HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Human Resource Development Policies for School Teachers in India: A Conceptual Framework for Professional Thriving

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Abstract

Teachers are considered gurus in our Indian culture and revered for generations. They are the cornerstone and driving force of any nation. They shape the way students learn and also broaden the social and moral fabric of a nation. Teachers who thrive are more likely to innovate in the classroom, build strong relationships with students, and sustain the motivation to survive in these competitive times. The New National Educational Policy 2020 also suggests that teachers' working conditions should improve and they should be provided with continuous professional development. The Indian Education system faces several challenges, such as focusing more on the number of student enrolments rather than quality education, disparities between private and government schools and shortage of well-qualified teachers. While research on Human Resource Development (HRD) has examined Organisational Policies, HRD Climate and Employee Development across several sectors, relatively limited attention has been given to how these can be applied to the professional thriving of school teachers in India. This paper develops a conceptual framework that brings together the literature on HRD policies, HRD climate and thriving at work in the context of school education. Drawing on a narrative review of literature on HRD climate, teacher development and thriving at work, the paper develops a conceptual framework. The framework proposes that these policy dimensions may create organisational conditions that support the two dimensions of thriving, namely vitality and learning. The paper concludes with implications for policymakers and school administrators, with directions which can guide future empirical validation of the proposed framework.

Keywords: Human Resource Development Climate; teacher thriving; HRD policy; school education in India; professional development

1 Introduction

Education is the most powerful instrument a nation can employ to shape its future growth and development. As Swami Vivekananda once said, a nation advances in direct proportion to the spread of education among its people. India's ability to sustain and accelerate its development depends significantly on the quality of its education system, and the quality of its education system depends on the quality of its teachers. Teachers are the true architects of society. They shape individuals across every field of human endeavour, from medicine and engineering to law, arts, and public service. The role of a teacher extends far beyond the transmission of knowledge; it pushes logical thinking, fostering creativity, building self-confidence, instilling values, and equipping students to confront life's challenges as informed and ethical citizens (Dogra & Gulati, 2006; Ray, 2018; Dau & Araor, 2022).

India's National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) acknowledges this reality strongly and recognises that teachers are at the centre of any meaningful education reform, and that their empowerment, dignity, and professional development are necessary for a high-functioning education system. The policy calls for improvements in teacher recruitment and deployment, continuous professional development, greater autonomy in pedagogy, and better career management and progression systems. Similarly, the National Council for Teacher Education's National Professional Standards for Teachers (2021) also suggests that investment in teachers is investment in students. Despite these policies, the ground reality for a large proportion of teachers in Indian schools is completely different. Working conditions are often inadequate, career progression is limited, recognition is inconsistent, and the developmental support needed for teachers to grow professionally is frequently absent or poorly structured (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020).

Just like in any other organisation, teachers' effectiveness in teaching, their motivation, and long-term commitment to the profession are deeply shaped by the environment in which they work. Just as professionals in manufacturing, information technology, healthcare, and hospitality need workplaces that invest in their growth, school teachers need institutional conditions that enable them not merely to function, but to truly thrive, so that they can give their best at work. Teacher thriving, understood here as the experience of sustained professional vitality, growth, and a sense of purpose at work, is cultivated or undermined by the policies and practices of the organisations teachers work (Spreitzer et al., 2005).

Human Resource Development (HRD) Climate, a concept developed by Rao and Abraham (1986) and further elaborated by Pareek (1994, 1997), is the most comprehensive concept that discusses the necessary conditions for a conducive work climate that helps employees give their best. HRD Climate refers to the overall organisational environment that boosts and supports the continuous development of its employees. It is typically assessed across three dimensions: the General Climate, which captures the extent to which top management values and invests in employee development; the OCTAPACE Culture, which describes the degree to which values such as openness, confrontation, trust, autonomy, proactivity, authenticity, collaboration, and experimentation are embedded in the organisation; and HRD Mechanisms, which refer to concrete practices such as training and development, performance appraisal, career planning, and mentoring. Across sectors, a strong HRD Climate has been associated with higher job satisfaction, greater motivation, improved retention, stronger team spirit, and better customer outcomes (Ravichandran, 2022; Reddy et al., 2018; Bhambhani et al., 2018; Raghuraman & Kumar, 2016; Mittal et al., 2016).

However, the vast majority of HRD Climate research has been conducted in corporate sectors such as banking, manufacturing, cement, insurance, and information technology (Srimannarayana, 2008; Mittal, 2013; Gupta et al., 2019). Its application to the education sector, and to school teachers in particular, has received far less attention. Various HRD policies that shape how teachers are recruited, inducted, trained, supported, assessed, recognised, and developed, the values embedded in the organisation and top management's investment in teachers, have a direct bearing on whether teachers can thrive in their roles, which will have a direct bearing on the education received by students.

Drawing on literature spanning HRD Climate, teacher development, and India's evolving education policy landscape, this paper tries to propose a conceptual framework that suggests how the dimensions of HRD Climate help teacher thriving in schools. The framework is intended to serve both as a theoretical contribution to the HRD and education management literature, and as a practical

guide for school administrators and policymakers seeking to design environments in which teachers can genuinely flourish.

2 Literature review

2.1 Human resource development: conceptual foundations

Leonard Nadler is credited with coining the term Human Resource Development, which he described as a series of organised activities designed to help individuals within an organisation grow, and when individuals grow, it helps the organisations to grow in return. The definition suggests that investing in individuals is crucial for any organisation's success. Organisations work in a dynamic environment, and if they want to survive, it is necessary to take the help of the organisational members.

Pareek and Rao (1982), in the Indian context, explained Human Resource Development differently, making it a more holistic concept and giving this idea more shape. In their view, HRD is the process through which an organisation systematically helps its people acquire and sharpen the skills required for their current and future roles, discover and put to use capabilities they may not have even known they had, and build the kinds of relationships with colleagues and supervisors that make work genuinely satisfying and motivating. An organisation that trains its people but fosters a culture of mistrust will find that the training does not stick. One that has warm collegial relationships but no investment in development will find that people stagnate and eventually disengage. And thus, all three dimensions should work cohesively with each other. This interconnected view of development has shaped how scholars and practitioners have approached HRD ever since.

2.2 Human resource development climate: framework and dimensions

The concept of HRD Climate was developed by Rao and Abraham in 1986 and later extended by Pareek (1994, 1997). At its core, HRD Climate describes how employees perceive the policies, practices, and conditions of their work environment as they relate to development, growth, and learning.

Rao and Abraham identified particular tendencies that characterise organisations with a strong HRD Climate: a culture of openness and trust, a deep organisational belief that human resources are the most important asset, active efforts to help employees recognise and build on their strengths, and supportive policies backed by genuine faith in what employees can achieve. These are not simply aspirational values but active, observable features of organisational life.

The framework organises HRD Climate into three distinct but closely related dimensions. The first is General Climate, which refers to how much importance senior management and line managers actually place on employee development, visible through personnel policies, training investments, and the day-to-day attitude of leaders towards their people's growth. The second dimension covers HRD Mechanisms, meaning the concrete systems and practices through which development happens: performance management, skills training, rewards and recognition, mentoring, job rotation, and quality of work-life initiatives. The third dimension is the OCTAPACE Culture, a term developed by Pareek to describe the cultural values that either support or inhibit development.

OCTAPACE is an acronym for eight cultural qualities: Openness, Confrontation, Trust, Autonomy, Proactivity, Authenticity, Collaboration, and Experimentation. Each of these qualities deserves a moment's attention because together they describe something quite specific about what a genuinely developmental workplace culture feels like.

Openness means that employees feel free to speak their minds without anxiety about how their ideas or concerns will be received. It is not simply the absence of fear but the active presence of encouragement. Confrontation, in this context, carries no negative connotation; it refers to the willingness of people in the organisation to surface problems honestly and work through them together rather than burying them. Trust captures the quality of relationships in which people honour their commitments, act on verbal understandings without waiting for formal documentation, and are given the freedom to work independently because their reliability is taken for granted. Autonomy describes the degree to which employees are given genuine discretion over their work methods and decisions, a quality that is especially important for knowledge workers, who tend to do their best work when they are treated as professionals rather than operatives. Proactivity describes a culture that rewards initiative and anticipation rather than passivity and reaction. Authenticity refers to the alignment between what people say and what they do, the quality that makes a culture feel genuine rather than performative. Collaboration describes the spirit of working across boundaries for shared goals rather than protecting individual territory. Finally, Experimentation captures the degree to which the organisation encourages creative problem-solving, tolerates risk, and values novelty over routine.

An important insight from Bhambhani et al. (2018) is that these three dimensions of HRD Climate, General Climate, HRD Mechanisms, and OCTAPACE, are highly interdependent. A meaningful shift in any one of them tends to produce ripple effects in the others. This means that HRD Climate cannot be improved through piecemeal interventions; it requires a coherent, integrated approach to policy and culture.

2.3 Empirical evidence on HRD climate across sectors

A substantial body of empirical research has examined the relationship between HRD Climate and various organisational outcomes, and the picture that emerges is strikingly consistent across sectors and contexts.

In the domain of job satisfaction, both Raghuraman and Kumar (2016) and Reddy et al. (2018) found significant positive associations between HRD Climate and employee satisfaction, with the latter study specifically identifying OCTAPACE Culture as having a stronger influence on satisfaction levels than either General Climate or HRD Mechanisms. This suggests that the cultural dimension of HRD Climate carries particular weight when it comes to how employees feel about their work. Reddy et al. (2019) further found that implementing OCTAPACE Culture brought measurable benefits in the cement industry, and recommended its adoption as a practical lever for improving workforce quality more broadly.

When it comes to retention and turnover, the evidence is equally clear. Ravichandran (2022) found in a study of faculty members across private and government engineering and management institutes that poor perceptions of HRD Climate were associated with greater job dissatisfaction and higher turnover intention. Faculty in private institutions showed a stronger tendency toward leaving when the HRD Climate was seen as inadequate, a finding that has direct relevance to school settings where teacher attrition is a persistent concern.

In the banking sector, both Mittal (2013) and Gupta et al. (2014) observed that the HRD Climate in public sector banks was more favourable than in their private sector counterparts, pointing to the importance of deliberate policy choices in shaping developmental conditions rather than assuming that more commercially competitive organisations are automatically better at developing people. Mit-

tal (2014) added nuance to this picture by showing that perceptions of HRD Climate vary significantly with employee age and experience, suggesting that one-size-fits-all HRD interventions may miss the mark for different segments of the workforce.

Srimannarayana's (2008) large-scale survey across manufacturing, information technology, and service sector organisations found that manufacturing organisations outperformed the other two on all three dimensions of HRD Climate, and that across all sectors studied, the overall HRD Climate hovered at a moderate level, pointing to significant room for improvement in how Indian organisations invest in their people. Mittal et al. (2016) took this a step further by establishing a link between HRD Climate and customer satisfaction, arguing that the way organisations treat their internal customers (employees) directly shapes how well they serve their external ones.

What this body of research makes clear is that HRD Climate is not a soft, abstract concept. It is a measurable organisational condition with tangible consequences for how people perform, how long they stay, and how well the organisation ultimately serves its purpose. Yet with few exceptions, all of this research has been conducted in corporate sectors. The education sector, and school teaching in particular, has received almost no attention in this literature, despite being one of the most consequential organisational contexts in any country's development story.

2.4 Teachers in India: context, challenges, and policy imperatives

To understand why HRD policies matter for school teachers specifically, it is necessary to appreciate the particular context in which Indian school teachers work and the nature of the challenges they face.

India's school education system is vast and deeply uneven. While the Right to Education Act of 2009 brought millions of children into schools and significantly expanded enrolment, critics including Banerji (2015) have pointed out that enrolment and learning are not the same thing. The expansion of access has not been matched by a corresponding improvement in the quality of education delivered, and the responsibility for bridging that gap falls squarely on teachers. At the same time, the conditions under which many teachers work make that responsibility extremely difficult to fulfil. Sharma and Jyoti (2006) found in their study of school teachers that pay dissatisfaction was a primary source of professional unhappiness, and that while private schools tended to offer a more congenial work culture, government schools lagged significantly on almost every dimension of the working environment. Njoku and Modebelu (2019), studying teachers in public secondary schools in Nigeria, found that both open and closed organisational climates had limited influence on teacher job performance when structures for participation and recognition were absent, suggesting that climate conditions are necessary but need to be accompanied by concrete policy mechanisms.

Research on broader organisational support for teachers in India reveals a consistent pattern: teachers value autonomy, collegial relationships, opportunities to learn and grow, and recognition from their institutions, but these are precisely the things that many Indian schools, particularly government schools, fail to consistently provide (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Kirkpatrick, 2009). Kremer et al. (2005), in a study of government and private schools in India, found that teacher absenteeism was higher in government schools, and that better physical infrastructure was associated with lower absenteeism, a finding that underscores how the material and organisational conditions of schooling shape teacher behaviour in ways that go beyond individual motivation.

India's National Education Policy 2020 represents the most comprehensive recent acknowledgment by the Indian government of the need to rethink how teachers are supported. The policy calls for

merit-based recruitment, continuous professional development, greater pedagogical autonomy, career management systems that reward excellence, and a school culture that places teacher wellbeing and dignity at the centre. The National Professional Standards for Teachers (NCTE, 2021) makes the case even more directly, asserting that investment in teachers is investment in students. Both documents implicitly recognise what the HRD Climate literature has been demonstrating for decades in corporate contexts: that the organisational conditions created for employees determine what those employees are able to give back.

2.5 Thriving at work: theoretical foundations

The concept of thriving at work offers a richer and more complete lens for understanding what we want for teachers than satisfaction or performance alone. Spreitzer et al. (2005) proposed one of the most influential frameworks for understanding thriving at work, defining it as the joint experience of vitality and learning. Vitality refers to the sense of being energised and alive in one's work, of feeling that what one does matters and that one has the resources to keep doing it well. Learning refers to the sense of growing, acquiring new knowledge and skills, and developing as a professional. The reason both components are necessary is that vitality without learning can become restless or unfocused, while learning without vitality can feel mechanical and draining. It is the combination that produces what Spreitzer and colleagues called thriving, a sustained, forward-moving experience of flourishing at work.

Porath et al. (2012) extended this framework empirically, showing that thriving employees are not only more productive but also more resilient, healthier over time, and less likely to leave their organisations. Importantly, they found that thriving is not simply a function of individual personality or disposition. It is strongly shaped by the organisational environment, including the degree to which employees are given decision-making discretion, the quality of information and resources they can access, and the extent to which they receive trust and support from those around them. These are precisely the qualities that a strong HRD Climate is designed to cultivate.

Niessen et al. (2012) added a further layer by showing that the experience of thriving varies over time and is particularly sensitive to the presence of what they called agentic work behaviours, actions that employees take of their own initiative to shape their work in meaningful ways. This points toward the importance of creating not just supportive conditions for teachers but genuinely empowering ones, conditions in which teachers can exercise professional judgment, take initiative, and feel ownership over their own development.

Applied to the teaching profession, thriving means something quite specific. A teacher who is thriving is not simply showing up and delivering lessons competently. They are curious about their practice, energised by their interactions with students, growing in their subject knowledge and pedagogical skill, and sustained by a sense of belonging and purpose within their school community. These qualities do not emerge spontaneously. They are grown, over time, through consistent organisational investment in the conditions that support them.

2.6 Linking HRD policies to teacher thriving: the gap this paper addresses

What the literature reviewed here collectively reveals is a significant, underexplored connection between two well-developed bodies of knowledge. On one side, decades of HRD Climate research have established that organisational conditions powerfully shape how employees develop, perform, and feel about their work. On the other side, the literature on thriving at work has established that

professional flourishing is not a luxury or a personality trait but an organisational outcome that can be cultivated through deliberate policy and cultural choices. What has not yet been done, at least not systematically in the context of Indian school education, is to bring these two streams together into a coherent conceptual framework that maps HRD policy dimensions onto the conditions required for teacher thriving.

The education sector literature, while rich in studies on job satisfaction, organisational climate, and teacher motivation, has not yet engaged deeply with either the HRD Climate framework as an organising lens or the thriving construct as a desired outcome. Studies like those of Sharma and Jyoti (2006), Kumaresan and Prabakaran (2019), and Khan and Lakshmi (2018) point to the importance of organisational factors in shaping teacher outcomes, but they tend to focus on satisfaction or commitment rather than thriving, and on individual or relational factors rather than on the broader HRD policy architecture that shapes those factors.

This paper seeks to address that gap. By drawing on the HRD Climate framework of Rao and Abraham (1986) and Pareek (1994, 1997), the thriving framework of Spreitzer et al. (2005), and the Indian education policy context outlined in NEP 2020 and related documents, it proposes a conceptual framework that positions robust, context-sensitive HRD policies as the necessary precondition for teacher thriving in Indian schools. The following section outlines the methodological approach used to develop this framework.

3 Research methodology

3.1 Nature of the study

This paper is conceptual in nature. Rather than collecting and analysing primary data, it draws on existing theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and policy documents to develop a conceptual framework that connects Human Resource Development policies to professional thriving among school teachers in India. Conceptual research of this kind plays an essential role in any field of inquiry because it synthesises what is already known, identifies where the gaps lie, and proposes new ways of thinking about problems that empirical research can then go on to test. In a domain like HRD in school education, where the empirical literature is still sparse and the theoretical frameworks borrowed from corporate contexts have not yet been adapted to the specific realities of teaching, a conceptual contribution is not only appropriate but necessary.

3.2 Research design

The study adopts a narrative literature review design as its primary methodological approach. A narrative review is well suited to conceptual papers because it allows the researcher to bring together bodies of literature that do not always speak directly to one another, identify thematic connections across them, and synthesise those connections into a coherent argument or framework. Unlike a systematic review, which follows a highly formalised protocol designed to produce an exhaustive and replicable search of the literature on a specific empirical question, a narrative review gives the researcher the interpretive flexibility needed to build theoretical bridges across disciplines and contexts. This is particularly valuable here, where the paper draws on three distinct bodies of knowledge, namely HRD Climate theory, the literature on teacher development in the Indian context, and the organisational behaviour literature on thriving at work, none of which has previously been brought together in a single framework.

3.3 Sources of literature

Literature for this paper was drawn from multiple sources. Peer-reviewed journal articles formed the primary source base, accessed through academic databases including Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Shodhganga, India's national repository of doctoral theses. In addition to journal articles, relevant books, published doctoral dissertations, and key policy documents were consulted, most notably India's National Education Policy 2020 issued by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, and the National Professional Standards for Teachers published by the National Council for Teacher Education in 2021. These policy documents were treated as primary sources that reflect the official understanding of the challenges and aspirations surrounding teacher development in India, providing an important real-world grounding for the conceptual framework developed in this paper.

The theoretical anchors for the framework were identified through a careful reading of foundational texts in two areas. For HRD Climate, the foundational works of Rao and Abraham (1986) and Pareek (1994, 1997) were central, supplemented by the substantial body of empirical research that has applied and extended their framework across sectors in India and abroad. For the construct of thriving at work, the foundational framework of Spreitzer et al. (2005) served as the primary theoretical reference, along with subsequent empirical extensions by Porath et al. (2012) and Niessen et al. (2012).

3.4 Criteria for inclusion

Literature was selected for inclusion based on its relevance to the three thematic pillars of the paper: HRD Climate and its organisational outcomes, teacher development and working conditions in the Indian school context, and professional thriving as a theoretical construct. Studies from sectors other than education were included where they provided empirical evidence about the outcomes of HRD Climate, since this evidence base does not yet exist in the school education literature and the cross-sectoral evidence is directly relevant to the argument being built. Studies focused on the Indian context were prioritised given the paper's specific focus, though international studies were included where they offered theoretical insights or comparative evidence of direct relevance. There was no restriction on publication year for foundational theoretical works, but for empirical studies, preference was given to more recent publications to ensure the review reflects the current state of the field.

3.5 Framework development process

The conceptual framework proposed in this paper was developed through a process of thematic synthesis. The literature was first organised around its three primary themes: what HRD Climate is and what outcomes it produces, what conditions are required for teachers in India to develop and perform well, and what thriving at work means as a theoretical construct and what organisational factors support it. Patterns and connections across these themes were then identified through close reading and interpretation, with particular attention to points of convergence, that is, places where the HRD Climate literature and the thriving literature were pointing toward the same underlying organisational conditions, even if using different terminology. These convergences formed the building blocks of the conceptual framework, which maps specific HRD policy dimensions onto the components of teacher thriving as defined by Spreitzer and colleagues. The resulting framework is presented and discussed in the following section.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 The conceptual framework

The conceptual framework proposed in this paper brings together two bodies of literature that have, until now, developed largely in parallel without speaking directly to one another. On one side sits the HRD Climate tradition, with its well-established model of how organisations create conditions for employee growth and development. On the other sits the thriving at work literature, with its compelling account of what it means for an employee to flourish professionally rather than merely function. The framework presented here argues that specific dimensions of HRD policy, operating through the organisational climate they create, are the primary institutional levers through which schools can cultivate professional thriving among their teachers.

The framework maps four HRD policy dimensions onto two components of teacher thriving. The four policy dimensions are drawn from the intersection of the Rao and Abraham (1986) HRD Climate framework, the Pareek (1994, 1997) OCTAPACE model, and the provisions of India's National Education Policy 2020. The two thriving components are drawn from Spreitzer et al.'s (2005) model of thriving at work as the joint experience of vitality and learning. The following sections discuss each dimension and its connection to the thriving components in turn.

4.1.1 Dimension one: recruitment and induction policy

The first dimension concerns how schools bring teachers into the profession and into the institution. Recruitment and induction policy shapes the quality and fit of the teaching workforce from the very beginning of a teacher's journey in a school. When recruitment is merit-based and transparent, it signals to teachers that the institution values professional competence, which itself contributes to a culture of seriousness and mutual respect. NEP 2020 calls for the use of TET and NTA scores alongside demonstration classes and interviews precisely because the quality of who enters the profession has downstream effects on everyone already within it.

Induction, the structured period of orientation and support that follows appointment, is equally important and often neglected. A teacher who enters a new school without adequate induction is more likely to feel isolated, uncertain, and overwhelmed, conditions directly antithetical to thriving. A well-designed induction programme, by contrast, builds the relational foundations that support both vitality (a sense of belonging, welcome, and orientation to the school's culture and goals) and early learning (familiarity with the curriculum, pedagogical expectations, and available resources). Research on broader organisational contexts consistently shows that the first months of employment are disproportionately influential in shaping long-term engagement and commitment (Saks, 2006), and there is no reason to believe teachers are any different.

4.1.2 Dimension two: continuous professional development policy

The second dimension is the one most intuitively linked to thriving, and the one most directly addressed in India's current policy discourse. Continuous professional development, encompassing training programmes, workshops, seminars, peer learning, online modules, and opportunities for research and reflection, is the most direct organisational investment in teacher growth. NEP 2020 envisions a comprehensive professional development architecture that spans local, national, and international opportunities, delivered in multiple formats and designed around competency-based learning outcomes rather than mere attendance.

Within the thriving framework, professional development is the primary driver of the learning component. A teacher who is regularly exposed to new ideas, methods, research findings, and pedagogical approaches is a teacher who is growing, and growth is half of thriving. But professional development also feeds vitality, particularly when it is participatory, collaborative, and personally relevant rather than mandatory and generic. Teachers who are given opportunities to pursue areas of genuine professional interest, to learn alongside colleagues, and to see their new knowledge reflected in improved student responses tend to experience their work as more energising and purposeful (Porath et al., 2012).

The gap identified in the empirical literature from the companion study is instructive here: while peer coaching, classroom observation, and review meetings were already present in many schools, formal and structured professional development linked to career progression was largely absent. This suggests that the raw material for professional development already exists in many Indian schools, but it has not been organised into a coherent policy architecture that teachers can rely on and build toward.

4.1.3 Dimension three: service environment and organisational culture policy

The third dimension is perhaps the most comprehensive and the hardest to change through policy alone, though policy can create the conditions for it. The service environment encompasses everything from physical infrastructure (workspace quality, access to technology, sanitation, and basic welfare) to the relational culture of the school, including the relationships between teachers and school leaders, among colleagues, and between the school and teachers' lives outside work. The OCTAPACE values of openness, confrontation, trust, autonomy, proactivity, authenticity, collaboration, and experimentation collectively describe what a healthy service environment culture looks and feels like.

This dimension is the primary driver of vitality in the thriving framework. A teacher who works in a culture of trust and openness, who is given autonomy over their pedagogical choices, who is encouraged to take initiative and experiment, and whose relationship with school leadership is characterised by genuine respect and dialogue, is a teacher whose daily experience of work is energising rather than draining. Conversely, a teacher in a culture of surveillance, rigidity, and hierarchical pressure will find that even strong professional development investments do not translate into thriving, because the soil in which thriving grows is contaminated.

Research across sectors consistently shows that the OCTAPACE dimensions of trust, autonomy, and openness carry the strongest associations with positive employee outcomes (Reddy et al., 2018; Bhambhani et al., 2018). In the school context, these translate into concrete leadership behaviours: involving teachers in decisions that affect them, seeking their input before implementing changes, trusting them to manage their classrooms without micro-managing, and responding to concerns or ideas in ways that demonstrate genuine consideration. None of this requires large financial investment. What it requires is a different philosophy of school leadership, one that treats teachers as professionals rather than as delivery mechanisms.

4.1.4 Dimension four: career management and progression policy

The fourth dimension is the one most conspicuously absent in the current landscape of Indian school education. As the empirical evidence from the companion study revealed, both private and grant-in-aid schools in Surat offered teachers almost no structured career progression. In private schools, movement from classroom teacher to coordinator to principal was possible but rare and informal. In

grant-in-aid schools, designation-based progression was essentially non-existent. Formal performance appraisal was absent in both school types.

This gap matters because career management and progression policy serves a dual function in the thriving framework. On one hand, it feeds the learning component by providing teachers with a developmental trajectory, a sense that growth has somewhere to go, that accumulating skills and experience leads somewhere meaningful. On the other hand, it feeds vitality by providing recognition and purpose. A teacher who sees no path forward, no acknowledgment of growth, and no reward for excellence is likely to experience a gradual erosion of the very energy and commitment that makes good teaching possible.

NEP 2020 explicitly calls for assessment of teachers on multiple parameters and the recognition and rewarding of outstanding teachers through leadership roles and career pathways. The National Professional Standards for Teachers (NCTE, 2021) similarly provides a framework for career stages and associated standards. What is needed is for these policy intentions to be translated into operational systems at the school level: transparent appraisal processes, defined leadership pathways, recognition mechanisms that go beyond symbolic appreciation, and genuine opportunities to take on roles that expand responsibility and visibility within the institution.

4.2 Discussion: the integrated framework and its implications

Taken together, the four dimensions form an integrated framework rather than a menu of independent options. This is consistent with the finding of Bhambhani et al. (2018) that the three dimensions of HRD Climate are highly interdependent: a shift in one creates ripple effects in the others. A school that invests in professional development but offers teachers no autonomy in how they apply what they have learned will find that the development investment yields limited returns. A school that builds a trusting and open culture but offers no career progression will find that the motivation generated by that culture eventually runs up against a ceiling. A school that designs thoughtful career pathways but recruits carelessly will find that the pathways are populated by teachers who do not have the professional foundation to make use of them.

The framework therefore argues for coherence across all four dimensions as the condition for teacher thriving. No single dimension is sufficient. What schools and policymakers need to aim for is an integrated HRD policy architecture in which all four dimensions reinforce one another: strong recruitment and induction sets the foundation, continuous professional development builds capability and learning, a positive service environment and OCTAPACE culture generates daily vitality and energy, and career management and progression provides direction, recognition, and sustained motivation.

When all four dimensions are functioning well, the conditions are in place for teachers to experience what Spreitzer and colleagues describe as thriving: the joint, ongoing experience of vitality and learning that sustains professional effectiveness over a career rather than burning it out. And when teachers thrive, the evidence from both the organisational behaviour literature and the education research literature suggests that students, schools, and communities benefit in ways that extend well beyond measurable test scores.

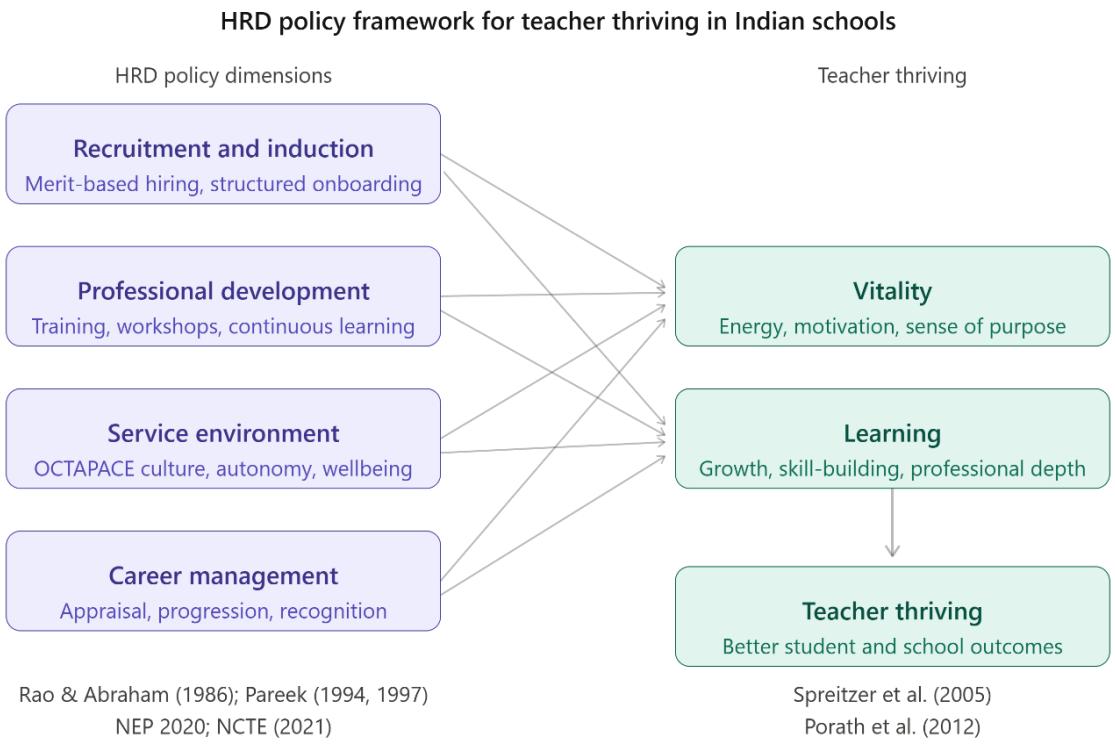


Figure 1. HRD policy framework for teacher thriving in Indian schools.

5 Research and managerial implications

5.1 Research implications

This paper opens several avenues for future empirical inquiry that researchers in the fields of HRD, education management, and organisational behaviour may find worthwhile to pursue.

The most immediate research implication is the need for empirical validation of the conceptual framework proposed here. The four HRD policy dimensions and their proposed relationships to teacher vitality and learning have been grounded in existing theory and literature, but they have not yet been tested quantitatively or qualitatively in the Indian school context. A natural next step would be to develop a measurement instrument that operationalises each policy dimension and administers it alongside a validated thriving scale such as that of Spreitzer et al. (2005) to a representative sample of school teachers across India. Structural equation modelling could then be used to test whether the proposed relationships hold, and to identify which dimensions carry the strongest predictive weight.

A second implication concerns the comparative study of thriving across school types. The empirical companion to this paper found meaningful differences between private and grant-in-aid schools on specific dimensions of teacher experience, particularly dedication. Future research could examine whether these differences extend to thriving, and whether the HRD policy architecture of private schools is systematically more or less conducive to vitality and learning than that of government-aided schools. Such comparative work would have direct policy relevance given the ongoing debate in India about the relative performance of public and private school systems.

Third, researchers may wish to examine the role of school leadership as a moderating variable in the framework. The OCTAPACE culture described in this paper does not emerge spontaneously; it is shaped in large part by the attitudes, behaviours, and priorities of school principals and management. Understanding how leadership style and leadership development interact with HRD policy implementation to affect teacher thriving would add significant depth to the framework and provide actionable guidance for leadership development programmes.

Finally, longitudinal research designs would be particularly valuable in this domain. Thriving is not a static state but a dynamic one that fluctuates over time and across career stages. A longitudinal study tracking teachers across multiple years, measuring both HRD policy conditions and thriving outcomes at multiple points, would provide a far richer picture of how these relationships develop, strengthen, or erode over the course of a teaching career than a cross-sectional design can offer.

5.2 Managerial implications

The framework proposed in this paper has several concrete implications for school administrators, school management trusts, and education policymakers at the state and national level.

For school administrators, the most immediate implication is the need for a diagnostic assessment of where their school currently stands on each of the four HRD policy dimensions. Many school leaders have a general sense that teacher motivation is a challenge but lack a structured framework for identifying where the gaps lie. The four-dimension framework provides exactly that structure. A school that discovers, for instance, that its professional development provision is reasonable but its career management systems are absent has a clear priority to act on. A school that finds its physical infrastructure and basic welfare provisions are inadequate knows that no amount of training investment will generate sustained thriving until those foundational conditions are addressed.

For school management trusts, particularly those running multiple private schools, the framework suggests the value of developing institution-wide HRD policies rather than leaving each school to improvise its own approach. Consistency in how teachers are recruited, inducted, developed, appraised, and supported across a group of schools signals a genuine organisational commitment to teachers as professionals, which itself contributes to the trust and authenticity dimensions of OCTAPACE culture.

For state and national policymakers, the framework reinforces and gives conceptual grounding to several of the ambitions already expressed in NEP 2020 and the National Professional Standards for Teachers. The policy intent is largely sound. What is needed is translation of that intent into operational systems at the school level. Policymakers can support this by developing model HRD policy frameworks for schools, creating accountability mechanisms that include HRD climate indicators alongside student outcome measures, and investing in the capacity of school principals to implement developmental cultures rather than simply administrative ones.

A particular priority for policymakers is the formalisation of career management and progression systems. As both the literature review and the companion empirical study make clear, this is the dimension most consistently absent from Indian school HRD practice. Developing transparent, multi-parameter appraisal systems, defining meaningful leadership pathways within schools, and creating recognition mechanisms that reward professional excellence rather than only seniority would address one of the most significant structural gaps in the current landscape.

Finally, for both school administrators and policymakers, the framework carries an important message about the relationship between investment and outcomes. Thriving is not a morale initiative or a wellness programme. It is the organisational outcome of coherent, sustained, and genuine investment in the conditions that allow professionals to grow and flourish at work. Schools that treat teachers as their most important asset, and organise their HRD policies accordingly, are not simply being generous. They are being strategically intelligent about the conditions required for educational quality.

6 Conclusion

This paper set out to address a gap that sits at the intersection of two well-developed bodies of knowledge and one critically important professional context. The HRD Climate literature has spent decades demonstrating that organisational conditions shape employee development, performance, and wellbeing in powerful and measurable ways. The thriving at work literature has established that professional flourishing is not a personality trait or a matter of individual resilience but an organisational outcome that can be cultivated through deliberate policy choices. Yet neither stream had been brought to bear in any systematic way on the question of what Indian school teachers need from their institutions in order to grow, sustain their effectiveness, and find genuine meaning in their work.

The conceptual framework proposed in this paper attempts to bridge that gap. By mapping four HRD policy dimensions, namely recruitment and induction, continuous professional development, service environment and organisational culture, and career management and progression, onto the two components of teacher thriving identified by Spreitzer and colleagues, vitality and learning, the framework offers both a theoretical contribution and a practical tool. Theoretically, it brings together the HRD Climate tradition of Rao and Abraham (1986) and Pareek (1994, 1997), the thriving framework of Spreitzer et al. (2005) and Porath et al. (2012), and the Indian education policy context of NEP 2020 and NCTE (2021) into a single, coherent account of what teacher flourishing requires at the institutional level. Practically, it gives school administrators, management trusts, and policymakers a structured way to think about HRD investment in teachers, one that moves beyond vague aspirations toward specific, identifiable, and actionable policy dimensions.

The paper has also been honest about what it cannot do. As a conceptual study, it proposes relationships rather than demonstrating them empirically. The framework awaits empirical validation across different school contexts, teacher populations, and career stages in India. That validation is the necessary next step, and the research implications discussed in the preceding section outline several directions it might take.

What can be said with confidence, however, is that the problem this paper addresses is real and urgent. India's school education system faces genuine quality challenges, and those challenges cannot be resolved without a committed, professionally supported, and genuinely thriving teaching workforce. Teachers who are well recruited, continuously developed, respected in their daily working environment, and given pathways to grow within their profession are not a luxury that only well-resourced schools can afford. They are the foundational condition of educational quality, and educational quality is the foundational condition of national development.

The Kothari Commission observed in 1966 that of all the factors influencing the quality of education and its contribution to national development, the quality, competence, and character of teachers are undoubtedly the most significant. Six decades later, that observation remains as true as it ever was.

What this paper adds to it is a framework for understanding what schools and policymakers must do, concretely and systematically, to give teachers the conditions they need to become and remain the educators their students and their nation deserve.

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