with possible types of employment contracts.

If companies were to be coherent with the principles and values they commonly endorse in public, they should opt for establishing **commitment relationships** with their workers, which are those that show clear support for human capital and reflect a firm conviction that the person is an asset to competition and can make the difference between companies. Thus, there is a need for more empirical studies that support this notion and confirm a positive influence on outcomes. Nevertheless, given the fact that research carried out in this line has found it difficult to demonstrate this direct relationship with business outcomes, it would perhaps be more viable to seek to show the influence of a commitment-based relationship on workers' satisfaction, wellbeing and motivation.

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