CHAPTER 6
CHALLENGES FOR EMBEDDING SPIRITUALITY IN HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

6.1 Introduction
In this chapter an attempt has been made to identify and examine the challenges faced by the corporate sector in embedding spirituality in the human resource development strategies. The chapter is divided into two sections. Section I explains about the challenges relating direct method. Section II discussion is carried out on challenges relating to indirect method.

Section I
In the following section an attempt is made to explain challenges faced at individual level and organizational level under direct method.

6.2 Challenges Relating Direct Method
The importance of the direct method and its mechanism has been explained in chapter four. But in the enforcement and the practice of this method, there are a number of difficulties, problems and challenges.

From the discussion presented in the chapter four it is clear that spirituality and its integration in human resource development strategies is very important. But in this exercise an organization faces a number of challenges. In this chapter an attempt has been made to identify and examine these challenges.

6.3 Challenges At Individual Level
Practicing spirituality at the individual level is the core of the thing. Therefore individual employees should respond favourably and practice in its true spirit for self development and organizational empowerment. But quite often this is not being done due to various reasons, they include.
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- Lack of awareness about spirituality
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of sustaining participation and practices
- Lack of self assessment

Lack of awareness about spirituality

People have to be educated on awareness of spirituality. Accepting spiritual practice is difficult due to lack of awareness. It also leads to non implementation of values at workplace. Even though Spiritual practices are implemented but externalized approach cannot serve the purpose. Exposing such people to spiritual practice cannot help them in the short run. Sustained effort to implementing spiritual values at workplace requires proper understanding.

Lack of motivation

In a general sense, it is said that workplace spirituality motivates an individual. It also depends on individuals self interest on spirituality. Lack of interest and lack of understanding about techniques create low interest to follow spiritual practice. Too rigid ways and means of implementing spirituality at workplace leads to short term motivation. Sustained motivation is possible only when individuals feel the importance and benefits of spiritual practice.

Lack of sustaining participation and practices

It is possible to accept workplace spirituality in the initial stages one’s profession as it appears to be reflective of human values that are universal and conducive for one’s existence. There is a lack of interest in participation by individuals due to lack of understanding. It is also possible that spiritual practice at workplace may not be the same that an employee practices.
Collectively when employee is do not follow spirituality at workplace. This situation will not benefit sustained practice of retaining spiritual values.

**Lack of self assessment**

Implementation of workplace spirituality and its advantages are assessed by individuals on the basis of collective benefit. If employees wholeheartedly do not participate in this exercise, they cannot perceive the benefits. Change is a universal concept which is accepted by all. An employee who does not bother about self development may not assess the change. Self assessment is a difficult task for individuals, Spiritual techniques are essential for self assessment. One has to introspect within to assess oneself. Self introspection is a spiritual trait, faith is essential for this purpose. People are lacking faith in themselves. This leads to misunderstanding of self and others.

There are some major challenges faced at individual level. They are creating problems in incorporating spiritual input in human resource development strategies.

**6.4 Challenges at Organizational Level**

In an organization dynamism is essential for its functioning. Efficiency of an employee is directly reflected in flexible and smooth functioning. In a competitive environment organizations have to look into the areas of cost consideration, time management, quality output etc. With the support of workplace spirituality these requirements can be fulfilled. In an environment, some of the employees cannot accept spiritual practice; they may differ in their thinking from others. Matthew Alan Condon(2009) stated, there are many people who firmly believe that spirituality and religion are private issues and
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should remain so. Thus organizations are finding it difficult to integrate spiritual aspects into their strategies.¹

For an organization, challenges arise at various stages like

- Decision making
- Communication
- Policy formulation
- Policy Implementation

Decision Making

In a corporate policies are made with the collective decision. Decision making is a process of participatory approach. Collectively all employees have to agree for the spiritually oriented policies. But non practitioners may not agree for such policies. Implementing policies with enforcing mechanism will also fail because spiritual principles have to be accepted and followed and cannot enforced. Spiritually oriented corporates will look for policies with spiritual principles. In such conditions, employees will not agree with the principles of spirituality. This results in dual opinion among practitioners and non practitioners in a corporate. Lack of collective opinion may lead to non implementation of the policy. Moreover policy makers should be aware about spiritual values. Their ignorance about spiritual practices will fail to incorporate spiritual principles in decision making. In other situations leaders are ready to implement spiritual values but employees are not interested in accepting the same. This will be a hurdle in decision making.

Communication

In a corporate there will be hierarchical system. The communication at different levels is dependent on mutual understanding. Coordination among

¹ Matthew Alan Condon: Communicative strategies employed in the introduction of Spirituality in the workplace, The University of Montana, Missoula, MT, December, 2009
departments, leaders and taking everyone into confidence makes an organization to communicate without hurdles. This leads to participatory approach. In a pyramidal structure from the top to the bottom, that is from CEO to lowest level of employee there is a line of command and chain of communication. Corporate with spiritual values are able to create the understanding at each level. Communication is easy and smooth with likeminded people. Individuals who are non practitioners may not have similar type of thinking as practitioners. This difference in understanding will create problems in communication. In a hierarchy in between at any level, if the employees are unable to understand the information that has been passed, this will lead to misunderstanding in an organization. Matthew Alan Condon(2009) stated, that given the diversity of belief systems among the typical organization’s workforce, the introduction of spiritually-based programs into a workplace setting is a challenging endeavor. Because of the difficulties involved, it is especially critical that those involved in the introduction utilize effective communicative strategies to do so.²

Policy formulation

Policy of a corporate is based on its objectives and goals. The roots of the corporate system are made by its policy. Individuals motivated with spiritual values are able to introduce workplace spirituality. Coordination and healthy discussion among policy makers will derive good result. Regular revision and modification of the policy is essential for the organizational wellbeing and good environment. There are individuals who are ignorant about spiritual practice. The difference of opinion among the policy makers will not facilitate the formulation of spiritually oriented policies.

² Matthew Alan Condon : Communicative strategies employed in the introduction of Spirituality in the workplace , The University of Montana, Missoula, MT, December, 2009
Policy Implementation

Corporates prepare their mission statement, goals and objectives according to ethical values. To implement these values organization need to have spiritual practitioners. Only people with conviction can implement spiritual principles in their functioning. To have such people at the managerial level is a challenge. Even though spiritual principles are embedded in their functioning without spiritual practitioners implementation will be superficial. It may be a one time or theoretical exercise which may not be sustained for a long period. Due to the ignorance at different level in an organization policy formulation may become a difficult task. Policy implementation machinery should have spiritual orientation. People who are responsible for implantation should be educated and exposed to these dimensions.

6.5 Challenges at Practice Level

In this section an attempt is made to explain the challenges faced at the practice level. Again challenges have been explained at individual level and corporate level.

Problems in practicing at individual level

An individual is influenced by his attitude, behavior, character and personality. An environment is created according to these traits. Individuals who are not interested in self improvement will not make an effort to change. At the practice level lack of spiritual values may be experienced in the form of laziness, misunderstanding, and lack of competitive spirit. At individual level without spiritual practice, it will be difficult to bring changes and accept the same. Acceptance of these values is a challenge for individuals with limited understanding about spirituality. Individuals may have misconception about spiritual practice as renunciation, boredom, escapism and so on. Accepting these concepts of spiritual principles is a challenge due to lack of practice or experience.
Problems in practicing at corporate level

At the corporate level the conduct of spiritual training requires expertise, time and money due to low priority and indifferent attitude adequate attention may not be given to this type of activities.

Further employees may not cooperate with such training. Organization in their absenteeism or in difference for spiritual practice may create problems difficult to include in them. Certain basic logistics has to be maintained for the spiritual practice and lack of logistics can be difficult to implement spiritual practices. Corporates need to identify priority, the first priority is towards material and physical growth, so spiritual practice is ignored.

Consistency is required for sustained effort in training employees. If regular and systematic approach is lacking in spiritual training, this will need to non acceptance of spirituality.

Human resource departments make a sustained effort for efficient functioning of corporates. Both employees and employers need to be responsible for understanding spiritual perception. Corporates without spiritual values may have to face challenges in accepting optimist approach. Creating awareness about spiritual practice is difficult task. With all theoretical knowledge of management principles, managers are externally and superficially evaluating corporate performance. Lack of understanding about the inner values of individuals and corporate will affect their spiritual practices. This will create lack of understanding, lack of harmony and lack of cooperative environment at the workplace. Such organization will function with spiritual values as an input in theoretical way. This happens mainly due to those employees and employers who are unable to understand the sanctity of workplace spirituality.
In the workplace, spirituality can be misused as just another management tool, such as "Total Quality Management," "quality of work life", "reengineering" or the multitude of other fads that have filled the business literature and been implemented by business firms. Consultants sell to business executives these new "management programs", set a system in place and collect their fees. The program is kept as long as it is profitable for the firm. When the scheme no longer yields tangible benefits, it is dropped. Similarly, some current popular spiritualities, like those based on a sense of oneness with the universe, claim to provide advantages to the individual and the firm. But when another experience or need appears, it is diluted. Hence, such an exercise does not provide a good foundation for developing personal integrity, discipline and character. The misuse of spirituality in this way robs business of an appropriate opportunity to realize long-term benefit to individuals, to society and to the firm itself. Gerald F. Gavanagh, Mark R. Bandsuch (2002)³

Some of the measures to meet challenges are identified in the following section.

**Measures to meet the challenges**

It is true that there multiple challenges for embedding spirituality. But it is absolutely necessary to take on these challenges and ensure that spiritual inputs are in place in human resource development strategies. This requires a wide range of the measures like

- Attitude should be value centred / Attitudinal changes
- Corporate must develop transparent and effective communication
- Developing in an organization a team approach
- Orientation of the policies towards individual welfare
- Proper networking and integration at implementation level

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- Participatory and inclusive approaches
- Developing spiritual practices for higher tier leaders and employees.
- Creating environment to learn and understand spiritual practices and their importance.
- Interactive sessions
- Projecting the role models and influencing their behaviour and opinion.
- Spiritual leadership and awareness

Section II

In the following section an attempt is made to explain the challenges relating to indirect method.

6.6 Challenges Relating Indirect Method

The importance of the indirect method and its mechanism has been explained in chapter four. But in the enforcement and the practice of this method, there are a number of difficulties, problems and challenges.

From the discussion presented in the chapter four it is clear that spirituality and its integration in human resource development strategies is very important. But in this exercise an organization faces a number of challenges. In this chapter an attempt has been made to identify and examine these challenges.

Challenges faced by NGOs

Generally nongovernmental organizations create their own agenda within a limited span. A limited approach to spiritual practice within their group will suffice. Their experience of implementing workplace spirituality will not fit into the corporate. Competition among NGOs may create commercialization, rigidity and dilute the effect of workplace spirituality. Even unethical means could be adopted to take up the contract with the corporate.
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The prime objective will be profit rather than introducing spiritual values. With NGOs superficial approach, practical concept of spiritual practices cannot be internalized. These organizations may face problems in finding the expertise to conduct programmes on spiritual values. The officials with superficial knowledge may support corporates with their limited understanding about workplace spirituality. Their objectives are more of providing general services rather than spiritual support.

Challenges faced by Civic groups

These are non profit professional bodies. Each one of them will be performing their function within the limited scope. Their networking with corporates will be limited. All members of civic groups may not be practitioners. Only a few members practically make an effort to introduce spiritual practice at in corporates. These professional bodies may not be able to support corporate due to the micro level functioning. Objectives of these professional bodies are mainly to look after the interests of their own members. Civic groups experience and expertise of its members may be directed towards taking care of their own interests. Some of the members of professional bodies could be spiritual leaders. They can train the organization employees on spiritual practices. Due to lack of coordination and consistency they find it difficult to continue the same.

Challenges faced by Charitable Institutions

Charitable institutions have their own set of plans. Their functioning is of social responsibilities. Given their activities, priorities and goals, charitable institutions usually have their own set of programmes. Orienting these programmes to the requirements of corporates may be difficult. Their expertise may be assisting corporate in their social responsibilities. Charitable institutions can have volunteers specialized for corporate social responsibilities.
They may lack spiritual trainers. This can become a hurdle for them to support corporates.

6.7 Apathy of the State

Though the state and governance can play an effective role, due to various reasons it is indifferent towards the same. In a democratic form of government leaders are elected by the people. These leaders due to their lack of commitment and coordination they may not be able to incorporate spiritual principles in their governance. To preach and practice values one should have awareness, understanding and experience. These officials instead of serving to the corporate they develop unethical nexus with the corporate. Due to this ideologies and policies may not be respected. Erosion of values creates dishonesty and reflects in government functioning. The leaders with spiritual awareness are able to influence government policies towards corporate. This is the only way through which corporate can implement spiritual practice. Therefore the government has major responsibility to introduce spiritual principles both at the individual and corporate level. This can be fulfilled only with sincere, selfless and dedicated leaders.

Measures to meet the challenges in indirect method

- Educational institutions should upgrade their policies and programmes according to the corporate requirements
- NGOs have to be flexible and internalize spiritual principles before propagating it
- Institutions needs to strike the balance within their objectives
- Orientation is needed towards spiritual practice
- Institutions required to train the experts for introducing spiritual practices in corporates
- Areas for coordination should be identified and right people have to be deputed
• Sustained support from institutions towards corporate is inevitable for their smooth functioning
• The administration and the government should be sensitive of happenings within and outside
• Sensitising the administration and governance

Conclusion

From the above discussion it is clear that there are wide ranging challenges for embedding spirituality in human resource development strategies. They are multiple, multi dimensional, inter related and also reinforcing in nature. Some of them are contextual and also specific to a particular agency / organization. Therefore the measures cannot be generalized. Depending on the nature, intensity and level of the challenges, strategies have to be constructed and operationalised. Some cross cutting mechanism can also be resorted to depending on the circumstances. All these calls for holistic and integrated approaches and their success depend on commitment and participation both by individual and organization.