2. Spiritual Training and Employability in Management Institutes

Prof. Amit Chaturvedi

Abstract:

Purpose – This paper aims to propose that spiritual training in business management institutes contribute to employability among the students of business management. It is observed that there remain course shortcomings in business management institutes' programme due to various causes that fail to boost employability among the students of such management institutes.

Unavailability of spiritual training fail to provide necessary element to the business management students whereby they can become employable. Here, the spiritual training act as a super facilitator to boost employability among the business management students.

Design/ methodology/approach - The study of Harvard Business School, a business school imparting management education, was employed to corroborate the claim.

Findings- Frequently the students of business schools lack spiritual competence in their academic and professional life due to lack of spiritual training available in the business schools they study. Additionally lack of motivation among the business schools to get ranked in the category of top B schools do not compel them to develop spiritual training course. Against this backdrop, spiritual training course, developed by business management institutes, can contribute to the employability requirements among the students of business management.

Originality/ value- The underpinning conclusions are to introduce the unique importance of spirituality, which gives fresh impetus to the employability among the business management students in the country and in the world.

Keywords:

Spirituality, Employability, Business Schools, Knowledge, Harvard Business School

Introduction:

"We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience." Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Spirituality involves internal attributes that are associated with individual contentment and satisfaction (Holder, Coleman, & Wallace, 2010). Studies suggest that spirituality provides advantages such as personal fulfilment, accountability, and creativity, ultimately enhancing subjective well-being. According to Moxley (1999), spirituality signifies a person who is interconnected, thoroughly involved and lively, and reliant on mutual connections. For Guillory (2000) spirituality originates from within a person. He characterizes spirituality as "our inner consciousness" and as something that "emanates internally, surpassing our deeply rooted beliefs and principles." The quest for subjective well-being is regarded as among the most valued and pursued goals in individuals' lives (Diener & Suh, 1997). The study confirms that "happiness" is a term commonly employed in everyday conversation by the general populace, while "subjective well-being" is a term more commonly employed by researchers. (Luthans,2002). It's generally agreed upon that happiness is a subjective, positive, and internal state of mind psychologically (Veenhoven, 2010). Factors that impact subjective well-being can be classified into two methods: the bottom-up and top-down approaches. The bottom-up approach prioritizes external elements like demographics, whereas the top-down approach highlights internal factors such as genetics and personality (Diener, 1984). Spirituality is inherent and unique to each individual, representing an aspect of one's identity that includes awareness, development, values, quest for deeper truths, inner understanding, compassion, tranquillity, genuineness, and well-being (Neck & Milliman, 1994). Those with elevated levels of spirituality often view themselves as adequately self-assured to confront work-related challenges and possess the abilities to utilize effective coping strategies for stress management, preventing burnout, and thereby fostering happiness and maintaining their overall well-being.

Employability:

Broadly speaking, existing definitions of employability can be categorised into three main groups. The first group emphasises the capabilities of individuals (De Vos et al., 2011; Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Hogan et al., 2013; Sanders and Grip, 2004; Yorke, 2006). These definitions resonate with the idea that employability of an individual depends upon personal assets or intrinsic characteristics. While Hillage and Pollard (1998) refer to it as capability, Yorke (2006) terms it a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes, and for De Vos et al. (2011) these are capabilities and willingness. These definitions emphasise the absolute dimensions of employability which relate to whether individuals possess the appropriate capabilities, skills and attitudes that employers need (Morrison, 2012). The second group's definition drew attention to the relative dimensions of employability. They often critique definitions based on individual capacity as ignoring the fact that employability is primarily determined by the labour market (Brown et al., 2003; Sin and Amaral, 2017). For example, Brown et al. (2003, p. 114) interpret employability as the "relative chances of finding and maintaining different kinds of employment". Employability can be influenced by broader external factors such as social, institutional and economic factors (Sin and Amaral, 2017).

Emphasis on the relative dimensions of employability has not received great attention in literature. Some conceptualisations of employability often overlook how social structures such as gender, race, social class and disability interact with labour market opportunities (McGinn and Oh, 2017). However, the relative dimensions can be very important. For example, ethnicity could affect employability, as some employers discriminate on job applications. This suggests that we will need to understand relevant political, social and economic contexts, as well as how these factors intersect with one another in order to fully understand the concept of employability (Speight et al., 2012). The third group of definitions emphasise the "duality of employability" (Brown et al., 2003, p. 110): the need to understand both absolute and relative dimensions of employability. For example, Small et al. (2018, p. 4) interpret employability as "capacity to be self-reliant in navigating the labour market, utilising knowledge, individual skills and attributes, and adapting them to the employment context, showcasing them to employers, while taking into account external and other constraints". Part of this duality is the interplay of disciplinal training and application of subject-specific skills in a job. As industries and career paths change, graduates are expected to possess attributes that are not only discipline-specific but also transferrable to a broader range of jobs and careers (König and Ribarić, 2019; Williams et al., 2019). These two latter groups of definitions not only recognise the importance of personal characteristics which make a graduate more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations but also emphasise the influence of external factors on the opportunities for employability. While the individual and their skills and competencies are positioned within a particular social context in these definitions (Holmes, 2013; Vuksanovic et al., 2014), skills and competencies are essential and must be acquired.

Harvard Business School:

The growth of the Harvard Business School campus owes a great deal to charitable contributions, beginning with a generous gift from financier George F. Baker. In 1908, Harvard Business School started with 80 students, conducting classes in various spots across the Harvard College grounds. By the early 1920s, enrolment had soared to nearly 700. Dean Wallace B. Donham launched an effort to establish a dedicated campus where both faculty and students could fully engage in academic and communal activities. Donham's vision, combined with Baker's significant donation and the collaborative work of architects McKim, Mead & White, along with landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, resulted in the swift construction of the initial twelve HBS buildings between 1925 and 1927. Positioned along the Charles River, the original structures of HBS followed its graceful bend, reflecting the esteemed Georgian Revival style prevalent in the University's architecture nearby. These initial buildings, now modernized, serve as the core of the present-day campus, spanning 40 acres and featuring 33 structures. As enrolment increased and requirements changed, the school's administration enlarged the campus, seamlessly integrating new buildings with the existing ones.

This expansion upholds the founders' vision of fostering diverse interactions among students, faculty, and guests. The enduring backing of HBS alumni and supporters, who acknowledge the transformative influence of business education, has been pivotal in nurturing this unique academic community. The story behind each named building highlights the crucial support that lays the groundwork for the campus. Originally named the "Harvard University, Graduate School of Business Administration, George F. Baker Foundation," Harvard Business School commemorates the exceptional generosity of George Fisher Baker, Sr. (1840-1931). His remarkable donation in 1924 funded the construction of the original campus. Baker, a distinguished financier, philanthropist, and former president of the First National Bank of New York (later Citibank), wielded significant influence in US finance and industry. Beginning as a teller at the age of 23, he invested $3,000 to become an original shareholder in the First National Bank. In just 14 years, he ascended to the role of president. Through his astute management, the institution weathered the financial challenges of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Baker's expertise in business extended to his roles on the boards of over forty companies, including several struggling railroads that he acquired and restored. He also found success through investments in the utilities, steel, and rubber industries. Despite maintaining a low public profile, Baker was sought out by leaders in business and government for his advice, which he willingly offered. Recognizing the impact of economic instability, his 1924 contribution to the school emphasized the importance of professional management education. When initially asked by Harvard Overseer Bishop William Lawrence for a $1 million donation for the new campus, Baker declined. After discussions with his son, George F. Baker Jr., a Harvard College graduate, the elder Baker opted to donate $5 million "to have the privilege of building the entire school."

Harvard Business School as a Business School with Spiritual Training:

Harvard business school offers a three-credit course the spiritual lives of leaders. The course tries to explore the following question of the students:

What defines spirituality? How can it be fostered? Explain the attributes of spiritual leadership. How can I reconcile conflicts between my convictions and the objectives of my professional and personal endeavours? What understanding of different faith traditions is crucial for effective leadership in diverse global settings? Why do religious establishments often falter or inflict harm, resulting in substantial discord and turmoil? In addition to these, the course tries to address the following questions of the students:

- Incorporating my faith and personal beliefs seamlessly into my professional life to align my career objectives with my values and aspirations—how can this be achieved?
- I aim to glean insights from religions beyond my own to enrich my leadership skills for guiding future teams.

- How do senior leaders translate their internal spiritual convictions into tangible leadership behaviors?
- What impact do spirituality and religion have on high-stakes decision-makers, and is there a distinction between the two?
- By comprehending the spiritual practices and commitments of my culturally diverse business partners, how can I foster deep, enduring relationships with them?
- While navigating leadership in a secular setting, how can I remain true to my personal faith?"
- "When is it suitable to engage in discussions about my faith and beliefs in the workplace while ensuring inclusivity?
- How can we infuse our employees' daily experiences with meaning and purpose?
- How can an atheist cultivate connections akin to those among spiritual individuals?
- How can leadership promote cohesion amidst prevalent divisive rhetoric and populism? Particularly, how can young women leaders navigate situations of power imbalance resistant to change?
- Given the divisive nature of religion and faith traditions in various contexts, is there a way to address this without completely dismissing spirituality and faith?

The department has brought together an impressive array of leaders, scholars, and intellectuals from diverse regions to support its endeavours. Despite their hectic schedules, many of these leaders have prioritized participation due to the importance they attribute to this field.

Strikingly, they are rarely queried about the fundamental principles and inspirations guiding their leadership. The course curriculum includes.

I.   The Inner Journey – Learning to Make Meaning

The Dance of Dharma, Leadership and Character, Making Meaning in the Workplace, Finding Meaning in Relationship with Nature

II. The Outer Journey – Focusing on Your Leadership Role

Difficult Decisions: How Faith Shapes Boardroom Debate, Faith as An Enabler and Disabler, Linking Spirituality, Health and Leadership, Poetic Justice: Islam and Business

III. Moving Beyond – Locating Purpose in the World

Moral Growth as a Business Leader, Spiritual Philanthropy in Emerging Markets, Trans-Generational Change: The Lessons of Ashoka, Spirituality in Technology, Regenerative Capitalism

The course expectations include:

- regular attendance at a 2-hour class every week for 12 weeks during the term.
- participation in six 90-minute Journey Group sessions spread throughout the semester, composed of a small group of students from various Harvard schools.
- optional participation in field trips scheduled on weekends or evenings throughout the semester, offering visits to places like the Arnold Arboretum, Harvard Art Museum, Harvard Dance Centre, and retreats to locations such as the Society of St. John the Evangelist or Blue Cliff Monastery.
- taking initiative to organize and lead sessions with invited guests, who are often featured in our weekly sessions. Previous guests have included Ken Frazier (CEO, Merck), Dr. Lisa Miller (Columbia University), David Brooks (NYT columnist and author), Martha Minow (former dean, Harvard Law School), and Larry Bacow (president, Harvard University).
- submission of a final paper or project reflecting on personal spiritual development and insights gained throughout the semester.

Grading relies on both classroom participation and the final paper/project. Participation is assessed based on the depth of engagement and enthusiasm rather than the quantity of comments. Throughout the term, the department offers numerous opportunities to demonstrate involvement with the course content and guest speakers, nurturing a cohesive community within and beyond the classroom. The course seeks to help students understand how a deepened understanding of spirituality and faith traditions can motivate both personal and organizational objectives, exemplified by leaders across various fields such as business, public health, education, and public policy. Furthermore, students are expected to gain insight into how this understanding can shape their personal and professional development over time.

Ultimately, the course aims to cultivate a greater appreciation and comprehension of the significant influence spirituality holds on individuals and societies. The course profoundly influences students' self-awareness, growth as leaders, understanding of the communities they interact with, and their personal sense of purpose. The course materials include a wide array of sources, incorporating carefully chosen readings from ancient wisdom traditions as well as modern works, including pieces authored by guest speakers. While the department has developed various case studies for the course, they emphasize experiential learning and direct interaction with invited guests over conventional case-based teaching approaches. During the course, each student is placed into a Journey Group comprised of five members. These groups are deliberately diverse, bringing together individuals from different schools within the university. The groups meet six times throughout the semester, striving for a consistent and mutually agreeable schedule. Although the department encourages in-person meetings, attendance at some face-to-face sessions is obligatory.

Journey Groups provide a safe and confidential space for students to explore their guiding principles and chronicle their spiritual progress during the term. A well-liked activity in these groups is "Rivers of Life," where students utilize coloured pencils and drawing paper to depict the pivotal life experiences that have shaped their previous leadership experiences and aspirations for the future.

Concluding Remark:

The lack of spiritual education in management institutions is a prevalent issue with multiple underlying factors. Earlier, we explored Harvard Business School's journey to becoming a leading institution in management education, highlighting the challenges it faced and its impressive ability to innovate across all facets of its work, including spiritual education. Harvard Business School strives to develop leaders who can effectively tackle modern challenges. Its alumni not only excel academically but also embody human values and a sense of social responsibility, making them highly sought-after worldwide. Business schools dedicated to nurturing business professionals can integrate spiritual education into their programs to foster academic excellence and improve the employability of their students.

References:

1. Brown, P., Hesketh, A. and Wiliams, S. (2003), "*Employability in a knowledge- driven economy*", Journal of Education and Work, Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 107-126.
2. De Vos, A., De Hauw, S. and Van der Heijden, B. (2011), "*Competency development and career success: the mediating role of employability*", Journal of Vocational Behaviour, Vol. 79 No. 2, pp. 438-447.
3. Diener, E.D. (1984). Subjective well-being. Psychological Bulletin, 95(3), 542-575. American Psychological Association Inc.
4. Diener, E., & Larsen, R. A. (1985). Satisfaction with Life Scale reference. Journal of Personality Assessment, 49, 71-75
5. Guillory, W. A. (2000). The living organization: Spirituality in the workplace, innovations international Inc. Salt Lake City: UT
6. Hillage, J. and Pollard, E. (1998), Employability: Developing a Framework for Policy Analysis, Department for Education and Employment, London.
7. Holder, M. D., Coleman, Æ. B., & Wallace, Æ. J. M. (2010). Aged 8 12 Years, 131150. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-008-9126-1
8. Holmes, L. (2013), "*Competing perspectives on graduate employability: possession, position or process?*", Studies in Higher Education, Vol. 38 No. 4, pp. 538-554.
9. Hogan, R., Chamorro-Premuzic, T. and Kaiser, R. (2013), "*Employability and career success: bridging the gap between theory and reality*", Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 3-16.

10. König, L.S. and Ribarić, H.M. (2019), "*Is there a mismatch between employers' and university teachers' perceptions on graduate employability in Croatia?*", Journal of Management Issues, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 87-102.
11. Luthans, F. (2002). Positive organizational behavior: Developing and managing psychological strengths. The Academy of Management Executives, 16, 57-75.
12. McGinn, K.L. and Oh, E. (2017), "*Gender, social class, and women's employment*", Current Opinion in Psychology, Vol. 18, pp. 84-88.
13. Morrison, A. (2012), "*Absolute and relative employability: lecturers' views on undergraduates' employability*", Paper Presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Manchester, 4-6 September.
14. Moxley, R. S. (1999). Leadership and spirit (1st ed). The Jossey-Bass and Management Series and The Centre for Creative Leadership.
15. Neck, C. P., & Milliman, J. F. (1994). Thought self-leadership: Finding spiritual fulfillment in organizational life. Journal of Managerial Psychology, 9(6), 9-16.
16. Sanders, J. and de Grip, A. (2004), "*Training, task flexibility and the employability of low-skilled workers*", International Journal of Manpower, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 73-89.
17. Sin, C. and Amaral, A. (2017), "*Academics' and employers' perceptions about responsibilities for employability and their initiatives towards its development*", Higher Education, Vol. 73 No. 1, pp. 97-111.
18. Small, L., Shacklock, K. and Marchant, T. (2018), "*Employability: a contemporary review for higher education stakeholders*", Journal of Vocational Education and Training, Vol. 70 No. 1, pp. 148-166.
19. Speight, S., Lackovic, N. and Cooker, L. (2012), "*Stakeholder attitudes towards employability in a Sino-British university*", Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 26-40.
20. Vuksanovic, N., Santa, R., Moisander, T., Taskila, V.M. and Leen, E. (2014), "*Student advancement of graduates employability: employability with students' eyes*", European Students' Union, available at: https://www.esu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Sage-EWSB-online-FINAL.pdf.
21. Williams, S., Karypidou, A., Steele, C. and Dodd, L. (2019), "*A personal construct approach to employability: comparing stakeholders' implicit theories*", Education + Training, Vol. 61 No. 4, pp. 390-412.
22. Yorke, M. (2006), Employability in Higher Education: What It Is-What It Is Not, Vol. 1, Higher Education Academy, York.
23. https://www.hbs.edu