

HRD Climate, Employee Engagement and Client's Delightfulness: An Analysis of their relationships

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Abstract

HRD climate is crucial for initiating a wide range of HR interventions. One such intervention is engaging employees. Engaged employees drive the organizations towards their goals. A conducive HRD climate enables employee engagement and engaged employees create delightfulness in their clients. Such premises have been examined in this paper. The concept of employee engagement has been receiving considerable attention from the corporate world as much as the academic world. Engagement is defined as "the extent to which people enjoy and believe in what they do and feel valued for doing it." What makes it the most interesting of all the management concepts pertaining to the problems of involvement of the employees in the work place are its startling research results across the world? For example, in a global survey of employee engagement, only 11 percent were found to be engaged in their workplace and a larger percentage of them are either neutral or disengaged. What is more startling to note from such results is that it is costing billions of dollars for developed and the developing nations in terms of lost productivity (Chandrasekhar, 2007). Two hundred employees from 10 major NGOs in south India were administered a questionnaire consisting of standardized scales measuring the study variables. Results are encouraging. We note that the HRD climate; employee engagement and client's delightedness are significantly varied across the different types of NGOs. The relationships among the study variables are positive and significant; indicating that HRD climate conducive is precondition for engaging employees. Further, engagement scores significantly affected the clients' delightfulness. Implications are drawn for developing a new model for HRD based employee engagement in NGOs.

Introduction

Globalization has brought out many management concepts and practices across the world. One of

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the most predominant HR issues in modern organizations is engaging employees. Interestingly, there has been none like employee engagement as a concept that has universal appeal and attraction across the world. More amazing to note is that there are now global studies that summarise, status of engagement of employees in various nations like the US, Europe, UK, China and so on. Despite such efforts internationally, the concept of employee engagement is still in its evolutionary stage.

One classic study that summarized the surveys across the board states that there has never been any concept in the domain of human resources management that has attracted the attention concertedly from both the practitioners and academicians (Scottish Executive Social Research, 2007). The literature on employee engagement builds on earlier research and discussion on issues of commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), but means more than what these terms encapsulate. The defining distinction is that employee engagement is a two-way interaction between the employee and the employer, whereas the earlier focus tended to view the issues from only the employee's point of view (Scottish Executive Social Research, 2007).

Definitions of engagement, or characteristics of an engaged workforce, focus on motivation, satisfaction, commitment, finding meaning at work, pride and advocacy of the organization (in terms of advocating/recommending either the products or services of the organization, or as a place to work). Additionally, having some connection to the organization's overall strategy and objectives and both wanting and being able to work to achieve them, are key elements of engagement. A recurring theme in the literature is the idea that engagement involves workers 'going the extra mile', and exerting discretionary effort over and above what is normally expected.

A non-governmental organization is defined as " an organization that is administered by an autonomous board which holds meetings, collects funds for its support, chiefly from private sources, and expends money, whether with or without paid workers, in conducting a programme directed primarily to improve public health by providing health services or health, or by combination of these activities" (Chandrasekhar, and Anjaiah, 2002). Similarly, a non-governmental organization is an entity set up by a group of persons on their own initiative to help the people of a locality to undertake activities in a self-reliant manner (partly or wholly) to satisfy

identified needs and also to bring them and the public sector extension services closer to one another for more equitable and effective development of the various sections of the rural poor (Chowdhary, 1985). By the beginning of 1990's, non-governmental organizations have become increasingly important actors in global politics. Known by the UN spawned title of non-governmental organizations, they devoted much of their time in international negotiations, conferences and lobbying activities. For instance, two international NGOs - Green peace and Friends of the Earth (FOE) (Rotham, 1972) have been deeply involved in the Antarctic minerals negotiations, and others seek to strengthen the Montreal Protocol on protecting the ozone layer, the London Dumping Convention on disposal of wastes at sea (Metcalf, 1978) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Rotham, 1972).

HRD

As Rao (1996) maintained, there is great scope as well as need for systematic research on HRD sub-systems. Therefore, there is a need to survey the implementation of HRD mechanisms proposed by Pareek and Rao (1992) in similar industries, either public or private. Matching the organizations in terms of major aspects is to be done before initiating the comparative studies.

It was observed in the review of literature that employees perceived the HRD activity as an intellectual level and they have a misconception that the HRD is the responsibility of HRD department and its staff. But, they have to use mechanisms to develop the employees. To comprehend the understanding of their knowledge about HRD, there is a need to assess the implementation of HRD mechanisms at all the levels of the management. The following inadequacies are found in the literature reviewed with regard to research on HRD mechanisms: i) the extent of implementation of each of the major HRD mechanisms proposed by Pareek and Rao (1992) was not reported. ii) Assessment of HRD mechanisms according to levels of the management was not done adequately. iii) the comparison of implementation of HRD mechanisms among the levels of the management within and across the organizations was not adequately done. iv) in some studies the HRD climate was considered as dependent variable, while the HRD mechanisms taken as independent without any theoretical support to this concept. Therefore, there is a need to properly understand the relationships between HRD climate as

independent variable and HRD mechanisms as dependent based on the model suggested by Hellreigal and Slocum (1983). v) HRD climate in organizations has to exist homogeneously in all levels of the management. Variation in the climate among the levels may misbalance HRD systems. Therefore, assessment of HRD climate according to the levels of the management in similar organization is conducted. vi) Comparison of HRD climate among the levels of the functioning in the organization needs immediate attention. v) comparison of HRD climate across the organizations according to the levels of management vi) there is no significant study on proper linking of HRD philosophy, HRD climate and certain HRD outcomes like employee engagement. and vii) Lack of evidence of studies that conceptualize a model of HRD with inclusion of emerging themes like employee engagement and subsequent testing of such model.

Employee Engagement

The concept of employee engagement has been receiving considerable attention from the corporate world as much as the academic world. Engagement is defined as "the extent to which people enjoy and believe in what they do and feel valued for doing it." What makes it an interesting sphere of study of the work place is the startling research results across the world? For example, in a global survey of the employee engagement, only 11 percent were found to be engaged in their workplace and a larger percentage of were either neutral in their engagement or disengaged. What is more startling is that it is costing billions of dollars for developed and the developing nations in terms of lost productivity (Chandrasekhar, 2007)

In recent times, employee engagement and related concepts have received a great deal of interest among HR and management circles. Consequently, there is a plethora of definitions of employee engagement. Their number will increase as more and more studies are undertaken. Let us look at the conceptualization of engagement according to various authors. It is the extent to which employees commit consistently to work and organizations (Richman, 2006), loyal to the cause of the business (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005), emotionally and intellectually involved in their work place (Shaw, 2005), put discretionary efforts into their work extraordinarily (Frank et al., 2004). However, there are arguments and counterarguments about the redundancy of the concept of engagement as it reflects the OB concepts in one way or the other (Saks, 2006). Robinson et.al (2004) states that "...

engagement contains many of the elements of both commitment and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), but is by no means a perfect match with either. In addition, neither commitment nor OCB reflect sufficiently two aspects of engagement – its two-way nature, and the extent to which engaged employees are expected to have an element of business awareness.”

In this study, it is conceptualized as “the extent to which employees commit to people and processes in their organization and how hard they work and how long they stay as a result of that commitment. Components of engagement include rational engagement and emotional engagement. Rational engagement denotes the employees focus on their financial, developmental and professional needs being met.

The outcomes of engagement are also along the same lines as the components of engagement are. For instance, the rational outcomes of engagement results in attraction or retention of the employees. The emotional outcomes of engagement results in discretionary efforts expended by the employees. On the other hand, studies hitherto were conducted to understand what are the drivers of engagement (Robinson, et.al, 2004; TPTR, 2003), the effect of leadership and managerial effectiveness on engagement (Trinka, 2005), engagement and organizational performance (Parsley,2005), engagement and customer focus (Townsend & Gebhardt, 2007). The list is ever expanding.

Thus, there is a need to understand the impact of HRD initiatives made by the Indian organizations in general and NGOs in specific on the work related outcomes as experienced by the employees on the one hand and the client's related outcomes on the other. This study explores relationships between HRD climate, employee's engagement and the client's delightfulness in large NGOs working in South India.

Clients' Delightfulness

Delightfulness is definitely applicable in the lives of the beneficiaries of the development programmes as the NGOs efforts bring livelihood and sustainability of such livelihood in the lives of the people in need and distress. Therefore, nothing is parallel to such state of experience the clients

experience as a result of NGOs efforts. Delightfulness is conceptualized as the extent to which the people who are adopted by the NGOs feel that their achievement in life is extremely important as it brings an unparalleled advancement in their lives. Therefore, client's delightfulness is considered to be the most important outcome of the interventions developed and implemented by the NGOs. Though it is akin to the concept of client's satisfaction in case of other services like hospitals, hotels and other service providers for a pay, nothing is like the transformation that brings in the lives of the people. Such transformation improves their quality of lives, enabling them to earn good amount of money which further enables them pay for better goods and services. How is such transformation possible? It is the engaged employee of the NGOs who can make it possible in the lives of the clients. Thus, the engagement scores are assumed to improve the delightfulness scores.

Statement of the Problem

The present study is based on data obtained from the employees representing 10 NGOs which are categorized as Research & Training organizations, Funding organizations and Action-research organizations. All of them are working in the southern geographical region of the country. Employees representing three levels of functioning in these organizations have been chosen with an intention to have a better representative picture of the HRD climate perceived and their attitudes of engagement in the development work.

In today's context of NGOs there is a need to develop the employees for the effective service delivery in order to ensure a better quality of life for the children, women and men in rural and urban areas. More specifically, there are certain disadvantaged groups in the society which need specialized services to uplift them and to integrate them with the main stream.

Many organizations have attached importance to training at the time of joining of the employees as well as on the job. Employee development has been very well recognized as an adaptable component of HRD in achieving attitudinal change and employee regeneration. A country like Japan, which has been much advanced technically has adopted such programmes for the development of their employees as a pre-requisite for organizational effectiveness. HRD forms a link between organizational systems with client related outcomes. However, the

contribution of such initiatives in a frame work of HRD remains a question in the context of the extent to which employees are engaged in their workplaces.

If HRD plan is to be implemented in any organization, top management has to extend full support and committed to it. Single component of HRD may not bring desired change in the organization. HRD is not a mechanism for fire fighting a problem which crops-up in an organization. The role of line managers is very important in implementation of HRD practices. HRD department has the responsibility to guide and advice the line managers to implement. HRD competencies will be used to educate the line managers in order to implement the HRD efforts and make it clear that HRD is the joint responsibility of line managers and HRD personnel.

It is further understood that the studies have not highlighted the linkage of HRD climate with certain employee relevant outcomes. There were no evidences of studies conducted exclusively on OCTAPAC (O-openness, C-confrontation, T-trust, A-authenticity, P-proactiveness, A-autonomy and C-collaboration) Culture in the organizations. Further, there is no direct evidence of the top management's support/commitment/ towards the HRD and training. Further, it is found that there is no study on clear pronouncement of HRD policy by the top management.

There is a gap in survey with regard to the role of those programme functionaries who are directly responsible for the provision of services to the clients in the implementation of HRD efforts and developing competencies of the HRD staff to guide these supervisors.

Thus, it is argued that due to liberalized economy and the globalization of economy, donor NGOs all over the world are affected by the lack of adequate funds. This has led the donors to be very specific in funding the activities of those NGOs who are very effective and can produce the value to the clients in specific and society in general.

To face these challenges NGOs need to forge strategies for survival by providing quality services. One such strategy is HRD that is needed by these organizations to recognize their human potential which could be engaged in the development work. This enables the supervisory staff to use the capabilities of the employees to the best possible extent to meet organization goals. Thus, there is

need to have good climate of HRD which is a pre-requisite for implementing development programmes with a purpose. This way, it will be easy to develop the employees' skills, knowledge and attitudes and engage them further.

In this study, it is intended to examine the standard assumptions that climate influences engagement. Therefore, HRD climate perceived by the staff of select NGOs has been taken as a major independent variable and the employee engagement as the dependent variable. From the standard theoretical model perception, it is very clear that every perception is bound to result in certain outcomes like, values, opinions, attitudes, feelings etc. While, following this model, HRD climate is treated as perception which could result in an outcome like employee engagement which is well known as an employee attitude in the recent times. Engaged employees make their clients delighted.

Firstly, three categories of organizations were selected, namely, research & training organizations, funding organizations and action-research organizations. Secondly, we assess the relationship between HRD climate scores, employee engagement scores and client's delightfulness with the help of descriptive and inferential statistics.

Objectives and Hypotheses of the Study

This study has a four-fold purpose.

Firstly, it intends to assess the HRD climate perceived by the employees across the select NGOs under study.

Secondly, it attempts to measure the employee engagement of employees across the select NGOs.

Thirdly, to know the inter-organizational differences that exist in the HRD climate as perceived by the employees.

Lastly, to assess the relationships between perceived HRD climate, employee engagement and client's delightfulness. In the light of these objectives, the following null hypotheses are formulated.

1. Employees may not differ in their perceptions about HRD climate, engagement and

client's delightfulness according to the type of their organizations namely research and training organizations, funding organizations and action-development organizations.

2. Clients' may not differ in delightfulness scores according to the type of NGO that provided interventions to them.
3. There may not be a significant correlation between HRD climate dimensions, employee engagement and client's delightfulness...

Research Methodology

Study Area

10 NGOs were identified on the basis of three categories namely: 1) research and training organizations (which provide livelihood training to the beneficiaries), 2) funding organizations (which either directly provides funds to the beneficiaries or support grassroots NGOs dealing with the beneficiaries), and 3) action-development organizations (which empowers beneficiaries and enables them to use community resources). All of them operate in south India. Thus, using stratified dis-proportionate random sampling technique, structured questionnaires were administered to the participants. All the respondents (200) were asked to give a list of four beneficiaries who were directly interact with them as a part of their intervention. Two beneficiaries were randomly chosen to whom four question were asked to assess the extent of their delightfulness. The sampling design is presented in the following table.

TABLE 1: SAMPLING DESIGN

Sn	ORGANISATION	Senior Level	Middle Level	Lower Level	Total
1	Asmitha	8 40.0%	12 60.0%	0 0.0%	20 100.0%
2	Council for Social Development	6 30.0%	6 30.0%	8 40.0%	20 100.0%
3	Anveshi	4 20.0%	8 40.0%	8 40.0%	20 100.0%
4	Centre for World Solidarity	6 30.0%	4 20.0%	10 50.0%	20 100.0%
5	Gandhi Peace Centre	2 10.0%	6 30.0%	12 60.0%	20 100.0%
6	Academy of Gandhian Studies	2 10.0%	2 10.0%	16 80.0%	20 100.0%
7	Help Age India	6 30.0%	2 10.0%	12 60.0%	20 100.0%
8	Integrated Rural Development Services	6 30.0%	6 30.0%	8 40.0%	20 100.0%
9	Progress	2 10.0%	12 60.0%	6 30.0%	20 100.0%
10	Youth for Action	0 0.0%	6 30.0%	14 70.0%	20 100.0%
	Total	42 21.0%	64 32.0%	94 47.0%	200 100.0%

Measures

HRD climate scale: A separate HRD climate questionnaire (HRDCQ) was prepared keeping the NGOs in mind. As the structural and functional attributes of NGOs are quite different from that of other organizations, a specially designed scale to assess the perceived HRD climate based on the HRD needs of the NGOs was evolved. A pilot tested instrument resulted in 21-item scale. Each statement was measured on a five point scale (where 1 is 'not at all true' and 5 is 'very much true'). A composite score was obtained by computing the scores on all items. The reliability co-efficient of

their scales were calculated with the help of split half and test-retest Co-efficient of reliability formulae. The reliability results of the scales are presented in the following table 2.

TABLE 2 : RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS FOR HRD CLIMATE AND ENGAGEMENT SCALES

S.no	Scales	Split half reliability coefficient Pilot study	Test-re-test (pilot and main study)
1	HRD Climate	.8147	.7312
8	Employee Engagement Scale	.7021	.824
3	Clients' Delightfulness	83.02	82.42

The Split half reliability coefficients for all the scales presented in the above table, reveals that they are highly internally consistent, indicating that the scales are very reliable.

Employee engagement Scale

There are various instruments existing for the measurement of engagement. However, almost all of them were exclusively developed for the industrial employees. Therefore, scales that could be used in services context definitely are invited. One such scale is an 18-item scale developed by Thomas (2007) was adapted since, it has sufficient psychometric properties and also considered to be a unidimensional construct befitting the needs of this study. The scale items were measured using five-point scale (were 5=strongly agree and 1=strongly disagree). The split half reliability coefficient for employee engagement scale yielded a value of 0.70. In other words the Employee engagement scale is internally consistent.

Clients' Delightfulness

A 4-item scale was exclusively developed for this study for the measurement of the clients' delightfulness. These items were measured with a three point scale (where 1=disagree, 2=neutral, 3=agree). These items are "I am very delighted having been enabled by the NGOs staff" "I am much delighted in general as I am self-reliant in many aspects of my life". As is evident from table 2, the reliability of the scale is quite high.

In order to test the null hypotheses, means, standard deviations and F ratios were computed to see the inter-organizational differences in HRD climate, engagement and client's delightfulness variables. Finally, regression analysis was utilized to see the predicting relationship between HRD climate, employee engagement and client's delightfulness. All such results are presented in table 3.

Results and Discussion

The results pertaining to the testing of null hypotheses are presented in the following sections. Firstly, the interorganisational analysis has been made to present the HRD climate and employee engagement issues in the NGOs. Secondly, the interfunctional analysis has been made on the study variables. Thirdly, the relationships between the variables have been analyzed.

HRD Climate, Employee Engagement according to Type of NGOs

As regards top management's belief in HRD, all the members from the NGOs perceived uniformity as is evident from the similar mean scores. The f value presented in the table also suggests that such finding is statistically insignificant. This indicates that the top management's belief in HRD is good in NGOs as is evident from the mean scores which have not reached the theoretical average scores.

TABLE 3: HRD CLIMATE BY TYPE OF NGOS

Study Variables	Type of NGO	Mean	S.D	F Value	P=
HRD Climate	Training and research	49.8333	7.56927		
	funding Oriented	45.3000	6.31334	8.100	.000
	Action Oriented	49.2333	8.29819		
Employee Engagement	Training and research	71.5333	19.89589		
	funding Oriented	65.5000	17.77781	4.608	.011
	Action Oriented	75.1667	19.90500		
Client's Delightfulness	Training and research	10.8000	2.80919		
	funding Oriented	9.1750	2.49442	8.815	.000
	Action Oriented	10.9333	3.14544		

The null hypothesis 'Employees may not differ in their perceptions about HRD climate, engagement and client's delightfulness according to the type of their organizations namely research and training organizations, funding organizations and action-development organizations' is rejected, since all the NGOs significantly varied on HRD climate and engagement significantly according to their types".

As is event from table 3, HRD climate is perceived better in T& R (mean=49.83) and Action Oriented (Mean=49.23) NGOs than in Funding NGOs. The F value presented correspondingly shows that such variation in their mean scores is statistically significant. This further indicates that every NGO will have its own HRD climate evolved and built over the time convenient to its own internal structure and functions.

Further, on engagement, it is interesting to note that the employees in Action oriented NGOs (mean=75.18) are more engaged than their counterparts in Training and Research (mean=71.53) and Funding NGOs (mean=65.50).

As regards client's delightfulness, Action oriented (mean=10.93) and Training and Research (Mean=10.80) have made their clients more delighted than the funding organizations. Interestingly, the f value also suggest that such variation in mean scores is statistically significant.

Thus, the null hypothesis "client's delightfulness may not differ according to the type of NGOs providing intervention to them" stands rejected.

Relationships between HRD Climate and Employee Engagement

The hypothesis "HRD climate, engagement and client's delightfulness are not correlated", has been tested using correlation analysis and regression analysis. Results in this regard are presented in table 4.

TABLE 4: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HRD CLIMATE AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Sno	Study Variables	r	Beta	t	P=
1	HRD Climate	.560 [*]	.154	4.394	.000
2	Employee engagement	.894 [*]	.818	23.308	.000
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.904 ^a	.817	.815	6.29832	

$F = 440.622, df = 2,199, P < .05$

It is evident from the table, that both HRD climate and Employee engagement are positively and significantly correlated. However, HRD climate is not very strongly correlated with the Clients' delightfulness. This is further clearly explained by the standardized beta coefficients presented in the table. All of them are found to be statistically significant.

Furthermore, the adjusted R square reveals that 31 percent of change in employee engagement could be accounted for by the dimensions of HRD climate. This indicates that the employee engagement is the function of HRD in NGOs. Thus, the null hypothesis "HRD climate, engagement and client's delightfulness are not correlated" is rejected.

Implications of the Study

As this study primarily explores the nuances of HRD and employee engagement in select NGOs working in south India, it is premature to comment on the status of such HRD orientations of NGOs. There is a need for replication of such efforts to come to terms with uniformity of understanding. However, it is felt very strongly that there is a need for more organized research efforts in this

direction for wider circulation and accepted by the NGOs to have a model of HRD practices which could be oriented towards engaging their employees. Future research should explore the more specific dimensions of HRD climate as identified in this study. Further, there is also a need for understanding the dimensional structure of the engagement measurement more suitable to the NGO members and their work experiences. Besides, there is also a need for a working model of HRD in NGOs that could include engagement as an outcome of HRD practices.

Thus, a new model of HRD in NGOs has been proposed in this section incorporating all the major issues for systematic initiating, implementation and evaluation of the HRD systems.

There is a need for conducive HRD climate which is a sum of perceptions of members about the organization and its HRD philosophy, systems and practices, prevalent in the NGOs in the form of values of openness, confrontation, trust, authenticity, proaction, autonomy, collaboration, experimentation (which are also called OCTAPACE elements). In the presence of these values, there exists harmony for the conduct of HRD practices, which are strategically evolved. There is a need for assessing the HRD climate in order to understand the preparedness of the NGOs for initiating HRD practices. HRD climate survey involves obtaining data from the members of the NGOs using standardized instruments for the measurement of members' perceptions about HRD systems and their impact on the members' engagement prevalent in the NGOs.

By and large, the HRD philosophy of the NGOs is understood from having elicited the top management commitment through HRD policy and the involvement of line management in the HRD programme. Thereafter, the NGOs need to assess the HRD climate before initiating HRD activities.

Thus, there is a need for applying managerial functions in order to make HRD system more effective in the NGOs. This way, the HRD mechanisms which include Training, Performance /potential Appraisal, Career Development, Other Development activities like integration during mergers and acquisition of NGOs and the diversity of workforce could be effectively planned, organized, directed and controlled in the light of the NGOs business objectives.

Further, the model shows two levels of outcomes: the primary and the secondary level outcomes. Primary level outcomes are viewed as improvements in Quality services orientation, Job involvement and job commitment. The secondary level outcomes are viewed as organizational, individual and clientele consequences, which are affected quite likely by other factors. These secondary level outcomes might include increments in employee engagement, client satisfaction, NGOs effectiveness and decrements in NPA, and recovery patterns in the NGOs.

Secondary level outcomes are best viewed as consequences, which are relative in nature. They occur, if at all, later in time and in response to variables like Quality services orientation, Job involvement and job commitment. Therefore, HRD practices can influence the first level outcomes and the second level outcomes, which are directly influenced by the first level outcomes of quality services orientation, job involvement and job commitment.

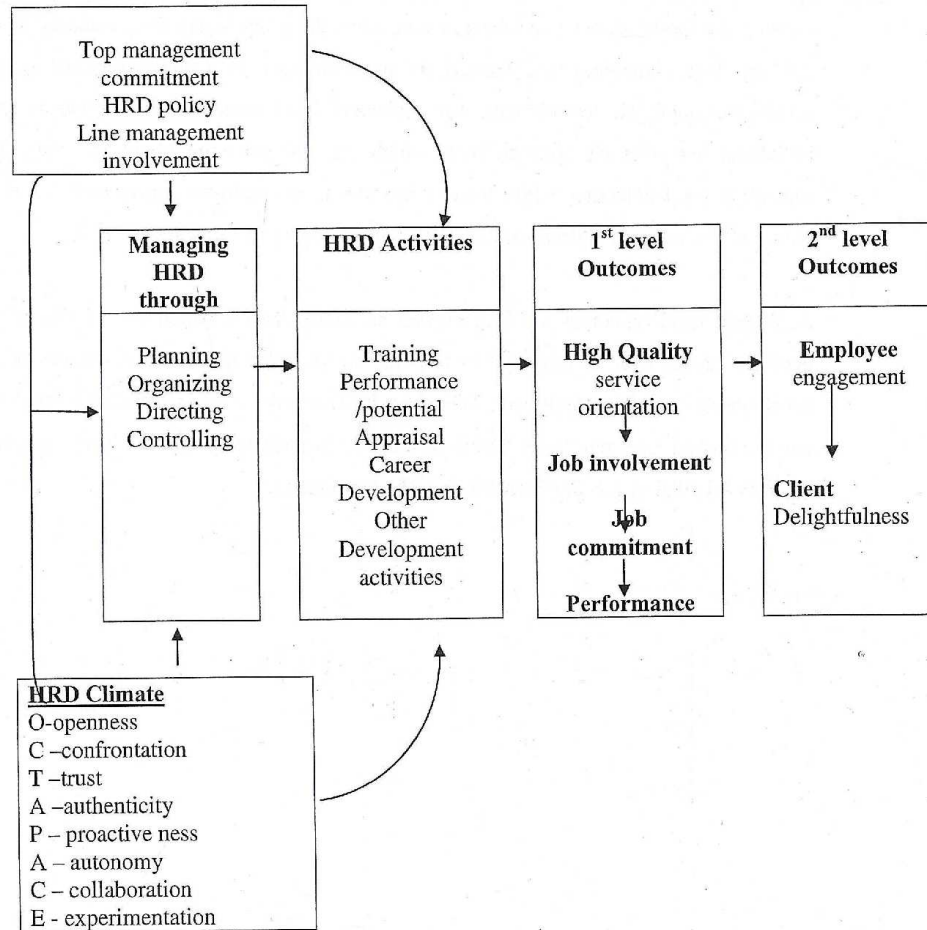


Figure 1: Model of HRD in NGOs

Conclusion

Studies on NGOs are quite sparse in our country. Since the globalization of the economies, the NGOs have been exploring their roles and identifications in structural adjustments our societies have been making. NGOs work is primarily through their employees who are either spirited with voluntarism or encouraged to make careers in such organizations. Evidence is scanty on the research attempts to understand HRD and employee engagement practices in NGOs, though the focus is too

high on the for-profit- organizations' across the world, resulting in a yawning gap. Thus, this study has made an attempt to bridging the gap in HRD and employee engagement practices in the NGOs of south India. Results are mixed, encouraging leading to some understanding of the dynamics in such organizations. Implications were drawn for future research considerations and practice while proposing a model of HRD geared towards employee engagement in NGOs.

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