Towards A New Paradigm: Employee Enlightenment

INTRODUCTION

The key factor that determines the success of any business organisation is undoubtedly the human factor. Ever since the evolution of Organisational Behaviour (OB) as distinct discipline, researchers have been on the lookout for attitude(s)/behaviour(s) that contributes towards this success. Many propositions, constructs and hypotheses have been formulated by various experts in this direction. This includes job satisfaction, commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour, employee engagement, etc., and the list is still growing. There is a need to look into this in a new perspective, in a holistic way. The present review proposes to look into the available and identified organisational behavioural constructs like satisfaction, commitment, engagement, etc., that is supposed to lead to success; and propose a new concept that may help organisations in obtaining optimum results and ultimate success. The study after reviewing the various available behavioural constructs proposes a new paradigm – ‘employee enlightenment’ which is defined as ‘that which helps one to do what is right’, which indeed is the need for the hour.

JOB SATISFACTION

In the earlier days it was considered that a highly satisfied work force will facilitate organisations to achieve better level of performance, thus evolving the concept of job satisfaction (JS). Ever since, the concept of JS has been researched in great length, and the volume of literature generated has been significantly high. Job satisfaction is defined by Locke (1976) as ‘a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experience’. It is also mentioned that job Satisfaction is a result of employee’s perception of how well their job provides those things which they view as important.
Research studies regarding JS have established conflicting results. For example, Smith et al. (1969) has opined that, the work itself, pay, promotion opportunities, supervision and co workers had major influences on job satisfaction. The concept, according to Joshi and Sharma, (1997) is central to many aspects of industrial and organizational behaviour and as per Ganguli (1994) is believed to be a good predictor of employee behaviour. JS is generally considered more the result or job performance than its cause. The reasoning is that high performance usually leads to rewards, such as recognition, higher pay and promotion. It is these subsequent rewards that are considered causes of job satisfaction. JS reportedly plays an important role for an organisation in terms of its productivity, efficiency and employee relation (Locke, 1976), and for an employee in terms of health and well being (Khleque, 1984). However, JS itself reportedly does not cause employees to work harder. It is often found that there exists only a slight positive relationship between job satisfaction and performance. Certain other researchers have, for example Staw and Barsade (1993) established that there is no specific relationship between job satisfaction and organisational performance. Thus the capacity of job satisfaction to ensure organisational success was put to discussion and doubt. Further, JS is only an attitude, and there is all possibility of changes in attitude without any apparent reason or cause. It is in this background that a new concept, organisational commitment (OC) emerged.

ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

Organisational commitment is defined as ‘the degree to which an employee identifies with a particular organisation and its goals, and wishes to maintain membership in the organisation’ (Robbins, 2005). More or less a similar definition is proposed by Muchinsky (2007) who says that it is the extent to which an employee feels a sense of allegiance to his or her employer. OC thus reflects a sense of loyalty and a psychological like towards one’s employer. Though a strong relationship is found between satisfaction and commitment, researches have treated both of them differently and have established that commitment may lead to satisfaction (Luthans, 2004). According to Muchinsky (2007) ‘the general pattern of results reveals that job satisfaction, job involvement and organisational commitment are substantially correlated with each other’. Shore et al. (1989) is of the opinion that OC is a better predictor of outcome variables than JS.

Meyer and Allen (1991) proposed three components to the construct of organisational commitment which include the affective, the continuance and the normative components. The affective component is the employee’s emotional attachment to and identification with the organisation. The continuance component refers to commitment based on the costs that the employee associates with leaving the organisation and normative component refers to the employee’s feelings of obligation to remain with the organisation.

It is also opined that (Robbins, 2005) an employee may be dissatisfied with his or her particular job, and consider it a temporary condition, yet not be dissatisfied with the organisation as a whole. However, when dissatisfaction spreads to the organisation itself, individuals are more likely to quit, and the consequent high attrition rate. This being the case, organisation should think of ways and means to maintain a high level of organisational commitment among its employees. Studies, for example, Mowday et al. (1982) have indicated that an individual’s level of organisational commitment is a better indicator of turnover. OC is considered as a better predictor as it is a more enduring response to the organisation as a whole.

Yet another concept, which is an offshoot of OC and that is worth noting is Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) also known as “extra role behaviour” is also said to be an essential ingredient of organisational effectiveness. However, there are others who have stated that OCB is the outcome of an individual who is highly satisfied with his job. Though Organ and Ryan (1995) established modest overall relationship between job satisfaction and OCB, Robbins (2005) says that it is closely linked with satisfaction. According to Janakiramudu et al. (2007) the process of OCB starts
with job satisfaction and ends with organisational effectiveness. It is opined by them that leaders should concentrate on satisfying the members, and they in turn will reciprocate their feelings towards their organisation through OCB. It is said to create feelings of confidence, dedication and pride among employees, which in turn will lead to organisational effectiveness. OCB has not received the type of attention received by other related concepts, and empirical evidences are negligible.

Continuing with the discussion on OC, managerial and professional workers, according to Muchinsky (2007), have exhibited a high degree of job involvement and organisational commitment. Further, committed employees are more likely to remain in the organisation than are uncommitted employees (Meyer, 1997). Highly committed employees, according to Rao and Unnava (2006) see themselves as an integral part of the organisation. A committed employee creatively involves in his organisation’s mission and values. He constantly thinks about ways to do their jobs better. Researches (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990) have also supported a positive relationship between OC and desirable outcomes such as performance, turnover, and absenteeism.

However, according to Luthans (2004) there are mixed opinions about OC. Robbins (2005) is of the opinion that ‘OC is probably less important as a job related attitude that once it was’. There are certain experts, for example Randall et al (1990) who have established not so strong or any relationships between commitment and outcome variables. It is in this background that certain behaviourists, for example, Robbins (2005) stated that in place of organisational commitment ‘we might expect something akin to occupational commitment to become more relevant variable because it better reflects today’s fluid workforce’.

This and the need to look for a broader concept that can motivate the employees to such heights so as to sustain a high level of performance as well as to maintain satisfied and devoted customers have led to the emergence of a new perspective – employee engagement.

**EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

Employee engagement, according to Tripathy (2007) refers to the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards is organisation and values. It is defined as the degree of commitment towards the job, which an employee performs and till how long the employee remains with the organisation as a result of this commitment. It is also said to be a state wherein employees are emotionally attached, in addition to intellectually committed to the job (Hewitt Associates, 2004). To put it simply employee engagement is developing a happy and loyal workforce, and is a two way relationship between employees and their organisation. It is vital to business organisations as it retains and increases the performance, commitment, involvement, and dedication level of the employees.

Employee engagement has been defined as ‘a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values’. An engaged employee is aware of the business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation. The organisation must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee’ (Robinson et al, 2004). Sangeetha (2006) says that employee engagement involves employee understanding the aims of a business and their individual contribution, a desire to perform well in a job they consider interesting, a belief that the employer cares about their needs, and finally, a belief that they are supported. Engaged employees are reported to work with passion and feel profound connection to their company, and help move the organisation forward. The gallop survey had established that on an average only 29 percent of the employees are actively engaged in their jobs, and 54 percent are not engaged.

A review and analysis of the literature reveals that employee engagement is, to a certain extent, combination of organisational commitment and occupational commitment. Most of the available literature lays over emphasis on certain peripheral attitudinal
constructs like job satisfaction, organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour, etc.; and certain organisational constructs like employee contribution, performance, organisational profitability, turnover, etc.

Seijts and Crim (2006) proposed a border concept. They argued that ‘it is imperative for leaders to identify the level of engagement in their organisation and implement behavioural strategies that will facilitate full engagement’. They identified ten ‘avenues of action’ for managers, which was termed “10 Cs” of employee engagement. The variables proposed are connect, career, clarity, covey, congratulate, contribute, control, collaborate, credibility, and confidence. They propose that these avenues of action can help leaders to engage employee’s ‘heads, hearts and hands’. It seems that here also the concept of intellect, and integral part of the human being is left out, and thereby limiting is application to materialists aspects.

The current business scenario calls for something deeper than them – that which takes into consideration and provides due importance to the physiological, psychological and intellectual factors. This should be a factor that touches the inner individual – deeper than the psychological or psychological individual. It is in this light that managerial experts and philosophers proposed the spiritual employee – or spirituality at work place.

This concept is also worth reviewing.

**NEED FOR A HOLISTIC CONCEPT**

Majority of the present day employees are knowledge workers who looks towards not just the traditional management concepts. There is currently a shift in the consciousness of workers at all levels of management. According to Mitroff and Denton (1999) an employee looks for meaning, purpose and fulfilment in his work, not just efficiency and effectiveness. This calls for a more modern and holistic paradigm. Experts like Bberman and Whitty (1997), Lee and Zemke (1993), etc., laid emphasis on spiritual principles and practices. This points out for a deeper look into what is spirituality.

Spirituality is defined by Webster’s Dictionary as ‘of, relating to, consisting of or affecting the spirit’. There are many other who have defined spirituality in varying dimensions. For example, Craige (1999) states that it is concerned with unity, coherence, and balance - both in individual as well as organisational life. To Lerner (2000) it is a lived experience, a set of practices and a consciousness that aligns us with a sense of the sanctity of all being. Thompson (2001) says that it is something we all possess and is more than what we know or what we can do. It comes into play when we decide to do what is right.

Dhinman(2000) differentiated between religion and spirituality when he stated that while religion is outward - focused on rites and rituals, spirituality is focused inward and is non-dogmatic nonexclusive, gender neutral and non patriarchal. Lee and Zemke (1993) put forth another view point and differentiated spiritual workplace from participative management. It is stated by them that while in both management philosophies, skills and abilities are respected and valued, in spiritual work place the manager becomes a leader and takes more of a coaching or mentoring role. In addition to this the leader as well as the workers assigns meaning to relationships at work, and to the work itself.

In his classical book, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Covey (1997) presenting four dimensions of renewal, of which one is the Spiritual Dimension. According to him spiritual dimension is ‘your core, your centre, your commitment to yours value system. It’s a very private area of life and a supremely important one. It draws upon the sources that inspire and uplift you, and tie you to the timeless truth of all humanity’. Applying this in the organisational settings, he elaborates that while physical dimension is expressed in economic terms; mental/ psychological dimensions in terms of recognition, development and talent usage; social/ emotional dimension with how people are treated; the spiritual dimension deals with finding meaning through purpose or contribution and through organisational integrity. However, empirical research in this area is in the infant stage.
with spirituality being defined and seen within the background of culture of each society. It is in the light of these that a new and comprehensive construct has been proposed by the authors. It has been termed as ‘employee enlightenment’.

**EMPLOYEE ENLIGHTENMENT**

From the foregone discussion, it can be stated that a committed employee with a spiritual as well as strategic mindset would be one who would be best suited to meet the ever growing challenges of the modern world. The present employee is educated, well informed, and has a better understanding (wisdom) of the situations. In other sense it can be said that he is wise, wiser than his predecessors. He is capable of assigning meanings to his relationships – on and off his work place. There is, as such a need to see all aspects in a new perspective. As the terminology ‘spiritual’ tends to sound irrational and seems to have a meaning not ideal for all situations and is parochial, the same is substituted with a more rational and all encompassing terminology ‘enlightenment’.

Enlightenment broadly means the acquisition of new wisdom or understanding, enabling clarity of perception. It encloses a threefold process of understanding the truth of the situation, being centered into the truth of the situation, and then acting based on the truth in the larger world.

Considering this meaning, the present authors propose a new terminology ‘Employee Enlightenment’. The terminology proposed includes all the variables from the constructs discussed above and is the broadest possible. This includes the variables of OC, OCB, as well as engagement.

An enlightened employee is one who has clarity of perception, provides utmost care and importance to the value system, willing to go the ‘extra distance’ and considers ‘work as worship’. He is one who is well aware of the reason, purpose and need of, and for all that he performs in his work place. He thinks it is his duly to contribute his mite towards his organisation which provides him with, and caters to all that he needs in the society. His clarity of perception enables him to derive pleasure from what he does in his workplace.

Enlightened employee has the wisdom and is focused on everything he does and sees his work and work place in a different perspective. He understands his position in the work place, his relationship with his work as well as the general environment; and his inner self. He is clear as to the reason and purpose of his efforts and his relationships.

**CONCLUSION**

The social, economic and behavioural changes experienced around the world, with knowledge workers becoming the real capital and expert information being more powerful than any other aspects, there is a need to look at in a different perspective. In this era where the need of the hour is empowerment, employee engagement, etc., an enlightened employee will have all these qualities and much more. He invents the identity of self and tunes himself into the triune of understanding, awareness, and evaluation to become centered into the truth of the situation. Further, enlightened employee will have qualities that others may not have. For example, an enlightened employee looks for answering the question ‘why’, instead of answering ‘how’. Answering ‘why’ helps in moving forward in a fast pace and doing something. An enlightened one is one who has developed all positive qualities, and has eradicated all negative qualities.

An enlightened employee has the unique ability to view the human race as one species, with unqualified equality, and without any discrimination whatsoever. He views everyone equal without any bias and discrimination, and never believes in looking into the negative side of others. In addition, an enlightened employee is capable of radiating a positive energy among his peers and colleagues. He creates not only a better surrounding by keeping his actions at par with his words, but also better humans of tomorrow not just limiting to commitment or engagement. This in variably is the need of the hour.

**REFERENCE**