PERSPECTIVES OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AT THE WORK PLACE

Dr. E. Jalaja

Abstract:

Since the time immemorial the concept of Leadership is always an area of interest for all. Concentration on this has started from 2oth century. Old theories of leadership theories were questioned in many aspects as the role of leader is changing drastically. Now leaders are expected to be visionary, motivated, and must have value-based control of clan and culture. It emphases the abilities required to change themselves with the changing environment. Present situations are offering the most challenging culture driven, value based, inspiring workforce which has to struggle and strongly seek a shared vision. This can only be achieved with the most effective and motivated leadership. The aim of this article is to explore the concept of spiritual leadership in the context of organization and to show the several means by which spiritual leadership can be related to existing value-based leadership theories, especially relationship oriented and servant leaderships, though the direction of such an inquiry still requires much more observation, development and discussion. This article would also discuss several beneficial perceptions and motivations which have stimulated the interest to understand deeper the spiritual leadership in academic and business settings.

Keywords: leadership, motivation, spirituality, work place spirituality, Spiritual leadership.

Spiritual Leadership:

The term "Spirituality" is concerned with qualities of the human spirit and that intangible reality at the core of personality, the animating life principle or life-breath that which alerts us to look for the deepest dimension of human experience. It is at the heart of the quest for self-transcendence and the attendant feeling of interconnectedness with all things in the universe. This is the inherent assumption for the spirituality that underlies the world's spiritual and religious traditions. However, spirituality is not simply about developing a

personal relationship with a divine presence. It is also fundamental to the most widely accepted definition of workplace spirituality, which is "A framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected in a way that provides feelings of compassion and joy."

Researchers felt that there is a clear consistency between spiritual values and practices, and leadership effectiveness and that values that have long been considered spiritual ideals, such as integrity, honesty, and humility, have a positive influence on leadership success. spiritual needs in the workplace positively influences human health and psychological well-being, and forms the foundation for both workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership.

Increased attention has been paid to issues related to spirituality in the workplace. This has become a growing area of research and inquiry according to the leadership quarterly special issue by Fry.

Objectives:

i)   Knowing what is spiritual leadership

ii)   Identifying spiritual values and behaviours,

iii)   Examining conceptual frameworks and models pertaining to spirituality.

Research Methodology:

This paper is based on purely secondary research. Many articles, publications and journal sources are sourced for the write up.

Spirituality in personal context:

Spiritual leadership is leadership that comes out of our life force, our spirit. For some of us, that spirit is nurtured by a connection to "Spirit" that is, the creative force that makes and sustains life. What that inspires us, have many names: God, Goddess, Love, Mother Earth etc. Some will find their spirits deeply connected to the spirits of their ancestors, of plants and animals, of the elements, of their People, of the wider human community. You may have a strong and healthy relationship to a particular religious or faith tradition. You

may feel religion is something to stay away from. It is not our intention to impose a particular religious perspective or spiritual path on those with whom we work. It is our intention, however, to provide resources and opportunities for them to strengthen and nourish their spirit so that they increase their capacity to transform themselves, their relationships, organizations, and communities in such a way that everyone can blossom in the world. Sometimes spiritual leadership is "the use of the power of our deepest vision, values, and hopes as a creative force to strengthen ourselves and our communities, to bridge difference, and to work for justice."

Spiritual leadership is not a role or activity reserved for few. It is not about being or becoming an "authority", an "expert", a "director", or a "head." It is not about taking the lead and having others follow. Spiritual leadership is also not about solving problems. But it requires people who can narrow their focus to "the problem" and see a limited set of causes, effects, and solutions. In crisis situations this kind of sight is invaluable.

Spirituality in Organizational context:

Organizational spiritual leadership focuses on group relations between leader-follower, follower-leader, and peer-peer as being dynamic and reciprocal over time. It is well known that leaders through role modeling, behaviors, and other means can alter the self-concepts, attitudes, goals, and beliefs of followers. Through group member interactions an emergent process occurs whereby individual perceptions over time form group and, ultimately, organizational perceptions of spiritual leadership. As this process unfolds, leaders and followers in the organization begin to form compatible mental models of hope/faith in a vision of service to key stakeholders through altruistic love. As group members high in spiritual leadership interact, they continually bolster the level of spiritual leadership of each other and the group. In turn, this increases the group's sense of calling and membership, ultimately supporting and influencing each other toward a sustainability mindset and a commitment to do their part to maximize the triple bottom line.
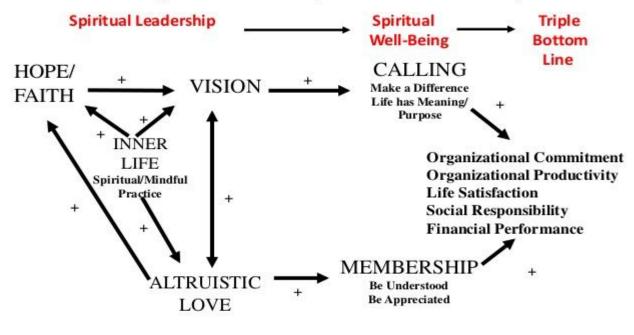
A challenge when implementing spiritual leadership at the organizational level is the negative connotation associated with the term spiritual. Secular organizations may desire a neutral term for the leadership model to avoid negative reactions from those who may associate the word spiritual with religion. Concerns arise regarding employee and employer's expression of belief without judgment while balancing respective parties' legal rights has

proven challenging. In particular, fostering voluntary programs that legitimate and nurture employees' inner life are seen as essential for implementing organizational spiritual leadership across the organization.

Spiritual leadership is a paradigm for organizational transformation and development designed to create an intrinsically motivated, learning organization (Fry, 2005b; Fry and Whittington, 2005a, b). Initially, the theory of spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003) was developed using an intrinsic motivation model that incorporates vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love, theories of workplace spirituality, and spiritual well-being. The purpose of spiritual leadership is to tap into the fundamental needs of both leader and follower for spiritual well-being through calling and membership, to create vision and value congruence across the individual, empowered team, and organization levels and, ultimately, to foster higher levels of organizational commitment and productivity. Operationally, spiritual leadership comprises the values, attitudes, and behaviours that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so they have a sense of spiritual well-being through calling and membership. This entails:

1. Creating a vision wherein leaders and followers experience a sense of calling in that life has meaning, purpose, and makes a difference.

2. Establishing a social/organizational culture based on the values of altruistic love whereby leaders and followers have a sense of membership, feel understood and appreciated, and have genuine care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others.

Organizational Spiritual Leadership

Source: https://www.slideshare.net/IISL_MTBL/slt-org-sl-011816-57383054

Spiritual leadership as a paradigm for transformation and recovery from extended work hours cultures:

Fry et al. (2006) proposed (1) that work holism is actually a continuum that, depending on the basis of motivation (extrinsic or intrinsic), can result in various degrees or levels of positive human health and psychological and spiritual well-being and (2) a 12- step recovery process as a specific model of spiritual leadership for individual, team, and organizational transformation of non-enthusiastic workaholics and the organizations that have culture that support them.

Incorporating Spiritual Leadership into Organizations:

Spiritual leadership is clearly still emerging, there is little doubt that this form of leadership contains desirable qualities in which many organizations might consider. For those companies with an interest in spiritual leadership, there are a few guidelines that must be

considered when determining how to incorporate this style of leadership into the organization as a whole. First, organizations must have a "clear and compelling vision of where they want to be in the near to distant future" (Fry, 2003, p.718). This vision should portray a journey that will give followers a sense of calling, of one's life having meaning, and making a difference. It should get followers excited about coming to work and give meaning to that work so that followers leave feeling more committed to the organization than ever. This vision should reflect high ideals that encourage both faith and hope in followers (Fry, 2003).

Second, organizations must have a culture that is aligned with that of a spiritual leadership framework. This culture must embody the idea of altruistic love that provides both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. The culture of spiritual leadership is one in which leaders and followers share responsibility. Ideas can come from anywhere and followers can become self-directed and empowered teams that replace vertical structures and functional boundaries (Fry, 2003). The culture becomes one where power is delegated to this enlightened team in which followers understand how their jobs are relevant to the organization's performance and vision/mission. Team members in this type of culture are challenged to persevere and do what it takes in order to meet challenging goals through hope and faith in the vision of the organization, their leaders, and themselves. The participation in these team efforts manifests followers who experience a sense of membership through recognition and celebration and who feel understood and appreciated (Fry, 2003).

Lastly, organizations must choose a leader who walks in front of one when someone needs to follow, behind one when someone needs encouragement, and beside one when someone needs a friend (Fry, 2003). Since this leader is at the heart of the vision and culture of the organization, perhaps this is the most vital step. Spiritual leaders are people who are often considered to be inspirational, visionary, and can move beyond barriers and limitations (Sikula&Sikula, 2005). These leaders concentrate on higher-order needs and try to build inspirational involvement of followers into the organization. "Spiritual leaders are proactive leaders who can change the way that others see and act" (Frisdiantara&Sahertian, 2012, p.284). This means that spiritual leaders can build trust and compassion in the organization. Spiritual leaders are people with the ability to take a backseat to being in charge and build teams of people who collectively share leadership responsibilities. Finally, spiritual leaders are more motivated by the need to make a difference instead of simply making a living.

Conclusion:

Spiritual leadership has reemerged as a focus of leadership that remains somewhat in its infancy as researchers strive to define its constructs. Although the idea of spiritual leadership is still emerging, many organizations are employing this type of leadership and are seeing increases in productivity, employee satisfaction, employee commitment, and financial gains. While the idea of spirituality has traditionally been avoided due to the misconception that it is the same as religion, emerging research indicates that a leadership style which focuses on the spiritual well-being of both followers and leaders leads to positive outcomes for both. Organizations that choose to use this form of leadership must transform the vision and culture of their work as well as choose an appropriate leader. More research is needed on the constructs of spiritual leadership as emerging trends indicate.

References:

1. http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_2_No_15_August_2012/36.pdf
2. https://gbr.pepperdine.edu/2017/12/spiritual-leadership/
3. http://iispiritualleadership.com/wp-content/uploads/docs/SLTExtendWkHrsJBE.pdf
4. http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/womenstheologicalcenter.pdf
5. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5038601/
6. http://jespnet.com/journals/Vol_3_No_6_December_2016/10.pdf