

SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE – THE ULTIMATE INTELLIGENCE TO HUMAN RESOURCE FLEXIBILITY

Soumya C¹ & J. Rajan²

Abstract: *Spiritual intelligence (SQ) as an organizational intelligence became a topic of interest and discussion only towards the late 1990s. An organization requires its human resource to be flexible as well as to have a better cohesive working interrelationship. Spiritual intelligence is concerned with the inner life of mind and spirit and its relationship to being in the world. Many organizations including Hero Honda Motors, Infosys, TVS Motor Company, Hewlett Packard, Airtel, BBC, IBM, etc. are encouraging the development of spiritual dimension to organizational life. This paper discusses the conceptual framework of spiritual intelligence (SQ) with specific reference to human resource flexibility in organisational context. The concepts and misconceptions regarding the terms 'spirituality' and 'religion' are reviewed. A model is proposed by which competence and sub-dimensions of human resource flexibility are related through components of spiritual intelligence.*

Key Words: spiritual intelligence (SQ), human resource flexibility, competence, spirituality, skills, knowledge, attitude, behaviour.

¹ Research Scholar, Institute of Management in Kerala, Senate Campus, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram – 695034, Kerala, balachandrabm@yahoo.com

² Research Scholar, Institute of Management in Kerala, Senate Campus, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram – 695034, Kerala

Introduction

Intellectual Intelligence (IQ) refers to thinking, Emotional Intelligence (EQ) to feeling and Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) is about being. SQ is referred to as ‘the third Q’, is the new secular scientific paradigm of spirituality, which addresses fundamental challenges currently faced by businesses. Spiritual intelligence in human resource can introduce adaptability to challenging diverse situations in the organisation. It clarifies and guides the structure of awareness which allows access to a full range of human capabilities required to succeed in life and prosper in the current economic environment and social climate. These spiritual capabilities are crucial when it comes to intelligently and comprehensively identify organizational requirements and to transform organizations into something new and more meaningful by wisely coping with the challenges of change, crisis and loss that the organisations inevitably face in increasingly complex environments. Thus spiritual capabilities in human resource of an organisation generate flexibility though developing ultimate intelligence, which is spiritual intelligence.

Human Resource Flexibility

Flexibility is the ability of a firm to respond to various demands from its dynamic competitive environment (Sanchez, 1995). Scholars have suggested that human resource (HR) flexibility in particular is a valuable firm capability (Mac Duffie, 1995; Milliman, Von Glinow, & Nathan, 1991; Wright and Boswell, 2002; Wright and Snell, 1998), and this is especially true in the current business environment, characterized as it is by rapid economic changes and shifting strategic demands (Hitt, Keats and DeMarie, 1998). We assert that HR flexibility is a *dynamic capability* of the firm (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997; Zollo and Winter, 2002) in the sense that it is focused on adapting employee attributes—such as knowledge, skills, and behaviors—to changing environmental conditions (Wright, Dunford and Snell, 2001; Wright and Snell, 1998). Wright and Snell (1998) proposed that HR flexibility is composed of three sub-dimensions:

1. Employee skill flexibility,
2. Employee behavioral flexibility and
3. HR practice flexibility.

Wright and Snell (1998) theorized that HR flexibility is an internal trait or characteristic of the firm that can be addressed through three conceptual components: employee skills, employee behavior, and HR practices. Flexibility of employee skills is the “number of potential alternative uses to which employee skills can be applied” (Wright and Snell, 1998) and “how individuals with different skills can be redeployed quickly” (Wright and Snell, 1998). Employee behavior flexibility represents adaptable as opposed to routine behaviors; it is the extent to which employees possess a broad repertoire of behavioral scripts that can be adapted to situation-specific demands. Flexibility of HR practices is the extent to which the firm’s HR practices can be adapted and applied across a variety of situations, or across various sites or units of the firm, and the speed with which these adaptations and applications can be made.

Spiritual Intelligence – Wisdom of Human Resource

A higher level of intelligence power distinguishes human beings from other animals on this planet. In the 20th century, they created IQ tests to define and measure intelligence power of an individual. But, it proved inadequate for measuring the wide spectrum of intelligence. In the 21st century, they are saying that ultimate intelligence is spiritual intelligence. Human beings are spiritual in nature. Spirituality is a natural state for all of us.

Zohar and Marshall (2000) created the term spiritual intelligence. The term derived from the latin word ‘Wind or breath’. This is literally a wind that is blowing through us, the principle that makes us alive and humane. Spiritual Intelligence, Zohar (2000) said, “is our access to and use of meaning, vision and value in the way that we think and the decision that we make”. It is the intelligence that makes us whole, that gives us our integrity. It is the soul’s intelligence, the intelligence of deep self, that with which we ask fundamental questions and with which we reframe our answers. SI can help a person discover hidden well springs of love and joy beneath the stress and turmoil of everyday life.

Spiritual Intelligence is the first comprehensive model of human intelligence incorporating the human search for values and meaning. Integrating all our intelligences and making us the truly human being, SQ is the “ultimate intelligence”. Based on Frankl’s (1984) research indicating that “man’s search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life”. SQ goes beyond the abilities to intelligently think, feel, act and behave within a situational context or a

given framework. SQ allows human beings to wisely reflect on the very situation and frame of reference they find themselves in and creatively and meaningfully transform it into something new and more valuable if they so choose. The concept of SQ directly relates to the understanding of wisdom as an attitude to question truth, exhaustiveness and validity of beliefs, values, knowledge, information, skills and abilities through “curiosity, openness, and complex sensing” (Weick, 2001). Wisdom as a “deeper understanding of reality” (Robinson, 1990) needs to go beyond a “technical knowledge” of how things work or of how people interact. Wisdom and spiritual intelligence accept the limitations and fallibility of our knowledge and avoid being too confident in our knowledge without becoming overly cautious and concerned with our ignorance. They help us keep a “balance between knowing and doubting” (Meacham, 1990).

Religion and spirituality

Many people think that spirituality and religion are same. Religion is our response to what God has done. Religion is not about spirituality. All spirituality is religious; but not all religion is spiritual. God is not religion. Religion is a practical response to God and therefore God can't be religious. Religiosity as well as productive engagement in work does play a pivotal role in individual's daily life (Jain and Sharma, 2004). Religious participation is positively associated with both the quantity and the quality of social relationship (Ellison and George, 1994).

The word spirituality is less focused on forms, practices, or personages, but embodies the idea of spirit or soul - the essential part of a person that transcends physical limitations, spirituality tends to focus more on the discovery of personal truth as opposed to taught truth (Wedemyer and Jue, 2003). Spirituality is actually self realization. There is no place for theism which seeks an external God in spirituality. According to Vivekananda “an atheist is he/she who does not believe in himself/herself”. This is because theism is belief in the Self. Unlike religion, spirituality denies the search of God outside oneself. This view suggests spirituality as revelation of inner potentials. Spirituality is the state of intimate relationship with the inner self of higher values and morality as well as recognizing the truth of inner nature of people. Conger (1994) elaborates on the inner life: “Spirituality gives expression to the being that is in us; it has to do with feelings, with the power that comes from within, with knowing our deepest selves and what is sacred to us.” Spirituality has been described as concern with the “deeper, more mysterious part of our being,” as compared with religion,

defined as an “institutionalized system of attitudes, beliefs and practices related to the service and worship of God or the supernatural.” (Carcasole, 1995). Spirituality is a search of universal truth and values. Religion is one among the many ways to reach this universal truth. So religion needs spirituality, but spirituality need not be in connection with religion.

A Viable Model of Spiritual Intelligence

In the current model, spiritual intelligence is defined as a set of mental capacities which contribute to the awareness, integration, and adaptive application of the non-material and transcendent aspects of one’s existence, leading to such outcomes as deep existential reflection, enhancement of meaning, recognition of a transcendent self, and mastery of spiritual states (King, 2008). An extensive review of the literature supports four core components:

- (1) Critical existential thinking,
- (2) Personal meaning production,
- (3) Transcendental awareness, and
- (4) Conscious state expansion.

Critical Existential Thinking (CET)

The first component of spiritual intelligence involves the capacity to critically contemplate meaning, purpose, and other existential or metaphysical issues (e.g., reality, the universe, space, time, death). In addition to the mounting support for Gardner’s (1993) suggestion of an existential intelligence (e.g., Halama and Strizenec, 2004; Shearer, 2006; Simmons, 2006), existential thinking is commonplace in definitions of both spirituality (e.g., Koenig, McCullough and Larson, 2000; Matheis, Tulsy and Matheis, 2006; Wink and Dillon, 2002) and spiritual intelligence (Nasel, 2004; Vaughan, 2002; Wolman, 2001; Zohar and Marshall, 2000). Some discuss it as a “quest for understanding answers” (Koenig et al., 2000) to these seemingly ultimate questions (e.g., Noble, 2000), this can more practically be considered as a related pattern of behaviour. To a large extent, aspects of cognition are inherent in the discussion of existential tendencies, with frequent references to existential thinking (e.g., Garo, 2006), existential contemplation (e.g., Lavoie and de Vries, 2004), and existential reasoning (e.g., Evans and Wellman, 2006), leading to the more plausible inference of mental capacity. It is further contended that simply questioning existence does not demonstrate complete mastery of this ability. One must be able to contemplate such existential issues using critical thinking, and in some cases come to original conclusions or personal

philosophies regarding existence, integrating scientific knowledge and personal experience. Critical thinking, defined as “actively and skilfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication” (Scriven and Paul, 1992), more accurately reflects intelligence.

Spiritual intelligence help employee to understand meaning and purpose in each work they do and found peace and joy in their activities in the organisation. Applying Critical Existential Thinking in the workplace helps employee to have strong intention which enables them to do their work by utilising skills, knowledge and attitude to the fullest possible extent. Human resource may be interested to acquire new skills, knowledge and positive attitudes to adapt themselves to the diverse work situations, is a feature of flexible human resource.

Personal Meaning Production (PMP)

The second core component is defined as the ability to construct personal meaning and purpose in all physical and mental experiences, including the capacity to create and master a life purpose. Like existential thinking, personal meaning is frequently described as a component of spirituality (e.g., King, Speck and Thomas, 2001; Koenig et al., 2000; Sinnott, 2002; Wink and Dillon, 2002; Worthington and Sandage, 2001), requiring its consideration in a model of spiritual intelligence. Nasel (2004) concurred, suggesting that spiritual intelligence “involves contemplation of the symbolic meaning of personal events and circumstances, in order to find purpose and meaning in all life experiences”. In essence, Emmons’ (2000) capacity for sanctification is one particular method of personal meaning production. Personal meaning has been defined as “having a purpose in life, having a sense of direction, a sense of order and a reason for existence” (Reker, 1997). Reker’s (1997) definition highlights the fundamental relationship between meaning and purpose. In addition to deriving purpose from daily events and experiences (i.e., situational meaning), one is also capable of defining a purpose for his/her life (i.e., global meaning), utilizing more coherent and creative forms of meaning production. The mastery of a life purpose refers to one’s ability to infer his/her purpose in all events and experiences. The ability to create meaning and purpose in all mental and physical experiences occupies the highest level of this particular ability.

Personal meaning production enhance an employee to understand that every experience in the workplace have meaning. Good experience from personal events in the workplace gives motivation, encouragement and impulse to higher performance. Bad experiences pose opportunities and challenges which give a direction to a path for future success. With the help of spiritual intelligence, employee derive meaning from the unfavourable events and circumstances they experienced in the workplace which act as an impulse for sharpening the existing skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours to meet the demands efficiently leads to human resource flexibility.

Transcendental Awareness (TA)

The third component involves the capacity to perceive transcendent dimensions of the self (e.g., a transcendent self), of others, and of the physical world (e.g., non-materialism, interconnectedness) during the normal, waking state of consciousness. The transcendent is commonplace in definitions of spirituality (e.g., King et al., 2001; Koenig et al., 2000; Martsolf and Mickley, 1998; Sinnott, 2002), with one aspect of particular interest to the current model: awareness (Martsolf and Mickley, 1998). Pascual (1990) proposed that transcendental awareness, particularly the awareness of a transcendental self, is a key factor of spiritual intelligence. Wolman (2001) explained this more broadly as the ability to sense a spiritual dimension of life, reflecting what James (1902/2002) had previously described as “a sense of present reality more diffused and general than that which our special senses yield”. Csikszentmihalyi (1993) also referred to the transcendent self, describing successful individuals who “move beyond the boundaries of their personal limitations by integrating individual goals with larger ones, such as the welfare of the family, the community, humanity, the planet, or the cosmos”.

Human resource is characterised with specific skills, knowledge, attitude, behaviours and with inherent limitations of their own. Successful individuals move beyond the boundaries of their personal limitations, take challenges and succeed in the workplace. Awareness of transcendental self is self-realisation founded on experience of inner being enables the human resource to identify their strengths and weaknesses within themselves and easily adapt to unique workplace situations which bring human resource flexibility.

Conscious state expansion (CSE)

The final component of the current model is the ability to enter spiritual states of consciousness (e.g., pure consciousness, cosmic consciousness and oneness) at one’s own discretion. From a psychological perspective, the distinction between transcendental awareness and conscious state expansion is well supported (Tart, 1975). The former must occur during the normal waking state, while the latter involves the ability to transcend this state and enter higher or spiritual states. States commonly referred to as spiritual include cosmic consciousness (Bucke, as cited in James, 1902/2002), pure consciousness (e.g., Gackenbach, 1992), and unitive consciousness (Maslow, 1964). Expanded or altered states of consciousness are deeply rooted aspects of religion and spirituality (James, 1902/2002; Maslow, 1964). As such, it is necessary to consider a potential mental ability that might underlie the experience of these states, as Emmons (2000) correctly did in his own model of spiritual intelligence. Due to their phenomenological quality and potential spontaneous occurrence (James, 1902/2002; Maslow, 1964; Vaitl, D., Gruzelier, J., Jamieson, G. A., Lehmann, D., Ott, U., Sammer, G., 2005), however, the mere experience of such states does not constitute mental ability. What is far less debatable is the capacity for entering these states at one’s own discretion.

Individual employees who enter into spiritual states of consciousness are stress-free, responsible, and have a clear sense of purpose, and are able to make the differences that impact positively on the business’ bottom line. Such employees have a healthy self-esteem, are able to transform negative emotions into positive energy, consistently come up with new and creative ideas and innovative solutions to problems, and act confidently, ethically and with integrity. These features of spiritual intelligence generate competent and flexible human resource in the organisation.

Figure I: Human Resource (HR) Flexibility Model

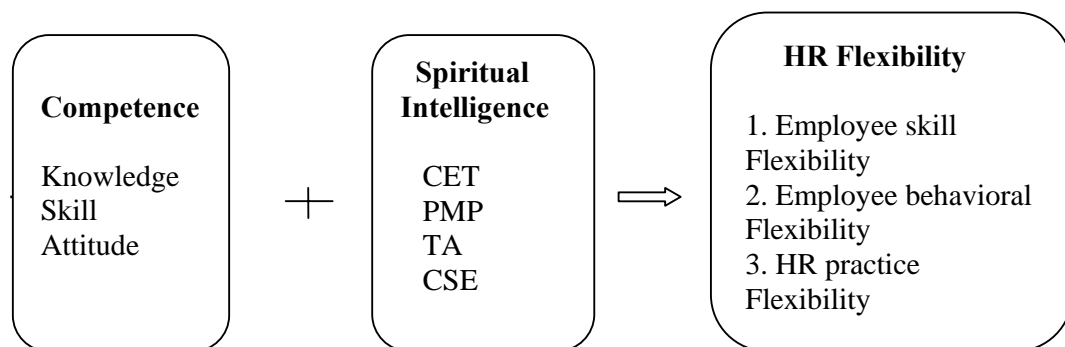


Figure I: Model showing the relationship between competence, spiritual intelligence and human resource flexibility

The model represents the relation between competence of human resource and spiritual intelligence which ultimately leads to human resource flexibility. An employee with knowledge, skill, attitude and having spiritual intelligence as his/her ultimate intelligence will lead to flexibility in his/her skill, behaviour and HR practices. An organisation having its human resource with competence and spiritual intelligence automatically creates flexibility. Spiritual intelligence acts as a facilitator to convert human resource to flexible human resource.

Competence is generally defined as consisting of integrated pieces of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Lizzio and Wilson, 2004), and is assumed to be prerequisite for adequate functioning on the job (Eraut, 1994; Hager, Gonczi, and Athanasou, 1990).

Many authors such as F.W. Taylor, P.F. Drucker and A. Toffier choose to equate "knowledge" to "information", and "data" and use the terms interchangeably. Mere knowledge regarding work, required skills to do the work, way to execute efficiently is not enough to create flexible human resource in organisations. Awareness and knowledge of transcendental self is highly important to overcome personal limitations, explore different aspects of one's life and perceive one's life independently. The knowledge of self helps to identify the limitations in skills, behaviours etc. So developing spiritual intelligence in employees is necessary to bring flexibility.

Skills are defined as expertness, practiced ability, facility in doing something, dexterity and tact. Skill encompasses experience and practice, and the gaining of skill leads to unconscious and automatic actions. Skills alone without knowledge and attitudes can be dangerous - knowledge and attitudes must support skills (Glendon, I.A. and McKenna, E.F., 1995). Skills with knowledge and right attitude are necessary to generate required results. Spiritual intelligence will reduce stress, anxiety and generate confidence applying those skills to different workplace situations as and when needed. Higher levels of creativity can be helpful for the employee to adapt to situations is a feature of spiritual intelligence. The human resource with spiritual intelligence has ability for sustainable performance at extraordinary levels.

Attitude can be defined as a "learned tendency to act in a consistent way to a particular object or situation"(Fishbein, M. and Ajzan,I.). Wrong attitudes of human resource in organisational situations generate problems and will adversely affect the performance of the organisation. With the help of spiritual intelligence, employees can transform negative emotional reactions and attitudes to positive and, encourage and enhance the performance and adaptability of employees.

Contributions of Spiritual Intelligence in HR Flexibility

Companies as diverse as Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, BioGenex, Aetna International, Big Six accounting's Deloitte and Touche, and Law firms such as New York's Kaye, Scholer, Fierman, Hays & Handler are extolling lessons usually doled out in churches, temples, and mosques (Mitroff and Denton, 1999). Many organizations including Hero Honda Motors, Infosys, TVS Motor Company, Hewlett Packard, Airtel, BBC, IBM, etc. are encouraging the development of spiritual dimension to organizational life. Integration of spiritual intelligence and work of employees bring the following;

- Very positive changes in employees' relationships and their effectiveness (Neal, 2001).
- Beneficial personal outcomes such as increased joy, peace, serenity, job satisfaction and commitment but that they also deliver improved productivity and reduce absenteeism and turnover (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003).
- Employees who work for organizations they consider being spiritual are less fearful, more ethical, and more committed. And, there is mounting evidence that a more humane workplace is more productive, flexible, and creative (Eisler and Montuori, 2003).
- Ultimate competitive advantage (Mitroff and Denton, 1999).

Organizational environments in the 21st century are chaotic and require rapid response from highly committed, productive, intrinsically motivated learning organizations with self-directed, empowered teams that are flexible, flat, networked, diverse, and global (Ancona, D., Kochan, T., Scully, M., Van Maanen, J. and Westney, D. E., 1999). HR Flexibility can be generated by developing spiritual intelligence in competent employees. Flexible human

resource in organisations helps them to easily adapt to different challenging situations lead to peak performances.

Conclusion

Today's human resource need to be flexible and creative to adapt to and transform the rapidly changing complex systems they work in. While cognitive intelligence and expert knowledge enables us to manage activities within a controllable environment of limited complexity and low uncertainty, competence and spiritual intelligence are required when dealing with increasingly complex organisational environments. In order to provide maximum output in highly complex and uncertain organisational environments, human resource additionally need flexibility through competence and spiritual intelligence. They need to be flexible when creating the future while keeping watch and being prepared for the unexpected.

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