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## THE NEED TO FOCUS ON HRD CLIMATE IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT

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### ABSTRACT

*Human Resource Development function believes that given proper opportunities and by providing right type of HRD climate in the organisation, individuals can be developed to give full expression of their potential, contributing thereby to the organizational success ensuring optimization of human resources. Thus, optimal level of Human resource Development climate is a precondition for facilitating the function of human resource development in any organisation. This empirical study is aimed at assessing the extent of HRD climate prevailing in Higher Educational institutions in Kolhapur district by drawing out employee perceptions. For this study, perceptual data were collected from 284 staff members from different higher educational institutions through 38-item HRD Climate Questionnaire developed by the Centre for Human resource Development at XLRI Jamshedpur. Results of this study demonstrate overall HRD Climate in higher educational institutions is at an average level. Out of three elements of HRD Climate, General Climate and OCTAPACE Culture are at an average level; however the HRD Mechanisms prevailing in higher educational institutions are at significantly poor level.*

### KEYWORDS

HRD Climate, General Climate, HRD Mechanism, OCTAPAC Culture, Higher Educational Institutions.

### INTRODUCTION

The ultimate aim of higher education is the development of human resources required for the development of the nation, and the institutions of higher learning are required to shoulder this responsibility. Higher education institutions (HE) are in essence HRD (Human resource Development) agencies set for the development of human resources for the country. This function in HE institutions is performed by the staff engaged in teaching-learning delivery system. Higher education systems, policies and institutions are being transformed by globalization, which is "the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness". It requires reinvention of the existing systems, policies and institutions to fit the changing environment. In the context of globalization and advancement in technologies due to ICT revolution the staff of higher educational institutions needs to sharpen and improve their capabilities, skills and attitudes. Effective performance of Higher Education institutions depends largely upon the proper development of its human resources- staff- engaged in teaching- learning activity. Research studies show that it is development of human resources that contributes for organizational success irrespective of their size, nature of ownership and control.

HRD believes that given proper opportunities and by providing right type of HRD climate in the organisation, individuals can be developed to give full expression of their potential, contributing thereby to the organizational success ensuring optimization of human resources. Thus, optimal level of HRD climate is a precondition for facilitating HRD. This empirical study is aimed at assessing the extent of HRD climate prevailing in Higher Educational institutions by drawing out employee perceptions. The researcher has selected higher educational institutions in the Kolhapur district of Maharashtra for the study.

### CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

**HRD And Its Critical Role In HE Institutions-** "Human Resource" means the "manpower or labour which organisation possesses" or the people who are ready, willing and able to contribute to organizational goals". Human resource is one of the most valuable and unique asset of an organisation. While thinking holistically about the term human resources Leon C., Megginson, refers to "the total knowledge, skills, creative abilities, talents and aptitudes of an organization's workforce as well as the values attitudes, beliefs of the individuals involved."

All organizations whether government department, public or private sector, health, recreation or educational institutions- all are equally concerned with HRD, which is said to be the key to organizational success in the modern era of globalization. T. V. Rao (1985) explains HRD in the organizational context that it is a process in which the employees of an organisation are continuously helped in a planned way: i) to acquire or sharpen their capabilities required to perform various obligations, tasks and functions associated with and related to their present or future expected roles; ii) to develop their capabilities as individuals so that they may be able to discover their potentialities and exploit them fully for their own and for organizational purposes; and iii) to develop an organizational culture where superior subordinate relationships, team work and collaboration among different sub-units are strong and contribute to the organizational dynamism and pride of the employees.

**HRD Climate-** The concept of climate with specific reference to HRD context, i.e. HRD climate, has been introduced by Rao and Abraham (1985). It has been elucidated that an optimal level of "Development climate" is essential for facilitating HRD. Such a development climate can be characterized with; to treat the people as the most important resource, manager to assume the responsibility of developing competencies of the employees; faith in the capability of the employees to change and acquire new competencies at any stage of life; to be open in communications and discussion; encouraging risk-taking and experimentation; making efforts to help employees recognize their strength and weaknesses through feedback; general climate of trust, employees helpful to each other and collaborate with each other; team spirit; supportive personnel policies and lastly supportive HRD practices including performance appraisal, training, reward management, potential development, job rotation and career planning.

**Elements of HRD Climate-** The elements of HRD climate can be grouped into three broad categories- general climate, OCTAPAC Culture and HRD Mechanism. General climate items deals with the top management commitment to the human resource development in general. The OCTAPAC items deal with the extent to which openness, Confrontation, Trust, Autonomy, Proactivity, Authenticity and Collaboration are valued and promoted in the organization. The items dealing with HRD mechanisms includes training and development, feedback and performance appraisal, career planning, motivation and rewards and employee welfare and measure the extent to which HRD mechanisms are implemented genuinely.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many researches have been conducted on HRD climate in public and private sector organizations. The result has shown that HRD climate affects performance of the employees. Rao and Abraham, (1986) in a study of 52 organizations show that the average level of climate was about 54% in these organizations which is

rather low. Various studies indicate the introduction and development of HRD programmes in Indian organizations. A study by D. F. Pereira (1985) on study of 'HRD Climate in Larsen and Toubro Ltd.', A study by Susan Varghese (1986) of HRD experiences in Crompton Greaves Ltd. A study of T. V. Rao in Voltas Ltd., found that HRD is practiced more in public sector than in private sector industries. In an analysis by Rao and Abraham, (1986) of 14 large public and private sector organization found that an organization that has better HRD climate and processes is likely to be more effective than an organization that does not have them. A study by Kapoor Bimal (1992) on 'HRD in Indian Oil Corporation' etc. found that HRD is practiced more in public sector than in private sector industries. Venkateswaran, K. P. Sai (1997) in his study of a large sector heavy engineering organisation located in Karnataka, found that, to a large extent, a favorable HRD climate was prevalent in a public sector undertaking in India. Krishna and Rao, (1997) carried out a comprehensive empirical study in BHEL, Hyderabad and found that HRD climate in the organization encouraged middle and senior managers.

Alphonsa, (2000) conducted a survey to examine the HRD climate of private hospitals and found climate satisfactory and reasonably good. Purang Pooja (2008) found the positive relationship between value institutionalization and HRD climate in engineering and manufacturing sector. Srimannarayana (2001) identified below average level of HRD climate in a software organisation in India. Agarawal Tanuja (2002) identified HRD climate was significantly more developmental in IT industry when compared to the automobile industry. Rodrigues, Lewlyn I.R. (2004) found highly satisfactory HRD climate in engineering institutes in India. Sampath & Kalpana, (2005) found that to a large extent organizations where knowledge workers work, enjoy a 'good' HRD Climate.

Mufeed SA, (2006) examined and found existence of poor HRD climate in the hospitals. Srimannarayana M, (2007) conducted a study in local bank of Dubai and found that a good HRD climate was prevalent in the organization. Banu (2007) conducted study in public sector Cement Corporation in Tamil Nadu and found that sound HRD Climate is necessary for the success of the public sector undertakings. Saxena and Tiwari (2009), in their study found that HRD climate in Public Sector banks is average and the perception of employees regarding the HRD climate do not differs significantly on the basis of gender, qualification and designation but it differs significantly on the basis of age. Dr. S. Sarswati (2010), in her study on 'Human Resource Development Climate: An Empirical Study', established significant difference in the HRD climate of software and manufacturing organizations.

A number of researchers on HR practices, have reported that HR practices are positively linked with organizational and employee performance. Huselid (1995) used eleven HRM practices in his study Teseema & Soeters (2006) have studied eight HR practices and their relationship with perceived employee performance. Khurram Shahzad, Sajid Bashir and Muhammad I Ramay (2008) in their research studied impact of three HR Practices of compensation, promotion and performance evaluation on perceived performance of University Teachers in Pakistan.

In India, very few researches have been undertaken to study HRD climate in Higher education sector. Shakeel (1999) in his study of the HRD Climate of two Central Universities found HRD Climate in both the universities at 'low' level, though the developmental climate in Delhi University is comparatively better than those of Jamia Millia Islamia University. Mufeed & Gurkoo, (2006) attempted to study HRD climate in universities and found poor HRD climate and employees dissatisfied with the prevailing HRD practices in the University. Mufeed and Shah (2006) while examining the perception of 549 teaching and non-teaching employees on the existing status of HRD climate of 9 Indian Universities have concluded that the existing HRD climate in the university is not perceived to be satisfactory. Ch. Venkataiah (2011), in his research studied Correlation between HRD Practices and Employee Performance of Private Engineering Colleges in Hyderabad.

An assessment of research studies carried out particularly on HRD climate reveals that numbers of studies have been carried out in the area of HRD climate in public and private sector organizations. Few studies have been undertaken in the area of HRD climate in HE institutions but are restricted to Universities and on HRD Practices in Professional Engineering Colleges. None of the studies have taken into account the perceptions of teaching staff on all the major elements of HRD Climate in all types of professional and non- professional higher educational institutions.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aims to answer the following questions according to the perceptions of teaching staff in the selected HE institutions.

Q.1: What is the level of General Climate- top management commitment- for HRD in Higher Educational Institutions?

Q.2: To What extent HRD Mechanism-sub-systems- are implemented in HE institutions?

Q.3: How HE institutions are performing in terms of OCTAPAC Culture?

## HYPOTHESES

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant inconsistency in applying three elements of HRD climate in Higher Educational institutions in Kolhapur district.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

**SAMPLING** - For the present study the researcher has adopted the '*Purposive Quota Convenient Sampling Technique*'. '*Purposive*' means that total 30 institutions selected are from both professional and non-professional category and from different disciplines of arts, commerce, science, education, law, engineering and management from rural as well as in urban areas. Staff means teaching staff belonging to different levels in the HE institutions; '*Quota*' means the predetermined sample size of 10 respondents per institution, the total quota is of 300 respondents from 30 HE institutions; '*convenient sample*' means only those respondents that were willing to participate in the present survey.

**PERIOD OF THE STUDY** - The data was collected during the period of February – April 2012.

**DATA COLLECTION** - This study being based on survey method, the primary data was collected through the 38- item HRD climate questionnaire being developed by the Centre for HRD at XLRI, Jamshedpur. The researcher was able to collect the 290 filled questionnaires with response rate of 96.67%. Lastly 284 filled in questionnaire were selected for this study after rejecting 6 questionnaires for various reasons like errors, incompleteness and inadequate information.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY** - This study was carried out in reference to HE institutions; the findings of the study are not applicable to other types of organizations.

1. This research is an attempt to study the extent of HRD climate in HE institutions and is limited to Kolhapur district.
2. The study examines the extent of HRD climate on the basis of perception of only teaching staff in HE institutions. There is a possibility of prejudice having entered into their perceptions.
3. The findings may not be the same all over India, since the perception of teachers are likely to vary depending upon the environment.

**FRAMEWORK OF THE ANALYSIS** - Likert's five point scale was used to measure the perception of respondents (5-almost always true, 4-mostly true, 3-sometimes true, 2- rarely true, 1- not at all true). The mean scores of 1 indicates extremely poor and of 5 indicates exceptionally high HRD climate existing in the college/ institute. Mean score of 3 and around indicates an average tendency, while mean scores around 2 indicates poor level and mean score around 4 indicates a fairly good HRD climate in the college/institute. In order to make interpretations easy the mean score were converted into percentage score using the formula Percentage Score = (mean score - 1)\*25. This assumes that a score of 1 represents 0 percent, of 2 represents 25 percent, of 3 represents 50 percent, of 4 represents 75 percent, and of 5 represents 100 percent. Thus, percentage score indicate the degree to which the particular dimension exists in the college/institute out of the ideal 100.

Data collected have been presented in tabular form and the analysis was made using mean score, simple percentage and standard deviation. Z value and P values were used to test the level of significance.

## RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

**Top Management Commitment For HRD – Creating General HRD Climate** - A general supportive climate is important for HRD if it has to be implemented effectively. In HE institutions such supportive climate consist commitment not only from top management, Principal and Vice-Principal, but also from Heads of



different departments, Librarian, Office superintendent, Registrars etc. of the institution. Good personnel policies and positive attitudes towards development are also of essence.

For the assessment of top management's commitment in creating general HRD climate in HE institutions, 14 related items from the questionnaire were identified and the score as regards perception of staff have been calculated and presented in Table 1.

As per Table 1, the average mean score of 3.22 (55.58%) indicates existence of slightly more than average level of general HRD climate in HE institutions. The important factors contributing largely to the general climate are, employees in their own college/institute are helpful to each other (mean score 3.50); they are also very informal and do not hesitate to discuss personal problems with their supervisors (mean score 3.45) and psychological climate in their respective institutions is very conducive to an employee who is interested in developing himself by acquiring new knowledge and skills (mean score 3.41).

**Implementation of HRD sub-systems: HRD Mechanism** - To achieve the HRD objectives, HRD systems may include many processes, mechanisms or sub-systems. These are also called as HRD practices. Successful implementation of HRD involves an integrated look at HRD and efforts to use as many HRD mechanisms as possible. HRD mechanisms or sub-systems or techniques etc., has to play unique role to facilitate favorable HRD climate in the organization. These mechanisms include: performance appraisal, potential appraisal, career planning, performance rewards, feedback and counseling, training, employee welfare for quality work life, job-rotation, etc.

For this purpose, 14 related items from the questionnaire were identified and the perception of respondents was accordingly noted down.

As per table-2, the average mean score of 2.72 (43.05%) indicates existence of almost poor level of HRD Mechanism in HE institutions. Perception of respondents as regards performance appraisal system in HE institutions is at an average level. Good number of respondents mentioned that Performance appraisal reports in their college/institute are based on objective assessment without any subjectivity (mean score of 3.11); weakness of employees are communicated to them in a non-threatening way (mean score of 3.04); and When feedback is given to employees they take it seriously and use it for development (mean score of 3.02).

Training of the staff is extremely important HRD factor in higher education which directly contributes to the staff development. However, maximum number of respondents under the study expressed their negative perception about the statements: employees of their college/institute when sponsored for training take it seriously and try to make best use of it (mean score 2.30, percentage score 32.45); and that their employees are sponsored for training on the basis of genuine training needs (mean score 2.46, percentage score 36.44); and also employees following training are encouraged to apply ideas of what they have learnt (mean score 2.13, percentage score 28.19). This study strongly reveals that training and development with its lowest score is the most neglected HRD practice in HE institutions.

The respondents feel that mechanism established to reward employee's good work and contributions in their college/institute is also at poor level (mean score 2.33 and percentage score 33.24). Respondents perception as regards welfare activities in their college/institute provided to enable employees to harness their mental energy for work purposes is at poor level (mean score 2.76 and percentage score 43.99).

**OCTAPAC Culture** - OCTAPAC culture is essential for facilitating HRD. The essence of the HRD climate can be well gauged from the amount of importance that is given to the development of OCTAPAC culture in the organization. To study the OCTAPAC culture prevailing in HEIs 10 relevant items from the questionnaire were identified and the perception of respondents was calculated and presented in Table 3.

As per Table-3 above, the mean score of 3.11 (52.62%) point out an average level of OCTAPAC culture in HE institutions as perceived by the respondents. The respondents have expressed very positively that staff at their college/institute are not afraid to express or share their feelings with their subordinates (mean score 3.63), and also are not afraid to interact with their superiors to share their feelings (mean score 3.61). Respondents also perceive high order of team spirit at their college/institute (mean score of 3.49). It signifies that openness and collaboration in HE institutions have highly contributed to maintain OCTAPAC culture at moderate level. However, the lowest score of 2.58 (39.54) for item no. 36 validate that college/institute's future plans are not made known to the senior staff to help them develop their juniors and prepare them for future.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THREE ELEMENTS OF HRD CLIMATE

As discussed earlier HRD climate elements can prove important instruments for organizational dynamics, growth and effectiveness, if implemented effectively. To create an appropriate HRD climate in any organisation contribution of all the elements is of the equal importance. Change can be brought in a systematic manner only by using General Climate along with OCTOPAC Culture & introduction of HRD mechanisms.

Table 4 above strongly demonstrates General climate with mean score of 3.22 (55.58) and OCTAPAC culture with mean score of 3.11 (52.62) in HE institutions is above average level. Conversely, HRD mechanisms with mean score of 2.72 (52.62) are significantly at poor level. It appears that top management commitment for HRD and its efforts for establishing OCTAPAC culture in HE institutions are moderately good. However, there is an absolute failure to develop necessary mechanism, sub-systems, procedures and practices dropping HRD climate in HE institutions at average level.

## HYPOTHESES TESTING

### HYPOTHESES

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant inconsistency in applying three elements of HRD climate in HE institutions in Kolhapur district.

All the three elements are significantly inconsistent from each other (Table 5). Hence the hypothesis H<sub>0</sub> is rejected.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The basic objective of this empirical research was to evaluate the extent of HRD climate prevailing in Higher Educational Institutions in Kolhapur district.

- The findings of the present study indicate the existence of average level of HRD Climate in higher educational institutions.
- **General HRD climate** in HE institutions is slightly more than average level. The factors like helpfulness; attitude of the staff to discuss personal problems freely with their supervisors and favorable psychological climate for self-development have contributed to keep the climate somehow at moderate level.
- Staff perceived **OCTAPAC culture** in HE institutions at an average level. The study signifies that openness of staff with their subordinates and superiors and attitude of collaboration have contributed to keep the OCTAPAC culture still at modest level.
- It is identified that **HRD Mechanism/ HRD sub-systems** in HE institutions is at significantly poor level.
- There is significant inconsistency in applying three elements of HRD climate in HE institutions.

The present study reveals that there is still a substantial scope for improvement of various aspects of HRD climate in HE institution. Some of these aspects along with broad suggestions are:

- Top management's commitment should be increased towards overall responsiveness to HRD function. The factors which need immediate attention are, commitment of superiors about development of subordinates, firm personnel policies that show high concern for staff would go long way in creating better general climate in HE institutions.
- The management should draw its attention in bringing reforms in training and development (2.29), rewards and employee welfare (2.33) as the mean score is quite below average on these two HRD mechanisms.
- In creating favorable OCTAPAC culture management should put sincere efforts to embed the values of confrontation, autonomy, authenticity and proactivity in HE institution.

This research is an attempt to study the extent of HRD climate in HE institutions and is limited to Kolhapur district. The scope of study can be extended to include HE institutions at state and national level to give a wider picture of HRD climate in HE institutions. However, this study will positively contribute to the existing literature on HRD and give a way for future research in different areas of HRD in higher education.

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## ANNEXURE

## TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLE 1: TOP MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT FOR HRD –GENERAL HRD CLIMATE				
Item No.	Statements	Mean	Percentage	S.D.
1	Top management of this College goes out of the way to make sure that the employees enjoy their work.	3.24	56.12	0.75
2	Top management of this college believes that human resources are an extremely important resource who should be treated more humanely.	3.15	53.63	0.74
3	Development of Subordinates is seen as an important responsibility by the senior's at this college.	3.09	52.30	0.80
4	The personnel policies in this college facilitate employee's development.	3.16	54.08	0.85
5	Top management of this college is willing to invest a considerable part of their time and other resources towards employee's development.	3.15	53.72	0.73
6	Senior's at this college take active interest in their juniors and helps them learn their job.	3.17	54.17	0.72
7	Employees lacking competence in performing their jobs are helped to acquire competence rather than being left unattended.	3.05	51.15	0.77
8.	Principal/Director in this college believes that employee behavior can be changed and they can be developed at any stage of their life.	3.26	56.47	0.77
9.	Employees in this college are helpful to each other.	3.50	62.41	0.71
10.	Employees in this college are very informal and do not hesitate to discuss personal problems with their supervisors.	3.45	61.26	0.86
11.	Psychological climate in this college is very conducive to any employee interested in developing himself by acquiring new knowledge and skills.	3.41	60.37	0.87
12.	In these college seniors guide their juniors and prepare them for future responsibilities and roles they are likely to take up.	3.10	52.48	0.92
13.	Principal/Director of this college makes efforts to identify and utilize potential of the employees.	3.26	56.47	0.86
18.	Employees in this college do not have any fixed mental impressions about each other.	3.14	53.46	0.74
		<b>3.22</b>	<b>55.58</b>	<b>0.79</b>

Source: Survey Results

Item No.	Statements	Mean	Percentage	SD
14.	Promotions in this college are governed by the suitability criteria alone without any favoritism.	2.61	40.25	0.86
15.	This college has established mechanism to reward employee's good work and contributions.	2.33	33.24	0.92
16.	Principal/Director in this college appreciates employee's good work.	2.84	46.01	0.92
17.	Performance appraisal reports in this college are based on objective assessment without any subjectivity.	3.11	52.75	0.92
19.	Employees are encouraged to experiment with new methods and explore creative ideas.	3.06	51.51	0.65
20.	When any employee makes a mistake his seniors treat it with understanding and help him to learn from such mistakes rather than punish or discourage him.	3.09	52.13	0.78
21.	Weakness of employees is communicated to them in a non-threatening way at this college.	3.04	50.98	1.31
22.	When feedback is given to employees they take it seriously and use it for development.	3.02	50.44	1.25
23.	Employees at this University take pains to understand supervisors or colleagues perceptions about their strengths and weakness.	3.01	50.35	1.10
24.	Employees sponsored for training take it seriously and try to make it best use.	2.30	32.45	0.68
25.	Employees following training are encouraged to apply ideas learnt.	2.13	28.19	0.60
26.	Employees are sponsored for training on the basis of genuine training needs.	2.46	36.44	0.81
37.	The welfare activities in this college enable employees to harness their mental energy for work purposes.	2.76	43.97	0.73
38.	In this college opportunity to work in different departments by rotation facilitates employee development.	2.36	33.95	0.68
		<b>2.72</b>	<b>43.05</b>	<b>0.87</b>

Source: Survey Results

Item No.	Statements	Mean	Percentage	S.D.
27.	Employees trust each other at this college.	3.31	57.80	0.62
28.	Employees at this college are not afraid to interact with their superiors to share their feelings.	3.61	65.25	0.82
29.	Employees at this college are not afraid to express or share their feelings with their subordinates.	3.63	65.87	0.82
30.	Employees are encouraged to take initiative and undertake activities on their own without having to wait for instruction from seniors.	2.93	48.32	0.80
31.	Delegation of authority to encourage juniors to develop handling higher responsibilities is quite common at this college.	3.02	50.44	0.91
32.	In the event of delegation of authority, juniors use it as an opportunity for development.	3.03	50.71	0.73
33.	Team spirit is of high order at this college.	3.49	62.23	0.81
34.	In the event of problems cropping up employee discuss them mutually to resolve them rather than indulge in any blame game.	2.84	45.92	0.79
35.	Seniors often discuss career growth opportunities of juniors with them at this college.	2.61	40.16	0.98
36.	Our college 's future plans are made known to the senior staff to help them develop their juniors and prepare them for future.	2.58	39.54	0.91
		<b>3.11</b>	<b>52.62</b>	<b>0.82</b>

Source: Survey Results

Item No.	HRD Elements	Mean	Percentage	S.D.
1.	General Climate	3.22	55.58	0.79
2.	HRD Mechanism	2.72	43.05	0.87
3.	OCTAPAC Culture	3.11	52.62	0.82
		<b>3.01</b>	<b>50.18</b>	<b>0.83</b>

Source: Survey Results

	HRD elements	Z-value	p-value
1	General Climate and HRD Mechanism	7.374	0.0000*
2	General Climate and OCTOPAC culture	1.62223	0.104739**
3	HRD Mechanism and OCTOPAC culture	5.4781	0.0000*

Source: Survey Results

\* Strongly significant  
 \*\* Moderately significant

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