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Clarifying spiritual values among organizational development personnel

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Values lie at the core of all human behavior. Initially, it was believed that human behavior could be best explained in terms of one's personality system, including needs, motives, beliefs, goals and attitudes. But eventually, the emphasis shifted towards values, as there are many aspects of human behavior that cannot be attributed to the former concepts, but where values play an important role. The authors believe that values make personnel life more meaningful and give them a sense of direction for organizational performance and development. In this article, the authors have discussed the sources of values, early assumptions about values, a value based approach to organizations and value assessment. Recommendations have also been offered for the human resource managers to inculcate spiritual values among personnel that may in turn be fruitful for organizational development.

Key words: Spiritual values, organizational development.

INTRODUCTION

Industrial organizations are mainly concerned for productivity and quality by personnel. Spiritual values of the personnel are the prerequisites for the organizational health and development. Surprisingly, spiritual values of the personnel are treated casually in organizations. This fact has made many organizations to think that personnel's spiritual values should be viewed as a potential resource in organization rather than as something to be ignored. According to Mohamed et al. (2001), organizational theories and models that ignore the spiritual dimension will remain deficient. They said in this context: "our current models of micro and macro behavior do not account for spirituality and its effects and, as such, some of these models may be misleading or incomplete" (p. 647). Values of the personnel may improve quality of products and services and a better workplace. To achieve the organizational goal, that is, a satisfied workforce, spiritual values must be owned and practiced by all the personnel.

Spiritual leadership and values

Earlier studies has established link between spiritual values and leadership. For example, Fry (2003) defines spiritual leadership as "the values, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership" (p. 694-695). He says that spiritual leadership is treated more as an observable phenomenon occurring when a person in a leadership position embodies spiritual values such as integrity, honesty and humility, creating the self as an example of someone who can be trusted, relied upon and admired.

A research on effective leadership traits and behaviors (Den Hartog et al., 1999) claims that attributes and practices widely associated with spirituality have been found to have a global appeal. More than half of the universally endorsed leader attributes (14 out of 22) may be considered to be associated with spirituality, values and ethics: "positive, trustworthy, just, win-win problem solver, encouraging motive arouser, communicative, excellence-oriented, confidence builder, honest, dynamic, team builder, motivational and dependable" (Den Hartog

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et al., 1999, p. 239). Leaders who view their own work as a means of spiritual growth have also been shown to increase organizational performance (Himmelfarb, 1994). Mitroff and Denton (1999) found that many individuals are looking for ways to express their spirituality in their work. Workers who are able to express their spirituality through their work, find work more satisfying.

Realizing the importance of incorporating spiritual values in the workplace and the possession of spiritual values in spiritual leaders and workers, we considered that organizations should consider the value system, particularly the spiritual ones, among personnel to facilitate their job performance and productivity that in turn may be important for organizational development in a number of ways. This article also discusses sources of values, some early assumptions about values, value based approach to organizations and value assessment.

The sources of values

In an ancient tradition like India, the spiritual values as embodied in its religion and philosophy can claim to be the primary and original source of all derived social values (Ganguli, 1989). Sinha (1972) pointed out that “the moral and social qualities that are valued in a society have their roots in religion, philosophy and tradition and are relatively more enduring facets of our existence” (p.153).

There are empirical evidences that the transcendental and spiritual values that Indians hold is acquired from their religions and philosophies (Kakar, 1978; Mukerjee, 1949; Nehru, 1946, 1981; Radhakrishnan, 1968; Roy and Srivastava, 1986; Sinha, 1988; Sinha, J.B.P, 1982; Tandon, 1981; Tripathi, 1988; Verma, 1987).

Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism have been the mother religions and the sources of values for millions of people around the world. They are the underlying religious traditions for the systems of Yoga, Sufism and Zen, and are the basis of Eastern psychologies and philosophical thought.

Yoga, Sufism, Buddhist teachings have been originated from a common need to understand the relationship between religious practices and everyday life. All these three viewed morals and values in an iconoclastic and practical way. Furthermore, each of them emphasized transpersonal growth and experiences of the adherent. The value systems of most cultures and societies described as profoundly religious, have emphasized the meditative and ecstatic experiences of the willing individual and has meticulously outlined the process of transpersonal growth of the self (Angyal, 1956).

Modern psychology began late in the 19th century. To escape religion's influence, behavioral scientists have adopted a number of assumptions about reality that directly conflicted with traditional religious views of the

world (Richards and Bergin, 1997). The following assumptions about values, particularly naturalism, ethical relativism, ethical hedonism and positivism seem to be closely linked to the organizational development.

Early assumptions about values

Naturalism

It is the belief that the “universe is self-sufficient, without supernatural cause or control” (Honer and Hunt, 1987, p.225). Naturalists assume that human beings and the universe can be understood without resorting to spiritual explanations and that “the explanation of the world given by the sciences is the only satisfactory explanation of reality” (Honer and Hunt, 1987, p.225). This assumption led many behavioral scientists to conclude that all moral values are ephemeral and of human origin.

Ethical relativism

This is the belief that “there are no universally valid principles, since all moral principles are valid relative to cultural and individual values” (Percesepe, 1991, p.572). Thus, “whatever a culture or society holds to be right is therefore right or at least, right for them” (Solomon, 1990, p.235). Values are considered as relevant to professionals and organizations. Ethical relativism led to conclude that, if values are relative, then organizations should lay emphasis on the values of the personnel.

Ethical hedonism

This is the belief that “we always ought to seek our own pleasure and that the highest good for us is the most pleasure together with the least pain” (Honer and Hunt, 1987, p.222). According to some behavioral scientists (Hillner, 194; Lundin, 1985; Watson 1924/1983), human beings are basically hedonistic and reward seeking. This is the reason for contradicting the assumptions of ethical relativism by endorsing hedonistic ethical values. Relying on this assumption, organizations should encourage their personnel to “throw off the shackles” of religion and be more accepting of their hedonistic tendencies.

Positivism

It holds that “knowledge is limited to observable facts and their interactions” (Honer and Hunt, 1987, p.226), and that the scientific theories can be “shown to be true on the basis of evidence” (Bechtel, 1988, p.18). Positivists assume that it is possible for scientists to be objective,

impartial observers and that their empirical observations will eventually lead to a complete understanding of reality. Logical positivists sharply distinguished facts and values. They have advocated that only scientific thinking and logical assertions were to be cognitively meaningful (Tolmin and Leary, 1992) values (understood in ethical terms) and were regarded as intellectually meaningless (O' Donahue, 1989; Putnam, 1993).

The assumptions discussed above could bring the major influence on organizations' beliefs about how personnel values should be managed. In the light of the above mentioned assumptions, it hardly need to be emphasized that the ultimate objective of the organization-quality and productivity will be influenced by the values of the personnel which in turn would improve interpersonal relationships and pave the way for smooth organizational change and rapid development.

Although values were excluded from mainstream psychology for nearly a century, this normlessness is ending. Many organizations are now incorporating value system into practice. It is believed that, spiritual values of the personnel could increase the organizational performance in the right perspective. We therefore, suggest that the organizations should pay full attention to the clarification of spiritual values among personnel.

Spiritual values are built in the universe that is eternal and beneficial. Spiritual values promote spirituality, health and harmonious relationship. According to Richards and Bergin (1997), humans should "often forego their own rewards (pleasure) for the welfare of others. Responsibility, self-sacrifice, suffering, love, and altruistic service are values above personal gratification (p.30). Personnel cannot keep their values out of work domain, such as performing organizational roles, taking part in training, productivity, nor should they always change or try. When appropriate, organizations should explicitly endorse and respectfully teach healthy values. It is the responsibility of the organizations to explore the personnel values, especially spiritual values, to promote growth and well-being.

Value-based approach to organizations

The most ethical and effective approach for organizations is to assess the value of the personnel and to adopt a valuing style. The spiritual valuing style may be the best way for organizational performance and development and consequently to improve quality of work life and satisfaction of the personnel.

Value based approach should consider the following assumptions.

1. Organizations' theoretical orientations, goals, assessment methods and training of the personnel should be well grounded in spiritual values.

2. The most ethical way for organizations is to assess values of the personnel during in-job training. Value imposition should not occur when training is imparted to the employees.

3. Personnel should be encouraged to have their personal value system while disagreeing with their superiors on certain issues.

4. Spiritual values and beliefs affect personnel's goals, lifestyle, physical, social, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. When appropriate, organizations should let personnel know that values have personal and organizational consequences and help them increase the quality and productivity.

5. Teaching, training, and modeling spiritual values should be the desirable and honorable activity for the organizational development personnel. Trainers should accept the fact that they are value agents and purposely attempt to model and teach value systems to their personnel.

6. Personnel's spiritual values can have a significant impact on their mental, physical, social, emotional and spiritual health. Organizations should help the personnel to utilize their values and resources to assist them in their efforts to grow and develop, as fully functioning persons.

Value assessment

We believe that, there are some spiritual values that should be cultivated among personnel through training to promote the organizational development. Organizations can appeal to both the human resource managers and personnel for developing insights to the spiritual values. Miller and C'de Baca's (1994) list, includes a sizable number of spiritually-oriented values that we believe is more suitable for organizational development personnel. Examples of values are as follows: achievement, attractiveness, career, caring for others, equality for all, fame, family, forgiveness, fun, God's will, growth, happiness, healthy, honesty, intimacy, justice, knowledge, loving, pleasure, popularity, power, rationality, romance, self-control, self-esteem spirituality and wealth.

Organizations can use several techniques to assess, explore and modify their personnel's values and life style. For example, organizations can simply ask to the personnel value-related questions such as the following:

1. Are you spiritually oriented?
2. Do you believe in God or a supreme being?
3. What is purpose of your life?
4. What gives your life meaning?
5. What is most important to you in life?
6. What spiritual values do you use to guide your life?
7. What are your goals and aspirations?
8. Do you feel that your behavior is consistent with the values you profess?

9. Do you feel that your values and behavior are congruent?
 10. What other personal, moral or ethical values are most important?

These questions can give organizations considerable insight into their personnel's worldviews and spiritual values, and whether their values are healthy for the organizational development. Organizations can ask personnel to explore how these values are expressed or manifested in their family and work lives. Once personnel have identified their spiritual values, it then becomes more feasible for them to set long and short term goals that will help them regulate their behavior in harmony with their values and the organizational development.

Recommendations

When working with personnel who are spiritually inclined, human resource managers may promote better functioning by appealing to adopt more spiritually oriented values to guide their work and productivity. Spiritual practices such as praying, meditating, reciting Holy Books and scriptures, performing yoga, making pilgrimages to Holy Shrines, attending religious services, reading books of poetry and philosophy and seeking direction from spiritual leaders can also be valuable interventions for helping spiritually oriented personnel clarify and affirm their spiritual values.

Organizations should make greater efforts to use spiritual values to bring organizational change. Organizations can facilitate spirituality into organizational change and development by asking personnel whether they can think of ways that their spiritual beliefs and values might help them cope with their organizational and extraorganizational stressors. It would be of practical interest for organizations to examine the ways in which spiritual values influence personnel's activity directly and have wider impact on family and social life.

Organizations would need to do this in a way that guarantees freedom of thought to everyone, whether they are Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist, Jewish, Christian, secular humanist, ethical hedonist, positivist, etc.

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