THE VALUE OF A SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP ELECTIVE IN AN MBA PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

In the Western world a significant portion of leadership is developed for business and the community through Master of Business Administration (MBA) programmes. To the greatest extent it may mainly be argued that MBA graduates exert a significant influence on both their organisations and their communities. Their development as successful leaders has the potential to, and often does, affect all aspects of the business (for example, finance, marketing, operations, sales, profit and investor relations). MBA graduates bring with them the tools and techniques acquired on the MBA programme which, in turn, affect their approach to problem solving and leadership within their organisations. Generally however, MBA graduates are highly valued in the workplace, despite their lack of experience.

The global crises such as the September 11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent 'war on terrorism' including the financial crises of WorldCom, Enron, Tyco and Andersen have caused individuals, leaders and organisations to look for a deeper meaning and purpose (a spiritual journey) in their lives. It may be argued therefore that persons want the workplace to be a meaningful environment as they spend, on average, more than 50% of their time there. The importance of meaning, purpose, hope and compassion in the workplace has also been emphasised by a study performed by Mitroff and Denton (1999, pp. 3-4).

> [B]usiness education in this country [United States of America] is devoted overwhelmingly to technical training. This is ironic, because even before Enron, studies showed that executives who fail – financially as well as morally – rarely lack expertise. Rather, they fail because they lack *inter-personal skills and practical wisdom* what Aristotle called prudence (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005, p. 104, emphasis added).

Therefore the gap in business schools' curricula is clear and suggestions as to its improvement abound. What these suggestions have in common is the fundamental premise that the issues to be covered should include Spirituality and spiritual leadership interpersonal skills and practical wisdom, philosophy and theology.

The aim of this research is the development of a spiritual leadership framework or paradigm for MBA programmes. The following research questions support the central research problem:

Research Question One: What is meant by the concept of Spirituality (including its link to spiritual intelligence, spiritual leadership and its challenge to the traditional leadership view)? (Chapter Two)

Research Question Two: What are the relevant criteria for the evaluation of a spiritual leadership development programme? (Chapter Three)

Research Question Three: What should be the framework of such a spiritual leadership programme (elective)? (Chapter Four)

Research Question Four: What is the potential value of a spiritual leadership elective to the MBA programme, the MBA students and how does it change their perspective regarding leadership? (Chapter Six)

Research Question Five: Can spiritual leadership make a significant contribution to organisations? (Chapters Two and Six)

Research Question Six: To what extent can the results of this research be generalised to all business schools in South Africa? (Chapter Seven)

In order to answer the research questions, a mixed research method approach was adopted using non-empirical as well as quantitative and qualitative approaches. Experimental Research Design by means of One-Group Pre-test – Post-test design (due to small sample size) within the context of a phenomenological design (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 224) was adopted. The Evaluation Research Approach, which was the primary approach in addressing the research aims, was adopted to identify the criteria for identifying and recommending a framework for spiritual leadership programme. This approach typically evaluates the need for a programme, the problem it aims to address, the target population, the design (i.e., the theory upon

which it is based), its implementation, impact and efficiency (Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004, p. 40).

A literature review supported by conceptual analysis was undertaken to explore the concepts of Spirituality, spiritual leadership, traditional leadership and the significant contribution that spiritual leadership may make to organisations (see aforementioned research questions). The literature review should endorse the need for a spiritual leadership programme. The relevant programme theory was identified in the literature review.

The implementation of the spiritual leadership framework can have a larger relevance in affecting the following (observed from questionnaires, portfolios and interviews):

- Enhancing meaning, purpose and the worth of work in the workplace.
- Assist organisations to become both people- and profit-focused.
- Organisations will potentially become more aware of their impact on the physical environment.
- Problem-solving in organisations potentially will be addressed with a new mindset (that is, a spiritual mindset).
- Organisations will potentially focus on work-life balance which could support staff retention, staff productivity, staff fulfilment and improved relationships both at home and in the workplace.
- Corporate Social Responsibility programmes have the potential to become more core than is typically common, resulting in organisations with a focus on serving the community.
- The MBA programme within the business schools will be enhanced by :
    - being holistic (not primarily analytical-focused).
    - covering spiritual leadership and its related contribution.
    - adding value to the other modules in the curricula.
    - increasing effectiveness of syndicate groups.
    - enhancing performance of lecturers.

- producing graduates that can potentially add greater value to individuals, their organisations, their families and the community.

add to the body of knowledge regarding a *spiritual leadership framework/structure* that can add value to MBA programmes