Understanding spiritual leadership in organizational contexts: the case of non-profit organization in Korea

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Abstract: - This paper seeks to appreciate a systems-based philosophy, spiritual leadership and organizational spiritual leadership which can be explored through the reflexive research on practice for an alternative way to looking at organizational transformation from systems perspectives. Viable systems theory to understanding spiritual leadership is introduced and examined for the relationship of perception of organizational spiritual leadership and spiritual leadership in Korean contexts. It facilitates some sort of participative debate in which spirituality takes place during the decision-making process in organizations in which participants conceptualize as learning systems, and seeking to uncover the strategic planning of systemic designs for the involved participants. A detailed account of a case study of Korean non-profit organization is given to demonstrate how our proposed framework of understanding spiritual leadership is applied into practice. This paper claims that the participatory process of organizational learning is possible through practice of the spiritual leadership, which facilitates to the process of learning organizational culture in Korean contexts.

Key-Words: Spiritual leadership, viable system theory, organizational spiritual system.

1 Introduction
As a number of writers had been argued that spiritual leadership and spiritual wellbeing are important to create a vision of serving others through making high-trust environment, a systems based spiritual philosophy is required to focus primarily on the appreciation of exploring alternative capitalism, leadership and values in practice (MacGill, 2009; Yu and Jung, 2014). In global civil societies, perceptions and experience of organizational members on spirituality, inner life and transcendence, mindfulness, conscious conversations, diversity, social responsibility and altruistic love are important to understand and develop the nature of human beings, organizations and human societies (Fry and Altman, 2013). As humanity is basically the development of cultural and value systems, cultural progress should enhance the hidden talents and creativity of individuals, as well as perfecting of each person’s moral quality. The concept of value systems or ideology embedded within Behavioural Science and the study of culture which help managers to understand people at work to have a concrete reasoning based on human relations with the influence of organizational history and culture. Human relations and the application of moral reasoning will depend on the understanding and formation of the participants–driven approach to build professional ethics in organizations (Hoivik, 1996, 2002). Putting the moral development works in the context of organizational culture, organizational culture needs more openness and integrity to generate the communication within an open system. Understanding modern organizations as open systems, networks of relations have emerged where more attention can be given interpersonal processes, and power and influence are central to developing and maintaining sustainability amongst individuals, groups and organizations within open societies.

In this paper, we examines how Systems Theory offers a new way of looking at the world in relation to the moral development of modern organizations and societies which tend to emphasise on the importance of values, perceptions and symbolic communication. Appreciating the new science of Systems Theory provide a framework for the holistic world view and guide us as we acknowledge that the social sciences are not separate from questions of a spirituality and human values, morality and ethics. In the search for a spiritual vision that leads us to co-create holistic scientific...
world view, we propose that systems theory and systems methods are needed for making the reflexive research that is possible on the sustainability of the modern organizations and societies that are conceived as open systems. In this paper, we argue that spirituality, organizational spiritual system and spiritual leadership are necessary for organizational change and learning. In this sense, we have research questions: how we can appreciate a systems based spiritual philosophy that makes sense of spiritual leadership in social and organizational contexts? How can organizational use spirituality through leadership to develop organizational spiritual system? This paper review a systems based spiritual philosophy, spiritual leadership and organizational spiritual system through viable system theory. Lastly, a detailed account of a case study of spiritual leadership in action is given to demonstrate how our proposed framework of is applied into practice.

2 Theoretical overview: Towards a Systems Based Spiritual Philosophy

The basic tenet of MacGill (2009)’s view on the nature of world or social reality is based upon the notions of a holistic world as he delineated his arguments with the new science of Systems Theory. Seeing the world in this way, a new way of understanding the nature of a world is possible as it give a new way of looking at the nature of the complex systems, even an alternative way of looking at the mode of cooperative human existence in a larger community. According to MacGill (2009), in Western civilization process, after the scientific reformation and the Enlightenment, the traditional Christian worldview was supplanted by the reductionist scientific worldview, which intimately interwoven with capitalist free market system that has gain the power and control over the human’s body and mind through the accumulation of material goods to meet human’s needs. While human have those material needs and wants, the spiritual aspects of human life have been glossed over. In this sense, this has left Western civilization in an impoverished state compared to the wholeness that has the complex system which is made of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects. With the green movement and complexity science, New Age philosophies have formed to offer alternative ways of seeing the world, which we can construct a continuum of spiritual perspectives that link systems thinking. For instance, Ervin Lazlo (2006) believes that systems science explores the nature of a spiritual reality that originate beyond time and space, and this spiritual reality infuses our world of matter and energy and providing the driving power for the dynamics of living systems or the universe.

2.1 Principles of a systems based spiritual philosophy

In order to understand a spiritual reality and its complex system, we need to have a new philosophy that would need to meet the needs of people who deals with the complexity of today’s world. A spiritual philosophy suitable this needs of people needs to be enough to cope with a wide diversity of beliefs and values systems. However, a new philosophy needs to emerge to inform new guiding principles for determining properties of those complex systems. According to MacGill (2009: 7-10), there are empirically determined properties of complex systems, which have of a system that has the capacity to achieve and maintain its own integrity through time, within a dynamic environment. Such a system achieves this via a number of following principles.

(1) Principles of Autonomy and Connectivity

In the new science of spiritual philosophy, there are principles of autonomy and connectivity that occur within both the inner workings of a complex whole system and the environment that occupy are potentially infinite. For any complex system to operate effectively it must have a balance between autonomy and connectivity. In Chinese philosophy, a Yin-Yang systems emerges to balance the complex living system where moving to excess in either autonomy or connectivity will draw living system back into the stable state of such system.

(2) Principles of castastrophe and emergence

In the new science of spiritual philosophy, the principles of castastrophe and emergence affirm a Systems Theory that appreciates that complex systems allow a castastrophic state. The possibility of castastrophe and chaos are vital to the overall functioning of a complex system.
Chaos allows a sense of unpredictability. Emergence, on the other hand, depended on evolved hierarchical mechanisms, is the concept of Grace. Emergence can lead to a person moving to a whole new level of consciousness, where they are all dependent on the underlying realities of life on a deeper level. There are homeostatoci processes that allow a living system would feel with hope as if the ever present of catastrophe may lead us to find ways to avoid such a calamity and move towards emergence.

(3) Principle of autopoiesis
In the new science of spiritual philosophy, the principle of autopoiesis affirms a possibility of generating “self-producing” systems (Maturana and Varela 1991). The notion of autopoiesis or autopoietic systems refers to structural coupling that ties the structure and function of a complex system or the adaptive whole dynamically sustains it. It can be seen that autopoietic system could exist without the maintenance of its own organization as an output.

(4) Principle of diversity
In the new science of spiritual philosophy, the principle of diversity affirms a complex system has the inequality as diversity increases the range of differences. This means that the inequality between the individual agents must increase as complex systems will often move towards a power law distribution, and this inequality between the agents is often large.

(5) Principle of integration
In the new science of spiritual philosophy, the principle of integration affirms a complex adaptive system that made up of a number of multiple sub systems. All of these various subsystems and their hierarchies need to be functioning effectively and in balance for a single larger whole system.

(6) Principles of free will and destiny
In the new science of spiritual philosophy, principles of free will and destiny a complex adaptive system that has properties of free will and destiny. Free will can only be meaningful if there is uncertainty in our world. In a complex adaptive system, we would have free will as we would be fully aware of the various outcomes of our possible choices in our environment.

This MacGill’s account of the principles of a systems based spiritual philosophy would help us to understand that a spiritual leadership does not exist within an individual mind which is independent from the new science of spiritual philosophy. Rather the process of generating spiritual leadership makes a sense the organizational process of becoming according to principles of a systems based spiritual philosophy. It is the social act of the unity of a whole human being that creates with physical, emotional, mental dimensions of human being.

2.2 Understanding spiritual leadership and organizational spiritual system
In the work of Fry (2003: 711) personal spiritual leadership defined as comprising of values, attitudes and behaviours that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one’s self and others. Spiritual leadership requires an inner life practice that supports hope and faith in a vision of serving others through altruistic love (Fry and Altman, 2013: 17). Being a spiritual leader in organizational contexts, organizational spiritual leadership requires (Fry and Altman, 2013: 34).

1) An organizational vision wherein leaders and followers experience a sense of calling so their lives have purpose and meaning and make a difference.

2) A socio-organizational culture based on altruistic love so that organizational members have a sense of membership and leaders and followers have genuine care, concern and appreciation for both self and others.

Organizational spiritual leadership has a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership and taps into spiritual wellbeing through organizational commitment, employee life satisfaction, finance performance, and corporate responsibility, that is, triple bottom line (Fry and Altman, 2013: 34). As spiritual leadership itself is a two-way interactive process, ethics is very important to it due to the leader-follower
interactions, as leaders influence followers in either positive or negative ways. Therefore the nature of influence itself will highly depend on the characters and behaviours that leader poses. In addition as spiritual leaders typically posses more power they have more responsibilities as it can severely impact followers. Spiritual leaders greatly impact their followers in achievement and pursuit of goals, therefore in the case of both not-for-profit organizations and business entities it becomes highly influential to the prosperity of the organization and as a result everyone working for it as well. In addition to that corporate leaders are influential in developing and further establishing of values in organizations, as leader’s personal values might regulate the kind of ethical climate within the organization. For spiritual leader it becomes important to be a facilitator in bringing about organizational change as it is crucial to try to set an organizational vision and expectations and also to establish hope and faith for the organization (Fry 2003). In addition, an organizational culture is important to make sense of membership and belonging as it is crucial for the appreciation of others, in the case of corporate culture according to Cremer (1993) it is a portrayal implicit rules of communication within organization and its members. From the managerial point of view, according to O’Reilly and Chatman (1996) culture represents set of values and norms that are distributed and supported throughout an organization. Culture also bares social control. Predominantly individuals are concerned about people that surround them; therefore common set of expectations shared by employees in the work place contributed to the effective work flow that in turn influences corporate success.

As corporations and their practices have potential to greatly contribute to societies by not just providing products and services in order to satisfy customer’s demands, and also by providing employment, boosting economic development of the region of operations, paying taxes and etc, it can potentially harm individuals, communities and the environment. Therefore an issue of organizational change emerges as it becomes an important issue in organizations due to the aspiration to optimize performance and achieve an ideal state.

From one point of view organizational change is triggered due to the ever-changing environment. From another point of view it occurs due to the progressive management. Furthermore, according to Ghasemi (2009: 8-9) organizational spiritual system, which is a part of organizational culture, creates ethical norms and is changed to an ethical system. As spirituality has multiple levels (e.g. heart level, human soul level, satisfied soul level, and confident soul level) through which people develop and promote their dimensions of spirituality in people, organizational spiritual system is necessary for one of the essential organizational system that provides needed spiritual flow for organization and directs it. Understanding of a spiritual leadership in workplace, from systemic perspectives, Ghasemi (2009) argues the importance of the spiritual system in organization, which makes sense of a spiritual leadership within organizational settings. Organizational spiritual system (OSS) accepts particular types of spirituality as inputs depending on the history of organizations and organizational culture. Next, processing activities of people in OSS can be including physiological, social, psychological, and spiritual activities. Through the process of OSS, some spiritual norms are generated as output that will be the base of organizational activities and behaviours. In OSS, complex relations between input, process and output are interpersonal, intrapersonal, super-personal, and ex-personal occur like viable system’s process. A particular kind of activities and a series of events take place through the systems’ communication to one another through these relations (Ghasemi, 2009: 7-8). Thus, organizational spiritual system refers to a systemic attempt of people or groups to answer spiritual questions and needs that have recently go through old world spiritual systems transfer to new world spiritual systems that experience with an organizational change. In appreciating the relationship of spiritual leadership, culture, organizational spiritual system and organizational change from systemic perspectives, we discuss to understand organizational spiritual system through viable system theory in the next section.

2.3 Understand organizational spiritual system through viable system theory

In systems thinking development, Fielden (2006) suggested that the mindful knowing and spiritual views of the complex world are necessary prerequisite for alternative leadership styles to emerge. In order to develop mindful knowing and spiritual views of the world, active participation is essential for presence, as mindfulness usually requires immersion of the process for a state of meta-awareness, which is being aware of what is happening as participation occurs. Such concept helps us to understand a spiritual leadership as a mediator of mindful knowing based on historical traditions of organizational spiritual system that happens alongside of other systems in organization.
(Ghasemi, 2009: 7). According to Ghasemi (2009: 8), organizational spiritual system has multiple levels through which individuals improve their spirituality through individual spiritual practices, and promote higher levels. These levels are: heart level, spirit level, human soul level, satisfied soul level, and confident soul level. In OSS, spiritual leadership has eight different styles that are made base on three dimensions of self-seeking, other-seeking, and work seeking. These styles are as follows (Ghasemi, 2009: 4-6). The first style of spiritual leadership focuses on self and others is low. The second style of spiritual leadership pays attention to satisfying needs of self and organization is low but attention to needs of others is high. The third style of spiritual leadership focuses on work and organization. The fourth style of spiritual leadership focuses on organization and employees and customers is high. The fifth style of spiritual leadership focuses on spiritual needs of leader. It can bring some benefits to organization and its members once devotion and absolutely loyalty leader. The sixth style of spiritual leadership is highly focused on self and others, lowly focus on work and organization. The seventh style of spiritual leadership shows that organization and its leader’s needs and wants are more important than others (e.g. employees and customers) needs and wants. The eighth style of spiritual leadership shows that self-seeking, other-seeking and work-seeking are very important simultaneously, and leader highly pays attention to work and organization. At the same time, this style of spiritual leadership highly considers empowerment, self-control and self-awareness of employees and customers. Spiritual leader will contribute to set up an organizational learning climate and culture so that he or she will be act as a facilitator and learner, mentor and disciple at the same time.

Organization’s ability to operate successfully will depend on how much organizational spiritual system is successfully operated alongside of other active systems in organizations. Dealing with these messy networks, however, professions have to face issues in the full complexity of living systems as management is a living practice. As far as organizational spiritual system is concerned, thus, communitarian ethics of regarding the good and bad for the good life of human and living systems should be considered in practice in order to achieve eudaimonia in a shared common world. The idea of eudaimonia (it means the ‘good life’ in English) in Ancient Greek has been pivotal for the development of viable system model (VSM) and society, which happens through the exercise of phronēsis. In other words, the human development is possible through the virtue of a human society and the sustainability of living viable systems and society (Beer, 1975). On the other hand, the contribution of Yolles (1999) concerning the development of the cultural aspects of VSM is that, when we are engaging with “problem-solving” and/or decision-making in order to generate a ‘natural’ communication in which new possibilities are developed. When a new worldview guides us to create a spiritual vision to lead them to dealing with adaptive autonomous systems, and such systems exist not only a phenomenological domain but also a virtual and existential domain (Schwarz, 1994). Through participatory design using VSM we focus on cultural contexts rather than objectives of systems. By appreciating a part of a larger system or network, relationships with people or from outside, viable systems approach has self-selective process, which societal roles, norms, values and ethics are constantly (re)produce to social reality through participation and cooperation amongst people (Espejo, et al., 1996). The notion of the relevance of ethics in terms of the application of practical reason to the development of systems thinking is drawn from the work of Yu and Jung (2014). This approach is in line with what other writers have involved in the writing about ethical consideration for systems thinking development by drawing their ideas from the MacIntyre (1984)’s concepts of ethics and social practice.

Understanding the multiple levels of the OSS and various styles of spiritual leadership from the viable multiples system’s perspective (e.g. operational, strategic and normative levels in Viable System Model (Espejo, et al. 1996)), it is obvious that an alternative way of understanding the nature of organizational learning and changes take place when OSS stresses on the importance of individual spirituality produced by organizational spiritual system’s practice which would be resulted from the operation of OSS within organizations.

3 Case study: Spiritual leadership in action
To provide practical examples of the approach to applying spiritual leadership in organizational contexts, we demonstrate how spiritual leadership is applied in non-profit organization in Korea. This study carries out cooperative research projects between the local communities’ non-profit organizations and the Centre for Industry-Academic Cooperation Foundation at Keimyung University from the September 2013 to June 2014. In order to explore the nature of spiritual leadership in
organizational contexts, we apply systems approach into the understanding spiritual leadership and organizational spiritual system in Korean contexts.

3.1 Background information
The Centre for Industry-Academic Cooperation Foundation (CIACF) was established at Keimyung University to bring together academic disciplines and business practitioners who are working at both private business companies and not-for-profit organizations in local communities. In 2013 the author was involved in the cooperative research projects between social enterprises and CIACF at Keimyung University and investigates leadership development of non-profit organizations (e.g. social enterprises, community business organizations) involved in social business activities. In order to demonstrate how a systems-based spiritual philosophy and spiritual leadership can be applied in practice, the present study explores the leadership activities of non-profit organization (in the Korean context). This study draws on data from the research project that carried out by CIACF at Keimyung University, which situated in Daegu, South Korea.

3.2 Spiritual leadership of the non-profit organization in Korea
The case is introduced and carried out within the context of local communities. The case study was carried out by the author (Dr. Jae Eon Yu) as he was the member of action learning teams of business school at a Korean University situated at Daegu in South Korea. The author was acted as an advisor and facilitator action learning that takes places within community-based ‘village enterprises’ which operate at Daegu, South Korea. The independent social enterprise called ‘Ban Yah Communities’ (BYC), classified as a nonprofit organization, established in October 2010. BYC has three centres, namely, the centre for educational community, centre for cultural community and centre for village cooperative society. BYC has about 7 full-time employees and around 10 voluntary workers who are mainly undergraduate students from various universities at Daegu. Ms. Y. S. Kim is the Chairman of BYC. She is responsible for the overall management and operational activities of BYC. There are three senior managers who are generally involved with policy-making and managerial activities of all centres within BYC and assist the Chairman. To assist the operational activities each centres the voluntary workers are temporarily working within BYC.

According to workers within BYC, Ms. Y. S. Kim, who is spiritual leader of BYC for the over four years, has inner principles that were made her spiritual leader to achieve good performance over last four years. For instance, BYC, one of leading social communities enterprise in local areas, it has good reputation for spiritual and ethical leaderships and was well known for its social responsibility and principles such as the “BYC care for socially disadvantaged people and disabilities in local communities”. Under the leadership of Ms Y. S. Kim, BYC carried forwards these principles and consolidated its community business further in the east area of Daegu city, South Korea. The BYC’s Value and Philosophy are a set of principles that guide and govern the vision, attitude and conduct of BYC and their employees in all matters relating to community business. First elucidated in 2010, the Value and Philosophy of BYC lays down the ethical standards that BYC employees have to observe in their professional lives, and it defines the value system which is developed from the particular history and communitarian values in local communities. The BYC’s Value and Philosophy are as follows.

1. The organizational spiritual system focuses on self and others
2. The organizational spiritual system seeks to alternative life which is possible through life-time education, cultural development, and self-designed social and community economy from a eco-systemic perspective
3. The organizational spiritual system seeks to autonomy and participation from local people in order to solve the problems by themselves
4. The organizational spiritual system seeks to connectivity and relations through participatory approach
5. The organizational spiritual system seeks to the development of human potentials and happiness of community through the development of self and others.

In addition, Ms. Kim seeks to the balancing of the stakeholder’s interests, which involves taking the long view as leader must see company as a whole and the importance of the relationship between workers. As spiritual leadership has something to do with the history and tradition and values of communities and society, Ms. Kim articulated the missions and visions together as well as the values of the company to achieve these missions and visions. To do so, process integrity deals with how
deeply the spiritual culture is ingrained in a company’s core processes. For instance, Ms. Kim and her followers were satisfied with what they do even though the profits are lower in the short-term. In short, it is certain that organizational needs to make a spiritual system for improve the desirable state of health, safety and sustainable development of the organization. The key elements of the organizational spirituality system are: need making to spirituality or a system-based philosophy and values by people, a spiritual leadership, the maintenance of autonomy and connectivity through participation by people. The case study indicates that workers gain their spirituality through making ‘different’ relation to self, others, organization, and local communities.

4 Conclusion
The present study introduces and discusses a theoretical framework for understanding spiritual leadership within organizations from systemic perspectives. As spirituality is one of the main factors for improvement the desirable state of organizational health, safety and sustainable development of human individuals and their organization, organizational spiritual systems should directs and operates towards creating and improving a ethical culture within organizations. Put differently, to be becoming the organizational spiritual system, the ‘ethical difference’ is needed to support for the sustainability of spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality. As the organization can be described as highly complex, uncontrollable and unpredictable, a new science of a systems based spiritual philosophy is necessary to support for sustainable development of individuals, groups, communities and societies Exploring the spiritual philosophy from systemic perspectives, we argue that MacGill (2009)’s concept of spiritual philosophy is evolved through the process of organizational change and learning within social and organizational practices. In these sense, our contention is that we can argue that a systems based philosophy makes sense of spiritual leadership in organizations and can grasped by systems based philosophy that makes the continuous autonomy, relationship, connectivity between two processes of ‘spirit’ and ‘organization’ to proceed within local, contingent contexts. During such relationship, participants can appreciate organizational spiritual systems that develop like ‘heart’ and ‘soul’ of viable living systems in order to deal with unpredictability as organizational transformation and social change take place. In this sense, we propose alternative ways of understanding for the development of organizational spiritual system and spiritual leadership in practice.

References:


