

Participative Management Culture : Understanding Contemporary Change in Public and Private Sectors

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Abstract

Organizational approaches to employee participation and communication have assumed increasing importance for not only management practitioners but also national policy-makers. This study investigates the various employee involvement strategies used in selected public and private sector organizations in India. It attempts to analyze the new paradigm of participative and democratic work environment in a sample of 300 employees drawn from top, middle and lower management levels in these public and private sector organizations. Drawing upon a number of features of participative management, the overall level of participation has been measured keeping in mind the various significant factors related to the quality of interpersonal communication, the level of delegation and decentralization in different units and departments, giving and taking of honest and constructive feedback and proper consultation, and belief in establishing an empowering and total quality culture. The level of participation has been assessed using the SPSS 11.5 statistical package and t-value has been computed to see if there is any significant difference between the perception of public sector respondents and private sector respondents. Conclusions and implications for Indian industry and theoretical considerations have been discussed further.

Key Words : Participative Management, Delegation of authority, Feudalistic environment, Participative appraisal system, Leadership and power dynamics, Public and Private Sector Organizations, Real and genuine participation.

INTRODUCTION

In the present age, an organization can stay in business only by delivering value to its customers, which entails building enduring relationships, identifying means and desires, designing the package, delivering value and ensuring customer satisfaction. In this endeavour, those who are most valuable are the employees of the organizations, not just any particular segment but employees in all positions and in all departments, irrespective of the designation and role assigned to them. All of them have to be responsive and the tool, which can ensure organizational success, is employee participation and empowerment.

Participative management advocates using the cumulative skills and expertise of employees to solve problems and improve service quality. It calls for all members of an organization to share authority, responsibility, accountability and decision-making. Delegation of responsibility and authority is required for participative management to be successful. Participative management involves giving employees membership on committees that make recommendations on changes to organizational policies.

The hierarchical system is still prevalent in most Indian organizations, which results in mainly top down communications. Nevertheless, the old hierarchy system is set to see a major overhaul in the knowledge economy. Rigid command and control organizations are making way for knowledge-based companies where employees reign supreme, especially in sectors such as IT. A few companies are now framing in-house policies that strongly endorse equality and democracy. This will help to create a positive work environment where individuals will feel fairly and equitably rewarded for their efforts and such an environment would result in a culture characterized by higher organizational commitment.

Presently, we have several schemes of worker participation in management operating in a number of public and private sector undertakings in India. But these schemes have not been able to achieve genuine participation in most organizations. One of the reasons being implementation of the scheme without any real preparation, and without carefully weighing the pros and cons of the situation. But does this mean that we should abandon the idea as unworkable in this country in any form? We need to understand that implementation of any new policy in the organization requires a thorough review of the situation to understand the factors which will work in favour and those which will work against the change to be implemented.

This study has been carried out under the belief that Participative Management is not a panacea for all ills in the organization. It should be implemented

in phases as a long-term philosophy working at the intra-personal (individual leadership style), interpersonal (between the boss and subordinate), group level (team work and group cohesiveness) and finally making it a part and parcel of the overall organizational culture.

Employee participation in decision-making, if implemented sincerely, honestly and effectively with a welcome approach by the employers, will certainly produce improved employee performance, job satisfaction and organizational culture. But it is not an easy task, it requires the real commitment of both workers and management.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Recent research evidence (Sparrow and Budhwar, 1997) suggests serious consideration is being given to the development of human resources in Indian organizations. There are indications that the new economic environment has initiated a paradigm shift in the system of employment relations in India (Budhwar and Khatri, 2001). The nature of HRM function in Indian organizations, especially in a comparative context in public and private sector firms (Amba-Rao et al., 2000; Bordia and Blau, 1998; Sharma, 1992) has shown significant differences in the pattern of HR practices of private and public sector organizations. Bordia and Blau (1998) have reported differences in pay levels and employee satisfaction in private and public sector organizations in favour of the former. Reddy et al. (2000) report that workers in the Indian private sector organizations perceive their work climate as being more authoritarian. Although general studies of HRM in India have been conducted, there is a scarcity of comparative HRM research between Indian public and private sector firms. There is considerable research evidence that shows centralized decision-making and little participative management in Indian private sector organizations (Kakar, 1971; Tayeb, 1987). On the other hand, Indian public sector organizations are known to adopt a number of participative techniques (such as works councils, works committee, joint consultation) prescribed by the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947 (Mankidy, 1995; Venkata, 1995). A number of Indian wireless organisations (Mankidy, 1993; Krishna and Monappa, 1994) have shown the influence of the Japanese models of management.

The relationship between communication, consultation and organizational has formed a significant part of broader debates on high-performance work systems (Appelbaum et al., 2000). Kessler et al. (2004) examined the variation in communication & consultation practices in four European countries - France, Germany, Italy and the UK. They found that employees do attach importance to all forms of information,

whether they be related to Corporate or work place developments, although views do vary by national workforce.

The leaders of the US companies have found that a work environment that supports employee involvement, allows employee participation and features interdependent tasks can increase productivity, worker flexibility and job satisfaction (e.g., Cohen et al., 1996; Cordery et al., 1991; Manz and Sims, 1987; Versteeg, 1990; Harris, 1992). Various types and forms of participation have been linked with job satisfaction, including job participation (Griffeth, 1985), job enrichment (Maher and Overbagh, 1971; Wall et al., 1990) and various participative management approaches (Fried, 1991; Spector, 1997). Participation in various group related job activities such as quality circles (Griffin, 1988; Marks et al., 1986), gain sharing committees (Bullock and Perlow, 1986) and work teams (Cordery et al., 1991) have been associated with job satisfaction.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the pattern of organizational culture in the organizations under public and private sectors.
2. To compare the opportunities for participation in decision-making available in public and private sector organizations.
3. To investigate into the avenues for its promotion, available to employees in public and private sectors.

HYPOTHESES

The study hypothesizes the following :

Hypothesis 1 : Most of the management of Indian organizations are feudalistic in nature, and hence, they have little faith in the participative culture of management.

Hypothesis 2 : A sound policy for promotion of participative management is a necessary concomitant of generating a truly participative management culture.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on a total sample size of 400 respondents taken from the public and private sector organizations. Questionnaires were administered to 200 respondents each in the public and private sector. However, questionnaires complete in every respect could be obtained only from 175 respondents in the public sector and 125 respondents in the private sector. The whole universe consisted of employees from top, middle and lower management levels. The employees were selected on the basis of convenience sampling. The entire sample profile and the break-up have been shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Sample Profile and Break-up

	Sample Size	Final Responses Obtained
Public Sector	200	175
Private Sector	200	125
Total	400	300

A structured interview schedule has been used as the main tool for the purpose of collection of primary (field) data. Techniques of interview and observation have also been employed for on the spot investigations and gathering the needed information.

DATA ANALYSIS

Both primary and secondary data was collected to understand the participative management culture in the public and private sector organizations. The participation and communication level in the private and public sector organizations was studied with the help of a questionnaire by obtaining the responses on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) over the 38 items. The data so collected was processed and analyzed which included tabulation of data and performance of statistical application using MS-Excel and SPSS version 12.0. Cronbach's alpha for the various dimensions measuring the level of participation is 0.897.

Drawing upon a number of features of participative management, the overall level of participation has been measured keeping in mind the various significant factors related to the quality of interpersonal communication, both downward and upward, the level of co-operation between the boss and subordinates as well as between various departments, the level of delegation and decentralization in different units and departments, giving and taking of honest and constructive feedback and proper consultation, belief in establishing an empowering and total quality culture and the amount of identification of employees with their tasks. These job-related factors were those, which affected to various degrees the participative culture prevailing in any organization. Table 2 has been drawn to display the overall mean for the level of participation in the public sector (3.62) and private sector (3.74) organizations, which indicates that the level of participation is slightly more in the private sector as compared to public sector organizations although this difference is not very significant ($t = 1.66$).

Table 2
Comparison of Level of Participation Between Respondents of Public and Private Sector Organisations

Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t- Value
Public	175	3.62	0.68	
				1.66NS
Private	125	3.74	0.54	

Source : Field Survey 2008

NS-Not Significant

The respondents were asked to measure the importance of eight types of information on a five-point scale anchored by 'not at all important' and 'very important'. It consists of items like 'financial performance of the company', 'company

Table 3
Comparison of Public and Private Sector Organizations to Know the Importance of Various Types of Information for the Respondents

Dimensions	Group				t- Value
	Public (N=175)		Private (N=125)		
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Financial Performance of the Company	2.83	1.51	3.61	1.26	4.74**
Company Strategy/ Plans for the Future	3.25	1.41	3.02	1.43	1.37NS
Major Changes to the Company	3.37	1.28	3.29	1.38	0.49NS
Employment Prospects, e.g., Job Security	3.09	1.46	3.24	1.35	0.86NS
Conditions of Employment	2.90	1.47	3.46	1.43	3.24**
Decisions Affecting Your Team/ Department	3.44	1.47	3.26	1.46	1.07NS
The Performance of Your Team/ Department	3.28	1.45	2.97	1.23	1.91NS
Your Individual Performance	3.09	1.37	2.98	1.23	0.75NS

Source : Field Survey, 2008

NS - Not Significant

** Significant at 0.01 Level

strategy/plans for the future', 'major changes to the company', 'employment prospects', 'conditions of employment', 'decisions affecting your team/department', 'the performance of your team/department' and 'your individual performance'. The study by Kessler et al. (2004) has been the source of reference for identifying the various dimensions to measure the importance of different types of information provided by the organization. Table 3 shows that information with respect to 'decisions affecting team/department' and 'major changes to be introduced in the organization', is the most important for the public sector respondents, while information regarding 'financial performance of the company' and 'conditions of employment', is most vital for private sector respondents.

Further, employees were asked about the amount of information they received on the dimensions mentioned above using a five-point scale ranging from 'far too little' to 'far too much'. Table 4 suggests a comparative feedback of public and private sector employees on the amount of information received. Overall, there

Table 4
Comparison of Amount of Information Provided to the Respondents in Public and Private Sectors

Dimensions	Group				t-Value
	Public (N=175)		Private (N=125)		
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Financial Performance of the Company	3.79	1.08	2.89	1.62	5.77**
Company Strategy/Plans for the Future	3.31	1.36	2.87	1.52	2.60**
Major Changes to the Company	2.24	1.35	2.58	1.37	2.16*
Employment Prospects, e.g., Job Security	2.83	1.41	2.74	1.29	0.58NS
Conditions of Employment	2.95	1.28	2.95	1.54	0.02NS
Decisions Affecting Your Team/Department	2.31	1.30	2.94	1.37	3.98**
The Performance of Your Team/Department	2.40	1.27	2.54	1.49	0.90NS
Your Individual Performance	3.13	1.30	3.18	1.02	0.32NS

Source : Field Survey, 2008

NS - Not Significant

* Significant at 0.05 Level ** Significant at 0.01 Level

are no instances of employees feeling that they receive 'too much' information in relation to any type of information. Within the context of these general patterns, public sector employees perceived information regarding 'major changes to the company' somewhat low; and in the case of private sector, the lowest recorded mean was 2.54 with respect to the 'performance of team/department' but this was still more than the value recorded for public sector employees.

Finally, satisfaction of employees with the information they received was recorded using a five-point scale ranging from 'dissatisfied' to 'satisfied'. The findings are presented in Table 5. The mean scores of all the dimensions indicate that employees in both cases are fairly satisfied with the information they receive across different areas. Public sector employees seem to be most dissatisfied with feedback provided on the 'performance of team/department' and Private sector employees feel that information regarding 'conditions of employment' is quite dissatisfying.

Table 5

Comparison of Satisfaction of Public and Private Sector Respondents with the Information Provided by the Organization on Various Dimensions

Dimensions	Group				
	Public (N=175)		Private (N=125)		t-Value
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Financial Performance of the Company	4.03	0.86	3.28	1.39	5.77**
Company Strategy/Plans for the Future	3.85	0.98	3.23	1.44	4.39**
Major Changes to the Company	3.02	1.37	2.88	1.46	0.83NS
Employment Prospects, e.g., Job Security	3.23	1.26	3.49	1.42	1.67NS
Conditions of Employment	2.99	1.51	2.60	1.49	2.25*
Decisions Affecting Your Team/Department	2.78	1.40	2.64	1.38	0.84NS
The Performance of Your Team/Department	2.59	1.33	2.64	1.38	0.29NS
Your Individual Performance	2.90	1.20	3.08	1.52	1.16NS

Source : Field Survey, 2008

NS - Not Significant

* Significant at 0.05 Level ** Significant at 0.01 Level

TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

H_{01} : Most of the Managements of Indian organizations are feudalistic in nature, and hence, they have little faith in the participative culture of management.

The study reveals that Management in Indian organizations, both in the public and private sector, have given way to an open and participative environment where employees have autonomy to plan and carry out their work and the overall level of participation as indicated by the mean value in Table 2 is fairly satisfactory with certain noticeable differences across certain dimensions. Table 6 tries to specifically lay down certain dimensions, which measure the open and participative approach of management. Some of these dimensions are worth explanation.

L1 is a measure of expression of opinion and ideas by the employees, which are different from their bosses. The mean value for this dimension is a clear indication that employees can freely express their opinion even if it is different from the opinion that the superiors carry which would not have been possible in a feudalistic environment.

Table 6
Group Statistics for Dimensions Measuring Participative Culture of Management

Dimensions	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	t-Value
L1 I feel free to have and express opinions and ideas that are different from my bosses.	Public	175	3.76	1.373	0.10NS
	Private	125	3.74	1.307	
L2 The appraisal system provides for a frank discussion between the appraiser and the appraisee.	Public	175	3.03	1.542	2.41*
	Private	125	3.46	1.489	
L3 This is the job in which I can feel a sense of accomplishment.	Public	175	3.27	1.627	3.10**
	Private	125	3.82	1.322	
L4 I feel helpless in relation to vital matters.	Public	175	4.06	1.128	1.59NS
	Private	125	4.26	1.079	
L5 Every employee is empowered and has the autonomy to plan, organize and do his work.	Public	175	3.55	1.262	3.38**
	Private	125	4.02	1.066	

Source : Field Survey, 2008

NS - Not Significant

* Significant at 0.05 Level ** Significant at 0.01 Level

L2 measures whether the appraisal system provides for a frank discussion between the appraiser and the appraisee. An appraisal system characterized by free and frank discussion is increasingly being implemented in Indian organizations and the study indicates that more of private sector organizations are adopting a participative appraisal system in comparison to public sector organizations and this difference is significant as indicated by the t-value ($t = 2.41$).

L3 measures the sense of accomplishment of the respondents in their job. A sense of accomplishment is experienced by those employees who identify themselves with their job and is associated with their level of motivation. There is significant difference between the opinion of public and private sector employees.

L4 is a measure of the feeling of helplessness in the respondents in relation to vital matters, which is absent in both cases.

L5 expresses the perception that employees are empowered and have the autonomy to plan, organize and do their work. There is a significant difference in the opinion of employees from both the public and private sector, who feel more empowered.

The respondents when asked directly whether they favour participation in management indicated a positive attitude.

Table 7 indicates a significant difference in the opinion of public sector and private sector employees, with more employees from private sector favouring participation in management.

Table 7
Whether Employees Favour Participation in Management

Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-Value
Public Sector	175	2.62	0.65	
				2.97**
Private Sector	125	2.82	0.51	

Source : Field Survey, 2008

** Significant at 0.01 level

Thus, it is clear from Tables 6 and 7 that Indian organizations are increasingly preferring an open and participative environment and favour the concept of participative management.

H₀₂ : A sound policy for the promotion of participative management is a necessary concomitant for generating a truly participative management culture.

The complex global scenario calls for promoting the concept of Participative management by not merely forming new and more committees and participative bodies but making this concept properly imbibed into the culture of the organization.

Organizations can no longer be run with autocratic beliefs because the educated work force wants greater flexibility in the employment relationships. The responsibility for the promotion of the concept lies with every employee but more so over on the Management. Management will have to transfer more responsibility to employees who have the desire for taking up more interesting and challenging work involving more planning and decision-making as shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Whether Employees Desire for More Interesting and Challenging Work Involving More Planning and Decision-making

Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-Value
Public Sector	175	4.14	1.004	
				2.81**
Private Sector	125	3.78	1.202	

Source : Field Survey, 2008

** Significant at 0.01 level

The respondents were asked to explain which particular factor was the most important for the promotion of participative management culture. Table 9 shows that the employees from both the Public and Private sector thought that mutual trust and confidence between the workers and management was the most important factor for creating a participative management culture.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Important Factors for Promotion of Participative Management Culture

Factors for Promotion of Participative Management	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Consideration of the institution as their own by both workers and management.	Public	175	1.07	.263
	Private	125	1.05	.215
Attitude of sacrificing narrow selfish interests for broader ends.	Public	175	1.07	.253
	Private	125	1.11	.317
Readiness to sincerely understand each other's views and problems.	Public	175	1.09	.289
	Private	125	1.06	.246
Cordial worker-management relationship	Public	175	1.10	.297
	Private	125	1.11	.317
Preparedness to forsake some rights to maintain consensus and co-operation and unity.	Public	175	1.06	.233
	Private	125	1.06	.231

Table 9 (Contd.)

Adequate emphasis on suggestions and persuasion in place of restraints and coercion.	Public	175	1.09	.289
	Private	125	1.08	.272
Clear understanding of the basic objects of participative committees and their implications.	Public	175	1.09	.281
	Private	125	1.09	.284
Mutual trust and confidence between the workers and management.	Public	175	1.11	.312
	Private	125	1.14	.344
Management's readiness to encourage maximum participation of the mass of the workers.	Public	175	1.10	.297
	Private	125	1.08	.272
Workers realization of their responsibilities and readiness to discharge duty first then to demand the rights.	Public	175	1.06	.243
	Private	125	1.10	.306
Enlightened and encouraging attitude of participative committees.	Public	175	1.09	.289
	Private	125	1.05	.215
Constructive attitude of trade Unions.	Public	175	1.03	.167
	Private	125	1.04	.197
Control on the interference of political parties in the working of joint committees.	Public	175	1.05	.209
	Private	125	1.03	.177

Source : Field Survey, 2008

CONCLUSION

The present research highlights the pattern of communication and relationship between the subordinate and superior in selected public and private sector undertakings. It seeks to understand the psychological environment prevailing at the work place, the orientation of the mass of employees towards participation, the functioning of the various participative bodies at various levels, and the impact of participative culture on various dimensions like employee performance, employee satisfaction and organizational culture.

In this regard, the investigations made and interviews held with the employees have revealed that 33.14 per cent employees in the public sector agree that there are opportunities available to them to express their ideas to upper management and only 40 per cent employees completely agree that they are satisfied with the amount and quality of communication in their organization. A good number of employees perceive information with respect to decisions affecting their team or department very important and this information will help them to carry out their work more efficiently and effectively in their work group

or department. But this information is not being provided sufficiently in the public sector undertakings.

The study revealed that simple presence of various participative bodies was not sufficient to create a participative culture in the undertakings. Psychological and active involvement of employees was equally important to encourage and flourish the real and genuine participation. Employees personally wanted to take part in participative forums, provided these forums worked on professional lines. In order to create a truly participative culture, there ought to be sufficient focus on delegation of work, transparent communication, empowerment and proper feedback.

In spite of the adoption of participative schemes in the public and private sector organizations under study, the environment in the undertakings was somewhat not conducive to encourage and flourish the real and genuine participation because the management seemed to be more conscious of its prerogatives in dealing with the issues relating to production and assigning a lower position to human factor. Participative management required change in thinking and attitude of both the groups-workers and the management, but more so over of the administration and management giving place to the feeling of partnership and co-operation and working the scheme with a common purpose and common interest.

More often the factors, which had not given ultimate success to the concept of participative management were related to an improper understanding of group behaviour and group dynamics rather than technical and functional in both private and public sector organizations. The challenge for managers was to understand the dynamics that contribute to effective group decision-making so that they could create the proper conditions for excellent team management.

Another problem which emerged was related to providing feedback to the subordinates by the supervisors. At times, what the supervisors actually believed was not being received properly by their subordinates. Besides, subordinates and supervisors attached differing importance to various kinds of feedback. For subordinates, feedback with respect to their own success or failure with particular tasks and their own comparisons with the work of others, were more important while supervisors attached more importance to their own comments to their subordinates without understanding the perception of the subordinates about their own role. Individualized attention was viewed as especially important for each and every member who constituted the various participative bodies in the organization. Individualized consideration implied that there was not only open communication in the group but senior executives and junior professionals were given equal opportunities to have a voice in the decisions taken by the group. The employees

emphasized on the fact that influence should be based on knowledge rather than power. Organizational decisions in participative bodies had reflected the distribution of power in the organizations.

The survey had found that while most employees liked and respected their managers, they felt that their managers really did not know how to motivate employees to do their best. The study called for leaders to send signals that they are open, interested and willing to act on subordinate voice to increase subordinates' motivation and reduce the tendency towards silence and the fear of speaking up even when one was participating in the decision-making bodies of the organization. The fear of offending those above in the hierarchy was both natural and widespread, especially in the private sector. The employees did not want to get into trouble with those above them by speaking in ways perceived as challenging of authority and proving to be a threat to their job security.

Rewards and recognition could have an empowering impact on the employees. The culture prevailing in the public sector organizations, as observed, was less characterized by the use of regular monetary and non-monetary rewards to integrate the individual goals with the organizational goals.

Appraisal system in various organizations did not seem to be feedback-oriented. Data indicated that around 27% respondents in the public sector and 37% in the private sector organizations believed that they received transparent feedback during appraisals. A transparent and objective appraisal system is a key to establishing mutual-trust, which is *sine-qua-non* for building a participative culture.

The data obtained also indicated that there was insufficient delegation of authority in our public sector undertakings. Yet, it could not be underscored as a problem area because lack of delegation does not hamper their performance at work. Very few respondents had reported complete dissatisfaction with the amount and quality of communication in their department vis- a-vis organization, although the unstructured interviews with many respondents indicated that very few employees had made an issue of it either because Indian society does not place premium on individual initiative and independence or they had become accustomed to the bureaucratic way of life which laid down in unequivocal terms the clear role definitions for each and every member of the organization, leaving them little room to complain about.

Finally, the study revealed that the concept of participative management, which was encouraged through various Government regulations after independence, seems to have lost its vitality and vigour in today's context. Now the concept seems

to become more popular with the private sector, which has been trying to get rid of its authoritative work-climate and creating a conducive environment characterized by more delegation, better interpersonal communication and greater feedback, although the desired level was still to be achieved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If the Indian organizations are to be competitive, more productive and economically sustainable, they will require highly skilled, knowledgeable, innovative workers and a relatively stable workforce. An increasing number of companies in India are implementing management systems and HR practices with greater employee involvement to increase productivity and quality and to gain the competitive advantage of a workforce strategically aligned with the organization's goals and objectives. Leading Indian organizations are also increasingly recognizing that efforts to improve productivity and quality must include attention to the human organization — its motivation, commitment and morale.

Critical organizational processes such as information sharing, training, decision-making and rewards are now being moved down to the lowest levels in the organization. This approach to HR puts knowledge, power, rewards and a communication network in place at every level in an organization. If organizations are to be sustainable in the medium to long-term, employees must be motivated to care about the work they do, to acquire knowledge — related skills and to perform the work to the best of their abilities.

The present study has brought to light the fact that proper institutionalization and functioning of participative forums in an enterprise depends on the right attitudes of the parties concerned. The formation of attitudes depends on the individual personality as well as the social environment prevailing at the workplace. Leadership and power dynamics in any organization could be functionally related to the nature and value of management ethics in that organization. The ethical values can also play a vital role in influencing leadership processes and power dynamics in the organization.

To understand the leadership and power dynamics in Indian organizations, it also becomes essential to relate this to cultural characteristics of Indians, which provides the base for the socio-cultural environment in the organizations. The typical Indian joint family system is characterized by hierarchical structure, where oldest male member of the family is the head of the family and commands respect by virtue of his age, seniority and experience. Generally, everybody in the family respects him, takes his advice and all the important decisions in the family are taken

by him. He evokes a feeling of security, trust and dependability in creating a family-like culture. Given this, the psychic development of individuals in the Indian context is characterized by excessive dependence of the subordinates on their superiors with whom they want to cultivate a personalized rather than contractual work relationship. Subordinates are ever willing to work extra hard as part of their effort to maintain a personalized relationship with the superior and the boss cares for his subordinates, shows affection, takes personal interests in their well-being, and above all, is committed to their growth. This attitude of the boss, however, creates dependency and status differential and prevents the subordinates from reaching a reasonable level of maturity, which acts as a barrier to establishing a participative and empowered culture in the organization.

Participative management requires change in the thinking and attitude giving place to the feeling of partnership and co-operation and working the scheme with a common purpose and common interests. In an environment where employees view management with 'us and them' mentality, trust is a major barrier to creating an honest exchange of ideas. Building trust involves sincerely involving employees and demonstrating a constant commitment to their involvement. Sometimes, a small gesture can go a long way towards building trust.

To create a true participative environment, attitudes, values and behaviour have to be cultivated slowly and steadily over a period of time. In the initial stages an appropriate climate for learning needs to be created. This includes training people in appropriate skills related to problem solving, brainstorming, statistical analysis, conducting experiments and so on.

Finally, the organizational culture should facilitate maximum realization of potential of employees, who are endowed with natural capabilities. Full realization of one's potential contributes to the good of the firm, of the state and the society. Participative management, if implemented in the right spirit, will maximize the competencies, commitment and satisfaction of all its employees and only then real Human Resource Development (HRD) will be brought about. The aforementioned behavioural aspects can help the policy-makers, academicians, management and workers to reorient their efforts for a sustainable competitive advantage.

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