



"Transforming HR Practices In Indian Ngos: From Survival Strategies To Sustainable Growth"

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Abstract

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are engaged in the arena of philanthropic and humanitarian interventions and empowering marginalised groups to build sustainable livelihoods with the effective development strategies. NGOs have been known for promoting development and enhancing the social service delivery across the globe. In recent years, the increasing relevance of NGOs, they have realized the importance of developing their employees as assets to create sustainability of NGOs and their functions. NGOs are providing ample opportunities to foster employees' skills, knowledge and capabilities to achieve organisational outcomes with an orientation of long-term sustainability. The current research is focusing on Strategic Human Resource development orientations in NGOs. The approach of SHRD in NGOs has a combination of Strategic Action Orientation (SAO) of the top management and their commitment towards employees and Human resource development orientation (HRDO) of the employees and their alignment towards NGOs. The current research uses the Strategic approach to HRD orientations in NGOs as tool to study in-depth about the applications of SAO-HRDO aspects in the context of NGO management.

Key Terms : Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Strategic Action Orientation (SAO), Human Resource Development Orientation (HRDO), People Oriented, Internally Oriented.

INTRODUCTION

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are engaged in the arena of philanthropic and humanitarian interventions and empowering marginalised groups to build sustainable livelihoods with the effective development strategies. NGOs have been known for promoting development and enhancing the social service delivery across the globe. In recent years, the increasing relevance of NGOs, they have realized the

importance of developing their employees as assets to create sustainability of NGOs and their functions. NGOs are providing ample opportunities to foster employees' skills, knowledge and capabilities to achieve organisational outcomes with an orientation of long-term sustainability.

While they are managing the projects and their outcomes, NGOs are critiqued for their internal management problems and constraints that block the growth of the employees and organizations and their sustainability. NGOs are faced with insufficiency of trained personnel, non-existent of placement and promotion, ineffective recruitment and selection, insufficient training opportunities, increasing project costs, resistance of workforce and institutional deficiencies that are blocking the sustainability of NGOs [1]. NGOs are revisiting their internal management dimensions and breed their own management innovations like organizational alignment, employee empowerment and equal opportunities. NGOs are recognizing the need for a strategic approach to use Human Resource Development as a tool to enhance their employees and their performance with desired outcomes. The Strategic approach to HRD orientations in NGOs needs an in-depth understanding and applications in the context of NGO management. The strategic approach to HRD in NGOs bridges the gap and enables NGOs to embrace the 'strategic lens' that would enhance their performance and organisational outcomes.

Literature review

Review of literature gives us a bird view of our understanding of the current research and its dynamics in relation to the approach of SHRD in NGOs, that combines Strategic Action Orientation (SAO) of the top management and their commitment towards employees and Human resource development orientation (HRDO) of the employees and their alignment towards NGOs. Reference [2] has indicated the term NGOs as 'non-profit,' and 'charitable,' organisations'. Researchers [3] has proposed an abridged meaning of NGOs as a self-governed, privately owned, not-for-profit organisations, employed to improve the quality of the life of the marginalised. This definition has led the researchers to understand NGOs in new ways, directing towards the self-governing principles and practices along with orienting their practices towards the quality of life. The insights of [4] have indicated that NGOs have special functions to execute the project plans, to implement the objectives set and to maximise the project outcomes with monitoring and feedback. Reference [5] indicates that NGOs have three specific sets of roles namely: implementers, catalysts and partners to implement their projects and programmes along with desired outcomes. It has been observed that Many NGOs are today donor-driven and fund-driven. The donors have just influenced NGOs in terms of decision making and project implementation. Donors are providing a road map to NGOs to act as their choices than NGOs themselves. Since the professionalization creeps in, NGOs are struggling to cope up and face numerous strategic challenges relating to financial, technological and managerial problems of NGOs. Reference [6] observed that the weak foundation in many NGOs is causing problems and creating an impact and influence locally. Reference [7] has explained the influence of political interference causing damages to humanitarian service organisations. Thus, the review of literature has enabled me to understand the role of NGOs in shaping Human resource in organizations with a strategic framework.

Methodology

Research Problem

The review of literature has made the researcher understand the research gaps existing in the background of Strategic HRD in NGOs. The researcher has identified considerable gaps in the literature which in other way justifies the rationale for carrying out a research work on the topic under study. Thus, Strategic HRD in NGOs needs to be examined from the perspective of the relationship between SAO and HRDO of NGOs.

Research Objectives

Research Objectives (ROs) are the guiding radar on the basis of which the researcher can set the parameters to frame the questionnaire, investigate plans and employ the method of computing/analysing.

1. To examine whether NGOs having similar thrust areas vis-à-vis SAO have similar or different areas of HRDO and vice-versa through cluster analysis.
2. To extract the different dimensions of SAO and HRDO of NGOs and to relate these two dimensions.

Sampling Design for the Study

We have prepared the list of NGOs on the basis of the information available from the portal administered by the NITI Aayog (<https://ngodarpan.gov.in/index.php/search/>). First, based on the information available from the selected website, the states have been ranked on the basis of the number of NGOs that are registered in the relevant state and the total number of NGOs has been ascertained. It has been observed that NGOs in top six states represent 50% of the total NGOs in India. The top six states that have been ranked on the basis of the number of NGOs registered are Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Andhra Pradesh. In order to determine a sample size within manageable limit, a factor 0.025 has been considered as a factor for determining the state-wise number of NGOs for the study.

Methodological Considerations

The current research has employed two perspectives; For perspective I, there would be two types of questionnaires for understanding the issues associated with an understanding of SAO and HRDO of NGOs. The Perspective II would be addressed through case study-based approach. The mixed approach has enabled the researcher to collect the data and compute to derive conclusions.

Findings and discussion

Reference [8] has pointed out 0.7 as an acceptable reliability coefficient of the items construct and accordingly items would be found to be important for the research construct. Based on responses from 167 NGOs, we have obtained a satisfactory value of reliability using Cronbach's Alpha namely; SAO 36 items with 0.952, HRDO covering 65 items with 0.933 and the combination of SAO and HRDO items covering 101 items with 0.938. These values signify the overall strength of the research constructs.

NGOs Cluster membership

Based on Objective I, the cluster analysis has been used to form clusters of NGOs in relation to the closeness of their SHRD orientations with the combination of SAO and HRDO dimensions. As discussed in the methodological consideration, we have carried out hierarchical clustering separately for SAO and HRDO followed by K-Means clustering. As part of hierarchical clustering, we have examined the dendrograms

with respect to SAO and HRDO. From the dendrogram, four clusters for SAO and HRDO could be identified. Subsequently, K-Mean clustering is chosen to recognize cluster membership. The number of clusters in each of the clusters has been obtained from the results of K-Means clustering namely; SAO cluster 1 having 25 NGOs, cluster 2 having 94 NGOs, cluster 3 having 21 NGOs and cluster 4 having 27 NGOs, HRDO cluster 1 having 3 NGOs, Cluster 2 having 60 NGOs, cluster 3 having 75 NGOs and cluster 4 having 29 NGOs. The clusters of SAO-HRDO have been formed and named separately. These therefore denote SAO and HRDO propinquities.

SAO Clusters' Characteristics

The first cluster in SAO is known as *Generic NGOs* that are adequate focusing on the general concerns as part of SAO. Higher emphasis has been observed in communication of mission, development of specific goals and solving interpersonal goals of employees which appear to be generic and contemporary issues in running an NGO. The second cluster of NGOs has been named as *Strategically-Oriented NGOs* in view of their emphasis on the strategic issues. In these NGOs, added emphasis has been observed on aspects concerning communication of mission, planning with respect to the link between internal and external factors, understanding the environment, operational skills of leaders, identification of key social issues, advocacy etc. The third cluster of NGOs appears to have a focus around *people-oriented* issues as evident from their response and the importance attached to projects having widespread impact on key social issues and advocacy. These are aspects that are directed towards the mass in addressing their problems. Hence NGOs in this cluster are considered to pursue a people-oriented approach. The fourth cluster of SAO is known as *Internally-oriented NGOs* and they possibly try to have an orientation in terms of where they are good at and hence give less importance on generic issues like understanding the environment, past experience, projects of other NGOs etc. Because of these reasons we prefer to consider these NGOs as internally-oriented.

HRDO Clusters Characteristics

In the perspective of HRDO, the four clusters of NGOs have been named with the respect to the embedded commonalities in HRD aspects. *NGOs with Bundled HRD is the first HRDO cluster*. In these NGOs, HRD aspects like training, skill development, organisation development, training evaluation, training budget tend to be de-emphasized. NGOs take and pursue a few of the HRD practices. The second cluster of NGOs has been named as *NGOs with Routinised HRD*. Routinised HRD connotes the regular or generic HRD practices that are purportedly common to organisations in general and NGOs in particular. One unique research finding in this regard is that there are few HRD aspects in this cluster where there is less or more mean values.

The third category of NGOs is known as *NGOs with Prospective HRD* that have focus on some specific aspects of HRD like Performance management. The Performance guidance is the sole importance of NGOs and they are trying to help the employees to assess the employee performance towards achieving the organisational outcomes. It has been observed that NGOs are having practice of performance guidance relating to management of employee performance through planning, developing, monitoring and rewarding the employees. *NGOs pursuing employee growth-oriented HRD* is know as the final category that emphasise

on aspects of HRD that support and enable employee growth. It has been observed that majority of the NGOs that are grouped in this cluster have high values in the aspects of HRD and hence the approach of these NGOs tends to be supportive of employee growth. In these NGOs there is a constructive approach in the context of HRD. Among the aspects signifying high values, OD, Field research, trustful relation, etc. are aspects that have been underscored.

SAO-HRDO factors formation

Based on objective 2, we have carried out a factor analysis to understand how SAO-HRDO dimension are inter-related. SAO factors have formed as eight dimensions and we have taken four dimensions that are highly interrelated. The first SAO dimension comprises 9 aspects and has been named as *Organisational imperatives*. *Organisational imperatives* can be considered as guiding principles of the NGOs and their employees. In this current research perspective, *organisational imperatives* of SAO align aspects like supportive work culture, investment on resources, effective organisational structure and strategic partnership. The second dimension of SAO is comprised of seven aspects and is being named as *Strategic Benchmark*. The Strategic Benchmark dimension of SAO is comprised of employee performance, employee competency development and organisational outcome results. The Strategic Benchmarks define NGOs' goals, best practices within NGOs and performance measuring tools. The third dimension of SAO is covering four aspects and has been named as *Competency development*. *Competency development* dimension of SAO signifies a set of skills, knowledge and attitudes that govern employees' growth through competency at par with the organisational needs and priorities. The fourth dimension named as an *Organisational Outcome* comprises four SAO aspects. The SAO dimension of organisational outcome in NGOs is driven by work culture, organisational performance, leadership, operational skills, interpersonal problem solutions and human relations competencies.

In the context of HRDO aspects, the factor analysis in HRDO has been run and thirteen factors were formed. We have selected first five aspects for our discussion.

The first HRDO dimension comprises 10 aspects largely covering the various types of training conducted in NGOs and the dimension is according named as *Training Typology*. In the current research, it is observed that NGOs are required to emphasise on the Training Typology as a module to prepare training plan for employees for effective HRD orientation and employee skill development thrust. The Second HRDO dimension is covering 7 aspects and has been named as *Employee Growth Facilitator*. Employee growth facilitator highlights the alignment of training needs and other aspects of skill development process. The third HRDO dimension is covering 6 aspects and has been named as *Integrated Skill development*. Skill development in NGOs is aimed to bridge the skill gaps; honing employee abilities in order to enable them to succeed in accomplishing expected performance outcomes. The fourth HRDO dimension is covering 6 aspects and has been named as *Employee Maintenance*. The Employee Maintenance dimension in NGOs promotes employee well-being. NGOs use Employee Maintenance as the retention strategy of the organisations. Employee Maintenance is required to retain talented employees of NGOs and support them through employee benefits. The fifth HRDO dimension is covering 6 aspects and has been named as

Performance Management imperatives. Performance management in NGOs is somewhat different in NGOs in the sense that the performance of employees needs to be oriented in the light of the societal perspectives and accordingly the pertinent issues of managing performance of employees and teams need to be considered.

Discussion: SAO-HRDO Implications for NGOs

The aspects of the SAO and HRDO are common to all NGOs irrespective of their size and establishment. The SAO aspects like mission communication, specific goal settings, project planning, organisational structure, Project identification and project quality assurance are found to be complementary to all NGOs. The HRDO aspects are important to all the NGOs and their functions. It is evident from the current research that HRDO aspects, namely human resource planning, fostering employee growth, Formalized Selection process, potential appraisal, Contextual Analysis, Performance Review system, Performance contribution, Employee empowerment, Organisational trust, Training Evaluation and types of training. These aspects of HRDO are significant in the background of NGOs and shaping Strategic HRD. In the context of Perspective II with focused group discussion at CRY, it has been observed that the Flexi hours for employees is CRY's initiative in the background of Strategic HRD initiatives. The working hours of jobs are basic to employees. CRY has adopted the new initiative to introduce the flex hours at the work place. Based on the employees' need, availability, quality of employees and time factor, CRY has designed Flexi hours to have mutual benefits and allow employees to make work-life balance in their personal lives. In Seva Kendra, employees appreciate the initiative of introducing 'Employee Grievance Cell (EGC)'. This cell works for the welfare of the employees. Employees could address the following; employees addressing their grievances to the cell, the inquiry report submitted and final solutions given to protect the employees. SKC has laid policies namely Organisational policy, employee grievance policy, financial policy, Sexual atrocities policy, child protection policy and environmental policy. These are policies formulated to support the employees, target population and benefiting the larger society. These policies are employee supportive and employee oriented.

Teach to Lead has an innovative framework of impact assessment of Employees named "CSIL". This CSIL model has the basic foundation to understand the role of oneself to the group and the role between groups towards oneself. This CSIL framework has indicators, namely; contributing, inspiration, support and Learning. These are the four basic assessment factors that help the employees to understand their performance and the impact made through the project intervention. This is a unique learning for the researcher because this model provides double-loop understanding of performance contribution from individual to teams and teams to the individual. Manitham has the best organisational support for employees. Employees have enumerated that employees are with mentors and vice versa. If any employee or mentor has a family or a social problem, the entire organisation is with them and show their solidarity to contribute and extend the helping hand to propose a solution and solve the problems.

Conclusion

It has been a moment of encouragement for the researcher to conduct the research in the light of a holistic framework. The current research was enriching for the researcher to draw new insights on NGOs and their Strategic HRD practices using SAO and HRDO aspects and dimensions. It has been observed that Organisational Matrix and the positioning of NGOs were one of the breakthroughs of the current research data analysis. The current research explains the uniqueness of research findings covering two aspects; cluster membership, naming and positioning of NGOs in an organisational matrix. In addressing the first and second objectives of this research work, NGOs have been grouped based on commonalities with the help of cluster analysis. On the basis of the commonalities of the NGOs that make-up the clusters, the clusters have been named separately for SAO and HRDO. On the basis of the four types of clusters for SAO and HRDO, we have developed a Strategic HRD Proximity Matrix with 16 cells. Now, corresponding to each NGO, we have two assigned clusters, one for SAO and the other for HRDO. Thus, the current research has given importance to understand NGOs from different perspectives and shows how NGOs can empower the local communities with several areas of operations, in the light of the matrix. The SAO and HRDO aspects have been used comprehensively in this research and the findings reveal some relevant and best practices can be adopted by many NGOs. NGOs have a number of learning lessons to take it forward and develop them for the organisational growth and development.

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