

Spirituality in the workplace: An introductory overview

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Dates:
Received: 15 Oct. 2013
Accepted: 12 Mar. 2014
Published: 11 July 2014

How to cite this article:
Fourie, M., 2014, 'Spirituality
in the workplace: An
introductory overview', *In
die Skriflig* 48(1), Art. #1769,
8 pages. [http://dx.doi.
org/10.4102/ids.v48i1.1769](http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v48i1.1769)

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The research was conducted from the perspective of public practical theology, which has the general purpose to gain a deeper understanding of the human in all facets of his or her everyday life. More specifically, practical theology wants to facilitate the experience of meaningfulness and sense outside the walls of the church for people to be able to answer existential questions. In this article, the focus was on the individual in the workplace and the meaning of work. Corporate interest in spirituality is not a fleeting tendency, but a basic movement embracing a new perspective on work in which the emphasis has shifted to the idea that work is meaningful. Organisations of the 21st century require that their employees bring their whole selves to the work – not only their physical presence and intellect, but also their spirituality. A growing number of employees are seeking more than mere financial gain in the workplace – the aim is gain in the form of inspirational and meaningful work. Sufficient proof exists that spirituality in the workplace is responsible for creating a new organisational culture in which workers are more content and better achieving. In addition, employee motivation and experience of job satisfaction are enhanced. The result is an upward spiral for the benefit of the working individual and the workplace.

Spiritualiteit in die werkplek: 'n Inleidende oorsig. Hierdie navorsing is vanuit 'n publieke prakties-teologiese perspektief onderneem. Dit beoog om 'n beter begrip van die mens in al sy of haar lewensfasette te verkry. Dit het ten doel om die ervaring van sin en betekenis buite die mure van die kerk te fasiliteer om mense sodoende in staat te stel om eksistensiële vrae te kan beantwoord. In hierdie artikel is die fokus spesifiek op die werkende individu en die betekenis wat aan werk geheg word, gerig. Korporatiewe belangstelling in werkplek-spiritualiteit is nie 'n vlietende tendens nie, maar 'n basiese beweging met 'n verskuifde perspektief, gerig op die betekenis van werk. Organisasies van die een-en-twintigste eeu vereis dat werknemers hulle totale self – fisies, intellektueel en ook spiritueel – na die werkplek bring. 'n Groeiende aantal werknemers is op soek na meer as slegs ekonomiese beloning – hulle verkies eerder beloning in die vorm van inspirerende en betekenisvolle werk. Daar is genoegsame bewys dat spiritualiteit in die werkplek vir die skep van 'n nuwe organisatoriese kultuur met gelukkiger en beter presterende werkers verantwoordelik is. Daarmee saam word werknemer-motivering en -betekenisvolheid van die werkervaring verhoog. Die resultaat is 'n opwaartse spiraal tot voordeel van die werkende individu asook van die werkplek.

Introduction

Increasing changes all over the world have led to a changing work landscape, sometimes with destructive consequences to the working individual. Changes, occurring at economic, technological, historical, political, social and cultural levels, have a profound effect on the occupational world. Intense competition in all industries is stoked up by an insecure world economy (Raddon 2005:3–4; Blustein 2006:27–30; Holland 2006:4–7; Pryor & Bright 2009:521–522; Greenhaus, Callanan & Godshalk 2010:4–9; Greenhaus & Callanan 2013:594–595).

These changes seem to necessitate redefining the essence of work. Currently, the focus is on innovation, occupational flexibility and continuous learning as keys to success in a new economy. Therefore, employees have to be skilled in self-management as the locus of responsibility, which includes a proactive attitude and openness to new experiences (Hall 1996:8–11; Eby, Butts & Lockwood 2003:689–693; Gockel 2004:160; Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields 2006:430; Greenhaus *et al.* 2010:5–6).

The attributes that organisations require from employers and employees in the 21st century are 'that people bring their whole selves to work rather than just their muscles and/or brains' (Sparrow & Knight 2006:6). These requirements emphasise that not only intelligence, but also spirituality may be fruitfully accommodated in the workplace (Smith 2006:1; Schreuder & Coetzee

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2011:27). The focus is on a spiritual paradigm, which is a new, emerging paradigm. Several developments regarding the understanding of the workplace are incorporated (Biberman & Whitty 1997:131), keeping in mind that 'a focus on positive attributes of people and organizations means looking at organizational behavior in a new light' (Nelson & Cooper 2007:3).

The preceding approach poses challenging demands to the working individual and the organisation regarding the effective management of human resources, because such an approach emphasises a shift in the current thinking on organisations and the working environment. The objectives of this article are, firstly, to come to an understanding of the wider concept of 'what' is constituted by the multiple views of spirituality in the workplace (the meaning). Secondly, by pointing out the benefits to be reaped by an organisation, the reason 'why' spirituality in the workplace should be accommodated and 'why' managers should encourage different views and attitudes towards spirituality amongst the members of the organisation will be indicated. The manner (the 'how') in which spirituality is implemented in organisations falls outside the scope of the objectives of this article and will therefore not be addressed.

The article is conducted from a public practical-theological perspective. The focus is on society – in this case on spirituality in the workplace as social embodiment. It implies an approach that transcends denominational boundaries and searches for God outside the walls of the church. By using this approach, the aim is to contribute to the enrichment and meaningfulness of life as such.

The meaning the working individual attaches to work may differ from person to person. Subsequently, a brief overview is presented of 'work' as an integral activity of the daily existence of the human being.

The meaning of work

'What do you do?' is one of the first questions adults ask each other when they meet for the first time. Work is an integral part of adult identity (Brown & Lent 2013:3). Work is also woven through with all aspects of development. Intellectual, physical, psychological, social and emotional factors have an influence on work and, likewise, work may have an influence on every other area of adult life. An adult's choice of occupation determines what the community expects from him or her in terms of occupational behaviour and activities. It determines their social and recreational lives as well as their personal attitudes and values. Because of continual changes in the economy, technology, composition of the workforce and social climate, the role of the worker cannot be described as static (Hayslip, Panek & Patrick 2007:119; Papalia *et al.* 2007:278; Whitbourne 2007:246; Bjorklund & Bee 2008:202; Schreuder & Coetzee 2011:1; Brown & Lent 2013:2–5).

In the 1960s, the phrase 'different strokes for different folks' was used to explain that people differ from each other in

respect of motives and needs (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields 2006:428). Studs Terkel, the author of the fascinating book *Working* (1974), writes that work is:

... a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying. (p. xiii)

To some adults the importance of work is not only found in the income it generates, but also by providing a frame of life that demarcates the days, weeks and months of the year. It determines the greatest part of their interaction with other human beings. Work is a source of status and identity, self-esteem, social recognition, expression of personal interests and capabilities (Brown & Lent 2013:2–5). Moreover, it presents an opportunity to adults to give something of themselves to others in order to experience meaningfulness. To most adults the main purpose of work is indeed to earn an income. The meaning of work is connected to earning money in exchange for vital provisions (as well as luxuries), and also to the possibility of personal growth. These occupational priorities reflect cultural values and are subject to change (Louw & Edwards 2005:505; Raddon 2005:5–6; Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields 2006:428; Whitbourne 2007:246). The meaning of work may be understood in 'a web of relationships: in the interplay of person and material, and in a larger context that makes it more or less meaningful' (Mirvis 1997:199).

Before spirituality in the workplace is closely examined, it is necessary to look at the meaning of spirituality.

The meaning of spirituality

Spirituality is a wide phenomenon and may be interpreted in divergent ways. Every field cross-pollinated by spirituality defines the term in a unique way. The term resists a precise definition – on the one hand, because of the various ways in which it is applied and on the other hand, because placing it in a definite frame is disputed within disciplines. The diverse opinions enrich its conceptualisation, but also bring about confusion and frustration as underlined by Carette and King (2005):

One of the most intriguing features of the burgeoning literature on spirituality is the way that authors go to extraordinary levels to define the term and yet face complete exasperation in trying to pin down a definite meaning. (p. 31)

According to Miller (2000:6) and West (2000:7), researchers and authors consider the formulation of a precise definition of spirituality as extremely problematic. The result is that there are just as many definitions of spirituality as there are authors. Mohamed *et al.* (2004:103), however, believe that the difficulty in defining spirituality and the multiple definitions are normal and denote a field still in its infancy. With further development and maturing consensus will materialise.

In the light of the preceding arguments and in coherence with the research of Mohamed *et al.* (2004:103), it is concluded

that several authors are of the opinion that spirituality belongs to five dimensions, namely:

1. convictions, attitudes and perceptions
2. transcendental experiences
3. significance and meaning of human existence
4. belief in the paranormal
5. religious behaviour and practice.

It is therefore clear that the definitions are rather incomplete than faulty. Each definition focuses on a facet of spirituality. All the facets combined are thus an indication that spirituality is a multidimensional phenomenon (Miller 2000:6). Hill *et al.* (2000) insist that spirituality must be regarded as a multidimensional construct in order to establish a framework for further studies:

A profile analysis involving each element individually and all elements collectively within a multidimensional framework may be a fruitful way to approach the study of spirituality. (pp. 57–58)

Schneiders (2005:29; 2011:27) indicates that contemporary studies of Christian spirituality are interdisciplinary in nature, as well as fundamentally inductive and hermeneutical in methodology. According to Sheldrake (2005:460), Christian spirituality is regarded as an interdisciplinary field that has a special relationship with theology. A variety of methods is applied and 'thus demands a sophisticated rather than simple approach to interpretation' (Sheldrake 2005:460).

An issue that should receive attention is the interrelationship between spirituality and religiousness. The literature deals with these two concepts in a dual manner. Firstly, the two terms *spirituality* and *religiousness* are combined as an integral concept – they are regarded as a unit and are presented as *spirituality* and *religiousness*. Secondly, the terms are defined by opposing them to each other in an effort to distinguish two clearly different concepts.

Research on the conceptual differences between religiousness and spirituality in the workplace by Mitroff, Denton and Alpaslan (2009), shows that religion is primarily regarded as a phenomenon pertaining to dogma and institutions, and spirituality is seen as a phenomenon belonging to the individual. Religion is also described in negative terms such as dogmatic and intolerant, as opposed to the more positive terms of spirituality, which is characterised as open and tolerant.

Although spirituality is seen as personal, inclusive and positive, and religiousness as external, exclusive and negative, Mohamed *et al.* (2004:103–104) are of the opinion that distinguishing between the two concepts is artificial and unnecessary. The reasons for the argument are, firstly, that all major religions have a spiritual dimension, as confirmed by Zinnbauer, Pargament and Scott (1999:903). Secondly, evaluating religion as negative and spirituality as positive is the product of broad generalisations.

The unfolding of spirituality in the workplace stems from the organisational sciences – 'from a very different mind-

set than one would expect' (Giacalone, Jurkiewicz & Fry 2005:516). The field of workplace spirituality was born in the organisational and social psychology, ethics and management fields. Research in the emerging ontological tradition, for example the work of Biberman and Whitty (1997), has led to important and leading styles in complex and emerging issues in the social sciences (Mirvis 1997; Neal 1997; Mitroff & Denton 1999).

With a better understanding of the concept of spirituality, workplace spirituality will now be investigated.

Spirituality in the workplace

With the ascendancy of the humanistic psychology (specifically the work of Maslow) and the increasing interest in professional counselling and psychedelic culture, spirituality gained popularity in the 1950s and 1960s. During the 1980s, spirituality experienced a second major shift with the self-improvement movement as its focus (Carette & King 2005:44–45). Since the beginning of the 1990s, the interest in spirituality has shown a mushroom movement. Books, journals, websites and visual material on workplace spirituality seem to be an extremely profitable business for publishers. Organisational consultants embrace the value that workplace spirituality presents, as an opportunity to broaden the vision of their clients. Some follow a pragmatic, databased approach and others provide educational seminars and training on the theme (Cavanagh 1999:186; Hicks 2003:27; Mohamed *et al.* 2004:102; Giacalone *et al.* 2005:515–516; Smith 2006:14; Van der Walt, Du Plessis & Barker 2006:264; Marques, Dhiman & King 2007:8; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner 2007:199–200). With the preceding introduction in mind, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003:4) remark with good reason that 'workplace spirituality has spurred curiosity beyond the capacity to scholars to keep pace either theoretically or methodologically'.

The development of corporate interest in spirituality is not only regarded as a trend, but as a movement. Spirituality in the workplace is not a single or one-time-only organised movement. It is a basic movement with a shift in emphasis to the idea of work as being meaningful and having sense (Hicks 2003:27; Marques 2005:29; Smith 2006:6). The movement is not limited to the USA, but enjoys worldwide attention (Smith 2006:13). Hicks (2003:27) wants to know, with good reason, from where the interest in the phenomenon comes. Answers from different disciplines and approaches show that various factors are currently influential in the interest in workplace spirituality. An extensive list of sources have been consulted to identify certain markers (cf. Biberman & Whitty 1997:130–131; Neal 1997:121–122; Mirvis 1997:198; Cavanagh 1999:186–187; Ashmos & Duchon 2000:134–135; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz 2003:3–4; Hicks 2003:27–47; Kinjerski & Skrypnek 2004:26–27; Mohamed *et al.* 2004:102; Giacalone *et al.* 2005:515–516; Smith 2006:6–8; Marques *et al.* 2007:viii–x; Dhiman & Marques 2011:818). Amongst the factors that have been identified as conducive to interest in workplace spirituality, those that are most congruent and important will now be discussed.

Increased work insecurity

The stability of the employee-employer relationship flounders when the trust between employers and organisations is breached due to the number of staff being reduced because of negative economic cycles. This has a dual effect. Firstly, it leads to the undermining of mutual trust, loyalty and employees' expectation that organisations have their interests at heart and care for them. Secondly, restructuring leaves the remaining employees in an overwork syndrome. A situation of staff reduction and restructuring discourages workers to invest in relationships with co-workers, as the bond with colleagues may be short-lived. The outcome of this situation is demoralisation of workers, constant fear, stress, insecurity and thoughts of temporariness and transience. The result of this culture is a negative effect on the spiritual well-being of workers, as well as the impairment of a healthy lifestyle.

The midlife introspection of the Baby Boom generation

The most quoted demographic change that contributes to an increased interest in spirituality in the workplace and elsewhere is the fact that the Baby Boom generation have reached their midlife. Compared to other generations, the Baby Boomers were a large population cohort and comprised persons who were born between 1946 and 1960. Attitudes and behaviour characteristic of this group had a disproportional impact on institutions, including the workplace. According to the religious life cycle view, young adults generally show little interest in religion and spiritual matters. The onset of midlife, however, leads to an increased interest in faith that is not concerned with 'searching [...] for extrinsic measures of success, but for guides to life's intrinsic values and meanings' (Fuller 1988:63). Hicks (2003:28) remarks that 'from the life-cycle perspective, the aging of the boomer-dominated workforce has been a prime factor in the rise in spirituality in the office'. Towards the end of the previous century, it seemed as if a large segment of the population were sharing a midlife crisis. The Baby Boomers experienced a spiritual awakening since the late 1980s and early 1990s, with spiritual self-evaluative questions such as 'What have I reached in life up to now?' and 'What do I want to do with the rest of my life?'. The aging Baby Boomers showed an increasing interest in thinking about and considering the meaning of life against the background of the imminent confronting insecurity, namely death.

An emerging paradigm

The rejection of the rational and mechanistic view of work in which managers were regarded as 'impersonal instruments to achieve material ends' (Ashmos & Duchon 2000:135) has led to new thinking. Together with this change in mindset, the wider recognition that more than only self-interest and rationality motivate workers has brought about a paradigm shift.

The new emerging paradigm is a spiritual paradigm. Jerry Biberman and Michael Whitty (1997) argue that this spiritual

paradigm replaces the early-modern paradigm. The modern paradigm holds the simplistic view that the human being is a rational animal that becomes effective through conditioning. Biberman and Whitty (1997) present a framework for this paradigm shift in their article 'A postmodern spiritual future for work'. The modern paradigm assumes that people are motivated by self-interest and competition with co-workers because of the scarcity of resources – an assumption that is expressed by the faith-view 'that preservation of the self, even if it is at the expense of the other, is paramount to survival' (Biberman & Whitty 1997:131). The spiritual paradigm perspective is open to change. It incorporates developments with regard to understanding the workplace – not only as a conglomerate of individuals, but also in terms of group dynamics and interrelationships. An abundance faith-view implies that abundant sources are available to all, with the emphasis on the outcome that competition is unnecessary. The authors (Biberman & Whitty 1997) maintain the view that the spiritual paradigm will develop continuously in future years and that the:

...existing stress that managers and organizations are experiencing may actually produce the catalyst for organization spiritual transformation, in ways similar to that in which personal crisis have led to personal spiritual growth and transformation. (p. 133)

Moving from a modern to a postmodern cultural worldview

A high premium was originally placed on empirical knowledge. Any statement about the true state of things had to be tested scientifically according to empirical data. It is clear, however, that empirical research is no longer responsible for providing answers as spirituality implies an integration of the secular and the spiritual in a new worldview with no quick classification of the secular and the spiritual. Hicks (2003) states this point of view in a striking way when he remarks the following:

The commitment to treat workers as whole persons, and not merely as inputs to a production process, can lead to genuine and beneficial progress toward creating a human workplace. (p. 47)

A cultural worldview also implies a growing interest in Western and Eastern philosophies. It may be ascribed to a societal shift to diversity and an increasing interest in other cultures. Corporate multinationalism and the resulting effort to integrate Western and Eastern management practices appear to be contributing factors. Globalisation, according to Conradie (2006), is probably the most forceful current today. He (Conradie 2006:53; [author's own translation]) states that '*Globalisering het te make met 'n pluralistiese kultuur waardeur musiek, kos, kleredrag, sportsoorte en tegnologie dwarsoor die wêreld versprei geraak het.*' ['Globalisation has to do with a pluralistic culture through which music, food, clothing, sports and technology was spread across the globe']. Eastern influences on the West may be pointed out in cooking, fashion and architecture (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz 2003:4).

All of these factors form part of the 'spiritual movement'. It is impossible to specify the precise impact of each of these

factors. From the above-mentioned it is clear that examples of spirituality in the workplace do not belong to an isolated or single contextual reality, but environmental conditions 'are causing them to emerge much more rapidly than ever before' (Biberman & Whitty 1997:134). Furthermore, the issue of workplace spirituality cannot be restricted to a number of individual leaders who, on having discovered spiritual language and discussion, are making space for their own organisational profit. It is necessary to make a more specific analysis of the concepts, perceptions and practices that are classified as spirituality in the workplace.

From this analysis, the widely divergent meanings that different individuals attach to the concept of spirituality in the workplace will be elucidated.

What does 'spirituality' in the workplace comprise?

Experts in the field of workplace spirituality do not choose to provide a definition in an effort to avoid conflict. As the point of departure in this article is based on openness. The presentation of a definition might actually imply dogmatic rigidity. Hicks (2003:53) states that the difficult process of defining spirituality precisely is due to the underlying ambiguities in the term as such. Krishnakumar and Neck (2002:154) are of the opinion that the multiple views of spirituality are natural and logical (given the diversity of the workplace) and that a search for a definitive description of the term would not be the best exercise.

Mitroff and Denton (1999) have embarked on a study to determine what spirituality in the workplace means. They conducted 100 in-depth interviews with senior and executive managers. Discussions were held about the meaningfulness and purpose specifically of their work, and for their lives in general. An important finding was that the people questioned, were able to give their own definition of spirituality without a definition being presented to them by the interviewers. More important, however, was the fact that most persons included the same key elements in their definitions. The key elements of a definition of spirituality, as given by the respondents, may briefly be described by the following words and phrases:

- not formal, structured or organised
- no denominations
- broadly inclusive, embracing every person
- universal and timeless
- meaning and purpose in life
- adoration that is shared in the presence of the transcendental
- the sublimity of everything, the commonness of everything
- the interconnectedness of everything
- inner peace and calm
- an inexhaustible source of faith and determination
- the 'ultimate end in itself'.

The researchers (Mitroff & Denton 1999:89) emphasise that not all respondents agree with every element of the

definition, but that most of them 'endorsed the existence of a supreme guiding force and interconnectedness as the fundamental components of spirituality'.

Most of the managers in the study showed receptiveness for spirituality in the workplace. As opposed to this attitude, religion met with resistance. No single religion may stake out a dominant claim to spirituality. Therefore, spirituality in the workplace cannot be connected to a specific religious tradition (Cavanagh 1999:190; Mitroff & Denton 1999:86; Hicks 2003:48–49).

Another important outcome of the groundbreaking work of Mitroff and Denton (1999) concerns the 'whole person'. The authors postulate that separating spirituality and work is problematic and even futile. The reason supplied is the recognition that the individual brings the whole self into the workplace. In the reaction of respondents to the question about which of their qualities they are (currently) capable of living out or expressing in their work, 'total intelligence' and 'entire creativity' are indicated significantly more than 'all feelings', 'whole being and/or soul' or 'full humour'. This is a clear indication that, in the workplace, intelligence is shown and valued much more than emotions or feelings. The researchers remark that '[i]t is clear from the total context of the interviews that a decisive majority wished to be able to express and develop their complete self at work' (Mitroff & Denton 1999:85–86). Lambert (2010) underlines the preceding statement by the following explanation:

According to the workplace spirituality movement, creativity at work is a spiritual process that involves the whole person, and not just the intellect or manual skill, and the new class of knowledge workers is devoting more of their time to work because they find deep meaning and a sense of purpose on the job. (electronic source)

A glance over the most quoted definitions of spirituality in the workplace underlines the preceding research and sheds light on the key components of spirituality, namely the meaningfulness and purpose in the workplace and personal life, a feeling of interconnectedness and of belonging to the workforce, and personal joy and fulfilment (Ashmos & Duncan 2000; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz 2003; Kinjerski & Skrypnik 2004:27; Dhiman & Marques 2011:818).

Thus, it is clear that the spiritual dimension in the workplace has become increasingly important. With good reason, Topper (2003:x) points out that 'there is a strong movement focusing on the importance of spirituality [...] in mental en physical health. Many research studies show [...] spirituality's roll in the human well-being'. The spiritual dimension, together with the physical and intellectual dimension of being a human, contributes to 'interconnected wholeness' (Menz 2003:83).

Public practical theology with a view of social transformation

The research is conducted from a public practical-theological perspective. It endeavours to create space for God in this world, specifically outside the church where public importance is

underlined by the focus on social transformation (Osmer & Schweitzer 2003:6; Osmer 2008:x) in order to emphasise '*de geleefde religie in al haar verschijningsvormen [...] met het oog op onderling verstaan en beter samenleven*' ['a lived religion in all its forms [...] with a better understanding of society as outcome'] (Ganzevoort 2006:151; [author's own translation]). This public practical theology includes the study of the religious praxis in the community in order to establish a social paradigm. Spirituality in the workplace figures in this social paradigm as social embodiment (Dreyer 2007:45).

Practical theology may be understood within the paradigm of social embodiment, which focuses on society and contributes to the enrichment and meaningfulness of life as such (Cilliers 2009:629, 634–635). In connection with this point of view, Dreyer (2007:45) refers to a 'public practical theology', which includes the study of religious praxis in the community in order to establish a social paradigm. Dreyer (2007:46–47) underlines the implication of 'public practical theology' as set out by (Osmer & Schweitzer 2003):

Today, practical theology strives to be fully public in several senses. By making the social sciences its partner in academic dialogue and by taking psychological, societal, and cultural factors into account, practical theology makes its claim to having a voice within the academic world beyond theology and the church. And by addressing issues of public interest and importance, practical theology strives to become involved with the social and political attempts of shaping the future of society or, thinking of current debates, even the future of our globalizing world. (p. 6)

A growing number of employees are searching for more than only economic reward. Reward in the form of inspirational and meaningful work is the prime objective (Mitroff & Denton 1999; Ashmos & Duchon 2000; Bloch 2005). Practical theology as *fides quarens societatem* [faith in search of social embodiment] deals with life in the broadest sense of the word – with maintaining and healing life, lending dignity and value to life, imparting sense to and unlocking the sense of life, which may be lived as a gift before the countenance of God (*coram Deo*; Cilliers 2009:635).

Spirituality leads to an integration of the different aspects of being a human, which Louw (1999) clarifies it in the following way:

'n Integrale spiritualiteit moet die kwaliteit van menswaardigheid sodanig verbeter dat die teenwoordigheid van God 'n bydrae tot die sin van menslike bestaan en die kwessie van humaniteit lewer; dit moet die innerlike en die private verbind met die lewe, die sosiale konteks en publieke karakter van die mens se bestaan. [An integral spirituality has to improve the quality of human existence and the issue of humaneness; it must connect the inner and the private (experiences) of a person with life, the social context and the public character of the human existence.] (p. 236, [author's own translation])

Spirituality shows touches of gracious living and life skills that testifies to an intense awareness of the presence of God and supposes an all-inclusive lifestyle before God.

Practical theology therefore indeed wants to gain a deeper understanding of the human in all the facets of his or her life. Its purpose is to facilitate the experience of meaningfulness and sense outside the walls of the church for people to be able to answer existential questions.

Possible outcomes of a spiritually integrated workplace

'Workplace spirituality is not just a theoretical construct with little or no practical meaningfulness' (Dhiman & Marques 2011:830).

In the research conducted to shed more light on the practical outcomes of workplace spirituality, it was found that the topic concerned has been studied from many angles. These include studies that investigate the applicability of the integration of spirituality into organisational management (Mitroff & Denton 1999), the benefits of spirituality where profitability is set as a goal (Krishnakumar & Neck 2002), the meaning of work where a more productive organisation is the final goal (Mirvis 1997; Ashmos & Duchon 2000), ways in which organisations may be religious or spiritual (Mitroff & Denton 1999) as well as leadership and the promotion of spirituality (Groen 2001). Further investigations of these studies are different dimensions of workplace spirituality and their influence on employee involvement (Saks 2011), facilitation of a comprehensive model for promoting spirituality in the workplace (Pawar 2009), and the exploration of personal, organisational and interactive workplace spirituality (Kolodinsky, Giacalone & Jurkiewicz 2008). What the attributes all have in common is the recognition of the individual as a spiritual being, opportunities to live out an own spirituality, and a spiritually friendly work environment.

Encouraging spirituality within the organisational setup may lead to the strengthening of creativity, honesty, trust, personal fulfilment and commitment, and eventually also to an increase in achievements. Spiritual behaviour may lead to excellence in achievement and organisational welfare because of an increase in personal commitment and involvement, and a holistic approach to the working individual (Dhiman & Marques 2011:818, 830–831). Krishnakumar and Neck (2002:162) are convinced that spiritual workplaces fare better with regard to profitability. In contrast to this outcome, high incidence of absence, high turnover of staff and high stress, which is associated with target dates and depression, are the result of organisations lacking spirituality (Krishnakumar & Neck 2002:161). The preceding statements are confirmed and strengthened by the following quotation (Grant, O'Neil & Stephens 2004):

We believe that the workplace is one of the most important settings in which people come together daily to accomplish what they cannot do on their own, that is, to realize their full potential as human beings. For organizations to erect walls in the way of everyday spiritual development goes against the grain of deep human needs and puts an intolerable burden on individuals. Unless organizations become more spiritual, the fragmentation and ambivalence felt by individuals cannot be repaired. (p. 266)

The key components (such as the working human being that is accepted as a 'whole person' in the workplace, 'interconnected wholeness' with the self, society and the experience of sense with regard to work as well as personal fulfilment) may indeed lead to a positive work experience. This outcome comprises organisations that take advantage of spirituality with regard to greater employee involvement, higher productivity levels, increased profitability and optimal achievement. It may give rise to the longevity of an organisation with improved job security and, in exchange, the organisation experiences the advantages of increased commitment and self-esteem of the workers. The results are indeed an upward spiral to the benefit of the working individual and the workplace.

There is sufficient proof that spirituality in the workplace is responsible for creating a new organisational culture with happier workers who deliver better achievements. Together with these advantages, employee motivation and meaningfulness of the work experience are increased (Garcia-Zamor 2003:362).

Conclusion

Spirituality in the workplace enjoys widespread corporate interest. It comprises a worldwide movement in which the emphasis has shifted to the view that work should be meaningful and significant. The focus is currently on a spiritual paradigm as a new emerging paradigm in which several developments with regard to the understanding of the workplace are incorporated.

The concept of spirituality resists penning a precise definition, because spirituality is a multidimensional phenomenon, which is cross-pollinated by different fields in a unique manner. Although spirituality in the workplace is difficult to define, it is clear that organisations that accommodate spirituality in the workplace are rewarded with an upward spiral of positive outcomes.

Workplace spirituality plays itself out on two levels. Firstly, commitment in that the employee wants to bring his or her 'whole self' to the workplace, and secondly, a need for interconnectedness and belonging – interaction with other and to be able to reach out to people. Perhaps public practical theology has a bigger role to play than currently understood.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that she has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced her in writing this article.

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