chapter 2

Methodology
We are presently living in times of complex and seemingly insurmountable challenges in all the spheres of our collective lives. A whole gamut of leadership crises is evident in our organizations and business. From all areas of our society and from the world at large, we do hear about crisis of ineffective structures and relationships. The workplace has become more challenging. The workforce of today is experiencing more uncertainty and this calls for business organizations to adopt different strategies to deal with newer and more challenging issues. It is needless to say that Human Resources forms major component of organizational survival. In face of all this, we are called upon to rethink and renew our relationships in our organizations and our way of developing and managing human resources. We must find ways to create together a new and positive vision of the future. We must be empowered to pursue our higher common purposes. Our future quality of life depends on our sincere efforts in attaining the set goals.

Similarly, most organizations have a number of employees who believe that they are dependent on others and that their own efforts will have little impact on overall performance. In fact, almost every society has within it some minority groups who feel incapable of controlling their own destiny.

Empowerment and empowering employees changes all the equations towards better organization growth and development. It changes the key structures
of all relationships that exist...power relationship, work relationship, trust and faith relationship, delegated and shared responsibility relationship, employee-employer relationships and the very premises towards human resources development and management. The empowering policy and leadership role is to show trust, provide vision, remove performance-blocking barriers, offer freedom and encourage activities to perform without any boundaries. Indeed, the empowered organization as a whole is something, which focuses high at ‘Human’ and looks human resources as a prime asset of the organization.

What is this paradigm shift towards empowerment all about?
How different is it from other organizations?
Is empowerment something that has to be given? and
How to get one-hundred percentage co-operation from all?

The present study tries to examine this gap between performing organization and others, and that it is only because of the innovative workplace systems, practices, approach and policy adopted towards human resource development and management that makes top performing companies different. Thus, the enquiry into employee empowerment and its after-math benefits in over all growth and development of organization and the workforce, per se.

### Research Design

The focus of the study is to understand why and what makes top performing companies different. What are the innovative and unique strategies they adopted in creating an organization of global standards. It was decided to use an explorative and descriptive design, which fits into the pattern of investigation. The study explored the technical and commercial context within which the chosen firm operated in terms of environmental certainty-uncertainty, stability and resource
munificence. The study also looked at the timeline set for the change process that the firm went through (if that is what occurred), and explored whether the firm was set-up to be empowered from the beginning. The mandate was also to understand what things changed early, what things changed later and how well they meshed together. The current practices of developing and managing human resources were explored and descriptions of all these practices were analyzed through appropriate questionnaires and schedules, including verbatim recording of the responses.

Research Objectives

The investigation is an empirical research work undertaken to understand how a model company can be created with innovative workplace programmes and policies. It was also intended to understand the impact of such innovative practices on employee empowerment and how such processes could change the very face of an organization and help it remain at the top of the business. An effort was made to understand all factors that contributed to empowerment—the systems, practices, policy and leadership. The study also tried to differentiate between the various human resource strategies adopted in empowering employees and how these strategies differed from other management practices. An effort was also made to see how these management practices impacted upon employee behavior.

With these core objectives, the study also attempted to understand issues like: Do we really need empowered people? Is empowerment something that can be done to some one, or is it something a person must choose? What role does the person in the top have to play in this exercise? With all these objectives, the genesis of empowerment is probed at a macro level.
Research Hypothesis [Ha]

The following hypotheses were put-forth in the present study:

Ha1 Empowerment is a sense of belonging developed by employee as a result of various coherent organizational practices conducive to creating such an environment;

Ha2 A good Organizational climate would shape behavior and develop positive attitudes towards organizational growth and development leading to employee empowerment;

Ha3 Access to information about the mission, value, goals, and vision of an organization is positively related to empowerment;

Ha4 If an organization aspires for fundamental changes, it must change the fundamentals; and

Ha5 Empowerment at the workplace makes leaders redundant.

In support of these assumptions, the study also discovered that without transparent and open lines of communication and information sharing, people will not extend themselves to assume outright responsibilities or vent their creative energies; transparent Management ethos breeds faith and trust; and creativity and innovation are possible with positive management practices.

Methodology

a) Geographical Area

The State of Karnataka in India is industrially developed, with a wide range of organizations and activities. The Northern division of Karnataka, which compromises of four big and three small districts and has many small and medium scale
enterprises, is the selected geographical area for the present study. As many as eight to ten organizations from each big districts were initially selected. But, the empowerment style of human resources management on a macro level was not undertaken in any of the organizations other than Hindustan Lever Limited and Polyhydron Private Limited. When Hindustan Lever Limited was approached, they initially gave the permission to start the study, but, due to administrative problems, the project was dropped. Later Polyhydron Private Limited (PPL) was approached, and their consent was taken to conduct research on their organizational practices.

b) About the company chosen for the Study - PPL

The objective of the study was to understand how the best practice companies differed in their approaches in managing and developing organization and HR, and learn more broadly about trends and challenges in the field. The Polyhydron Private Limited-PPL has adopted various innovative HR systems, which caught the attention of many researchers, scholars, and academicians. PPL was established way back in 1981 with the sole purpose of creating an organization on par with global standards, with a clean business and ethical approach. Before PPL was established, SBH (Suresh Hundre, CEO and MD) with a few of his colleagues started a group under the Hyloc banner, manufacturing a wide range of hydraulic related equipments. PPL was one of the units under the banner. Changed ideologies and bigger dreams led to an amicable parting of ways. SBH took up the responsibility of independently running Polyhydron, a small unit then. Polyhydron manufactures hydraulic valves, radial pistons, pumps, etc. The wide range of products at PPL spans an average of 700 models. The customers are from varied places and the turnover on an average is between Rs.8-10 crores.
The techniques and methods practiced in Polyhydron have attracted the attention of several corporate CEO's, who have expressed their appreciation at different forums. In the words of Adi Godrej, Managing Director, Godrej, India "It has opened my eyes in many ways to see the excellent work done by you. I am sure your company has a tremendous future ahead of it". Dr D Nagabrahman, Director, TAPMI *, India has said "I have seen a really exceptional and endowed with qualities and values of ethical Management, who runs PPL on a different model. It is to be seen to be believed - his concepts of business and work, his values and his spiritualism". Sri Sharadrao Pawar, Former Chief Minister, Maharasthra State, India, "Congratulations for running a modern, clean plant. Your Vision of the 21st century will put you on global scale with such practices".

When pre-observation was undertaken at PPL, it was also felt that such innovative HR practices were never practiced so comprehensively by other organizations on a macro level in the region, and if they were, they were not reported. Since, PPL is one of its kind to experiment employee empowerment and has been successful in creating an ownership culture through unique achievements which are reflected in their corporate practices like: employees are owners; power is distributed; responsibility is shared; one has the liberty to act independently; high respect to people; trusting every employees' actions; open door and transparent policy; ownership culture; and shared leadership. The obvious way by which the World can get to know about PPL's excellent techniques in managing the organization and developing HR, is a Case Study approach. The present study is rooted in the premises that it is the policy, people and workplace practices that make an empowered organization and the workforce.

*TAPMI is a ranked Management Institute in Karnataka State, India
The focus of study restricts its enquiry to Polyhydron Private Limited, an engineering based organization established in the year 1981, and situated at the industrial sector of Machhe area, Belgaum district, in Karnataka State, India. The organization is known for its empowering ways of developing and managing human resources. The employee ownership culture has been widely instituted in the organization. All the employees including the CEO / MD form the respondent group.

**Sampling Population:**

Empowerment is a holistic process and needs to be studied from all the angles, involving everyone in the organization. A sample of the Human Resources information in PPL is put forth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Total Employees</th>
<th>Responded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Engineers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Software Expert</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Highly Skilled</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Skilled</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Semi skilled</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Trainee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>73(1)</strong></td>
<td><strong>60(1)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 74 employees including top management form the total workforce in the organization, with different categories like highly skilled (HSK), skilled (SK), semiskilled (SSK) and unskilled (USK) employees, apart from the Engineers, Administrative and Managerial staff. The categorization is done on the basis of the
nature of skill involved at the workplace. In fact, the CEO, who is also the MD, seven of the management cadre, six engineers with two-software experts and thirteen administrative staff, including four support staff at office level, forms one section. There are as many as forty-five grass-root employees, of whom five are highly skilled, eighteen are skilled, nineteen are semiskilled, two unskilled, and a trainee. All were included in the study, and as many as 62 employees expressed their willingness to take part in the final study, while the rest did not participate. Out of the total respondents, two could not complete the questionnaire and schedules at the final stage. Infact, they could only complete 40% of the enquiry, and thus, were not included in the study. The study results analyzed the data gathered from sixty respondents from different categories of employees. In addition to these, the CEO / MD of the organization by himself formed an important respondent.

P.S.: The organization has a flat organizational structure and hierarchy, where each is equal in position and status. But, on paper the hierarchy is designed. Otherwise, each one is a manager and each a CEO. In practice, there are no dividing lines between management and workforce and no grading on hierarchy as top / middle / grass root level employees. Each can work anywhere in the Organization depending on the nature of work-skill required. For administrative purpose, they are categorized into different streams.

Data Collection of Employees

Fig No 2.1: The mode of Data collection of employees
The model of data collection adopted for employee category includes six stages.

An exhaustive questionnaire on empowerment in different languages was put forth. It was distributed to all employees who participated and a formal discussion with CEO / MD was done keeping in view the intended enquiry areas. Several angles of empowerment were probed and areas were identified, which were apt, valid, relevant, and put to test on a five point scale, viz: (1) Strongly agree; (2) Agree; (3) Can’t say; (4) Disagree; and (5) Strongly disagree.

In order to gain an understanding of the empowerment process in PPL, special attention was focused on certain areas, such as: the system of accountability within the organization, attitude development processes, mode adopted for career planning, the open communication process adopted, decision making process, delegation and shared responsibility, ethical standards adopted, feed-back system, methods for information sharing, leadership development in all spheres, organizational transparency, management and organizational ethos, power distribution, climate of politics, degree of trust and loyalty, team working, and employee participation.

The enquiry is a scientific investigation into the practical workings of the empowerment system at PPL and hence is undertaken at multiple stages. The study used three distinct methodologies and procedure, viz: a) Pre-pilot observation; b) Pilot study; and c) Final observation.

a) Pre-pilot observation

The study began with pre-pilot observation carried out through a survey over a period of 8-10 months. Observation and identification of the management practices that were thought to influence business were made, such as:
communication, leadership, transparency, values, decision-making, participation, management style and ethos, organizational politic, knowledge sharing, ownership culture and the like. Initial micro level discussion with employees was held from time to time.

b) Pilot study

A pilot study on specific practices was undertaken, wherein a few enquiry areas were identified and put to test. The study pursued an in-depth research of the management practices that were pre-observed, which play a major role in enhancing or weakening a company’s performance. This pilot study allowed for verifying and extending the larger survey findings. The pilot study also paved the way for further exploration of new areas and it also concentrated on certain other areas in lines with the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

c) Final observation

At final stage, while collecting actual data, an exhaustive questionnaire / schedule was administered focusing all valid areas of empowerment and the extent of such organizational practices in the growth of the company and in creating an winning workforce, per se. Several areas were identified and put to test.

The collection and examination of data were done in three stages after informing to all the participants about the purpose of the study, and the importance of their responses. The respondents were willing participants knowing the far-reaching positive effect that such a study would have on not just the individual, but on the organization and the nation as a whole. A sense of purpose and direction was injected into every case at all the three stages of data collection.
Stage 1: In the first stage, questionnaires and schedules were drawn up after identifying the relevant empowerment angles, which were put to test on a five-point scale. This was the first stage, where individual opinions were sought on five-point scale, viz: Strongly agree (1); Agree (2); Can’t Say (3); Disagree (4); and Strongly disagree (5).

Stage 2: In the second stage, formal and informal observation and discussions at workplace based on the responses regarding the practices in vogue were undertaken. In fact, at this stage, each participating respondent was met individually, and questioned about his opinions and feelings regarding the empowerment system and why such a feeling had been expressed. At this stage, more emphasis was on questions like - Why such a system / practice was followed? Was it apt? What are the benefits of such practices? It was more of a fact-finding mission to know and analyze the feelings, views and opinions based on responses to the questionnaire. A series of formal and informal visits, from time to time, to each respondent was undertaken, injecting a case-by-case and opinion-by-opinion.

Stage 3: All possible ways through which information could be collected were adopted. At each stage of data collection, frequent discussions with the CEO / MD was undertaken. Based on these methods, the final discussion was held, focusing particularly on the responses elicited using the questionnaire method, and on the observations made and discussions held. Views from all the sides were pooled into a collective opinion and put through final examination. This was the last stage and extreme care was taken to ensure that all opinions, observations and details of practices collected were discussed at length and then pooled for the final test.
Interaction with the CEO

The collection of information from the CEO / MD was done separately through personal interactions. After a series of discussions with the CEO / MD, it was decided to have a one to one personal talk, with certain areas identified. A series of informal pre-discussions also paved the way in deciding the enquiry areas for getting the desired responses. The focus of the discussions with the CEO / MD was to understand the concern and issues from the Chief Executive angle – how to create a conducive work environment and the difficulties one has to face in managing an empowered workforce. A series of discussions were held phase by phase at various venues in the workplace and information was gathered about the systems that were developed for managing both human resources and the organization. Organizational meetings and discussions were also attended, informal gatherings were observed and all the ways and means of organization ethos, practices and systems in relation to CEO / MD were keenly observed. At each stage of the discussion with the CEO / MD, his actual participation in the functioning of the system was observed. The results based on discussion with CEO / MD are presented verbatim, and as many as twenty-five odd enquiries were put to test reflecting the empowerment paradigm.

![Diagram of data collection process](image-url)
a) An informal observation over a period of time was done phase by phase;
b) Discussion with CEO was done formally at one to one level;
c) The opinions of CEO and system match were interfaced;
d) All the data collected from the CEO, in terms of his opinions and observations were verified point by point with each of the employee;
e) The feedback opinions/ views of the employees were given to the CEO/ MD for discussion, and
f) The entire system was observed in its fullest scope, and the opinions were pooled in the presence of all. A series of meetings were held.

The uniqueness of data collection in the present study was the pooling of all the responses of respondents at one place and allowing them to express their views on the system and practices in presence of each other and the CEO. It is expected that responses usually tend to differ in presence of Management, and this was factored. All this was done to garner the facts and get a clear picture of the systems and practices, and not to cross-examine or find the faults. It was also possible to have such a pooling because of the empowering environment and culture that exists in the organization, and everyone appreciated the context and the spirit of the enquiry.

2.2 Mode of Data Collection

Personal discussions, individual interviews with all respondents, group discussions, personal meetings with the concerned employees at various venues like workplace (temple of ethics), recreational hall (temple of health), yoga center (temple of peace), Research and Development section, Refreshment hall, and rest
rooms were undertaken extensively. The study adopted a case-by-case method for collecting the required information. Frequent and repeated visits to each employee was undertaken in every phase to elicit opinions on the system and practices. In some instances, the employee, the officer and the CEO were all allowed to express their opinions on the practices in presence of each other. The intention, however, was not to crosscheck the opinions in presence of one another or to verify the truth, but, to get the complete picture from all the angles and thus, “ruling” the confusion. As mentioned earlier, a holistic approach is what makes empowerment work, hence this was the last path followed for collection of final data. At each stage, care was taken that all relevant facts on the practices were noted.

**Different aspect of Enquiry**

Several empowerment angles were identified, including understanding the system of accountability within the organization, attitude development processes, mode adopted for career planning, communication process adopted, decision making process, delegation and shared responsibility, team working, employee participation, etc were put to test. Several empowering areas were identified and examined. These areas were also tested at the level of the CEO / MD.

**Sources of data collection**

In the present study, both primary and secondary data are utilized. Primary data was collected through means of questionnaires / schedules and by participant observation. The other modes adopted for collecting primary data were: attending meetings, taking part in discussions, visiting the actual workplace with the concerned respondent and observing first-hand the systems and practices that were in operation.
Information was also gathered through the questionnaires and discussions with each and every respondent stage by stage, in the course of the study.

Secondary data includes written policy statements, work records, annual reports, documentations, bulletins, write-ups, procedure charts, instructions, personal files, case histories, site maps, follow up reports, and recorded suggestions and field notes were referred to and reviewed at length. All the policy papers relating to the vision statement, mission set, objectives, philosophy, guiding principles, and code of conduct were referred to, reviewed and examined. Finally, all the data were meaningfully related to the objectives of study, the hypothesis to be tested and the intended outcome.

**Analysis of the Results**

The focus in present study was on the qualitative analysis of the responses and results based on case-by-case observations. Since, quality and not quantifying the results was the focus, statistical analysis has been done only where relevant. Also, statistical equations probably cannot give the true picture of empowerment practices in such case study enquiry. However, to test the hypothesis, ANOVA has been applied for obtaining the F-ratio values and significance level. As also, to understand the degree of responses in relation to organizational practices, the mean and SD value have been put-forth. (§41-9)

As far as CEO data is concerned, various levels of discussions on areas identified were undertaken from time to time. The results are presented verbatim focusing the attention on the quality aspect of the CEO's responses. As many as twenty-five odd enquiry areas were identified and presented.
**Period of Study**

The total span of time utilized to collect the final data for the present study was ten months. Before the data was collected by means of questionnaires and formal observations, a series of pre-observation sessions and discussions were held from time to time over a period of two years. Several factors were identified and finally put to test after pilot work was completed. A series of pre-visits also paved the way for enquiry in the right direction, and also to finalize the objectives of the study.

**Uniqueness of the Study**

The study has been undertaken to shed light on the best practices that lead to overall enhancement and development of human resources and organizations by empowering employees. In fact, demystifying global standard strategies and practices has been the focus throughout the study.

- A holistic approach to demystifying empowerment practices that create high performance workforce has been the core attempt throughout the study.
- Several valid empowering factors have been identified and put to test on a five-point scale, thus, verifying the efficacy of such practices.
- It is not only the system, which makes an organization and workforce, empowered, but an attempt has also been made to know the required essential human traits that are needed.
- There has been an attempt to draw up theories, and develop model for how such system should be practiced at the macro level. The model specifies the priority areas of instituting empowerment practices step by step.
The study has identified the workplace culture that is actually effective. In other words, the enquiry could conclude that improving on specific practices guarantees a company’s superior performance, and that fumbling at those practices is bound to worsen performance.

An attempt has been made to utilize the results of the study on a larger canvas, where by Individuals, Organizations, Academics and Research Institutes can also reap the benefits.

Besides identifying the Management practices that can significantly affect a company’s performance, a list of leadership behavior that supports excellence in each practice has been developed.

The mandate was to identify factors and strategies that would create a challenging, satisfying work environment and a high performance workforce.

**Limitations of the Study**

While the study has made an attempt to demystify employee empowerment, there are certain limitations in the work, which were beyond the scope of the author.

a) The work pertains to PPL, an engineering based organization.

b) Of the 74 total employees, 62 responded and others didn’t participate in the study. A total of 60 have been included finally in the study, whereas, two respondents could not complete the questionnaire.

c) An attempt was made to elicit responses even from those employees who had left the organization, but it was not possible, due to lack of data and information availability.
d) Since, all the respondent employees were male, the perception and effect of empowerment on the different grades could not be studied.

e) The pilot study paved way to extend the enquiry for family members of the employees. This was not possible due to time constraints and possibility of not understanding the correlation of such enquiry.