

IS HR A PROFESSION, OCCUPATION OR A PRE-OCCUPATION OF A FEW?

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Rakesh Khurana, Nitin Nohria & Daniel Penrice, a team of Harvard Professors argued recently that “If management was a licensed profession on par with law or medicine, there might be fewer opportunities for corporate bad guys”ⁱ. They argue that corporate wrongdoing over the past few years have eroded public trust in business institutions and executives to levels not seen in decades. A Gallup poll indicated that Americans now have no more trust in business leaders than they do in Washington politicians. In the recent past there have been a lot of discussion and debate on whether Management itself has come to be a Profession. HR is conceptualised as a part of Management. The author of this paper has different argument to say that HR stands on its own and can be considered as a profession by itself or at least needs to be developed as a profession.

I have reviewed literature on the Sociology of Professions almost 40 years ago for my Doctoral thesis on Professional Socialisation of Medical students which was later published as a book “Doctors in Making” I once again reviewed literature on professions a few years ago when I was writing my book on the Future of HRDⁱⁱ. Perhaps the reason behind Why we Hate HR? And recent HBR articles on similar lines are indicative of the need for HR to rise to the growing criticism that it is not a profession and merely an occupation or a preoccupation of a few less talented individuals who don’t find other occupations and end up exercising control over other human beings without any scientific base. Often cited to promote the argument that in India HR is neither a profession nor a occupation and at best it is a pre-occupation of a few (with some routine tasks) are the professional qualifications (or the lack of the same) of some GMs and CHROs of HR by Banks and a few other corporations as well as those who head professional bodies of HR.

In this article I like to argue that the negative effects of HR could be avoided if HR can be fast developed as Profession with well defined set of qualifications, a code of ethics and a regulatory mechanism to ensure that the code of ethics is followed strictly. A large part of what I have stated here is taken from my earlier book on the Future of HRD.

What is a Profession?

The Webster dictionary defines a profession as “an open declaration or avowal of a belief or opinion” (Merriam-Webster, 1971, p.402), and professions are distinct from simple collection of people doing similar work or other non professional groups by their efforts to define expected norms of ethical behaviour among their members. For the members of a profession, “ethical standards are central to understanding what constitutes proper conduct as well as expectations of virtues professionals should possess” (Gellerman, Frankel, and Ladenson, 1990,p.8)

A profession, and thus a professional behaviour is defined by a high degree of specialized knowledge, social responsibility, self –monitoring of ethical behaviours through codes of ethics and a system of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (Barber, 1963).

Webster’s defines Occupation as... “That which occupies or engages the time and attention; the principal business of one’s life.” An occupation always metamorphosis into a profession if it is well practiced and developed by the practitioners.

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An occupation can be thought as falling somewhere along a continuum of professionalism, the continuum being made of common traits in definitions of profession. An occupation acquires status of profession when it incorporates all the core characteristics of profession. The significant question to ask about the occupation is not whether or not they are professions, but to what extent they exhibit characteristics of professionalization

The core characteristics of Profession are a prolonged specialized training in a body of abstract knowledge, and a collective or service orientation. Occupations may rank high on one of these, but low on other. Thus nursing ranks higher in service orientation, but has been unable to demonstrate that its training is more than a lower level medical education.

Characteristics of Profession

Though much has been said about the nature of profession, few contributors have tried to define the term Profession; each of them has given evaluative analysis of profession, its characteristics and non – quantifiable indicators of the closeness of a given occupational group to achieve fully recognizable professional status. If we try to analyze the most commonly cited definitions, a commendable unanimity is disclosed: there are no contradictions and the only differences are those of omissions.

Goode (1960), in his paper ‘Encroachment, Charlatanism and Emerging Professions’, American Sociological Review, proposes the following characteristics of Profession:

- (1) The profession determines its own standards of education.
- (2) The student of professional goes through a more far- reaching adult socialization experience than a learner in other occupation
- (3) Professional practice is often legally recognized by some form of licensure
- (4) Licensing and admission boards are manned by the members of the profession
- (5) Most legislation concerned with the profession is shaped by that profession
- (6) The occupation gains in income, power and prestige ranking and can demand high calibre students
- (7) The practitioner is relatively free of lay evaluation and control
- (8) The norms of practice enforced by the profession are more stringent than legal controls
- (9) Members are more strongly identified and affiliated with the profession than are members of other occupations
- (10) The Profession is more likely to be a terminal occupation. Members do not care to leave it, and a higher proportion assert that if they had to do over again , they would again choose same type of work

Barber (1963) lists the following characteristics of a Profession:

- (1) A high degree of generalized and systematic knowledge.
- (2) Primary orientation to the community interest rather than to individual self interest

- (3) A high degree of self control of behaviour through codes of ethics internalized in the process of work socialization and through voluntary associations organized and operated by work specialists themselves
- (4) A system of rewards (Monetary and non monetary), that is primarily a set of symbols of work achievement and thus ends themselves, not means to some end of individual self interest.

The Elements of Professionalization

Harries-Jenkins (1970) identifies the following elements of professionalization in his paper 'Professionals in Organizations', Profession and Professionalization.

1. Structural element: (a) Specialization: the exclusive nature of group activity; (b) Centralization: the locus of authority- sanctions mechanism; (c) Standardization: the control of non-occupational behaviour.
2. Contextual element: (a) Spatio- temporal dimension; (b) Size of occupational group; (c) Resources of occupational group; (d) Group Relations
3. Activity element : (a) The goals of occupational group; (b) The role of individual members
4. Educational element : (a) Occupational intelligence requirements, (b) Basis of systematic theory; (C) Institutionalized educational process; (d) Length of training; (e) Cost of training.
5. Ideological element : (a) Personality involvement; (b) Sense of group identity; (c) Group culture; (d) Status; (e) Socialization process
6. Behavioural element : (a) Code of conduct; (b) Evaluation of merit

Turner & Hodge (1970) proposed four areas of concern in study of Professionalism. They are:

- 1 Degree of Substantive Theory and Technique: A Profession should have a set of abstract principles, which should be organized into theory, set of theories or at least a complex web of theoretical orientations. Knowledge of a profession is passed on to next generations through these theories. Techniques for recurrent application of these fundamental principles should be developed. There should be a correlation between Theory and Techniques.
- 2 Degree of Monopoly: The profession should claim a monopoly over the set of activities in which it offers services. The bid for recognition may take form of claim to exclusive possession of knowledge and associated techniques, or at least to their greatly superior application. The justification is commonly advanced on grounds like possession of esoteric knowledge and high skill, the performance of tasks of high social values, the image of community service and dedication. Though it is extremely unlikely that any group will be able to enforce complete monopoly over the full range of activities to which it lays claim.
- 3 Degree of External Recognition: Public recognition is a critical aspect of any profession. But public recognition is a multi- faceted phenomenon. There are several possible publics to whom members of an occupation may address themselves. They may be Clients, Co-workers outside the professional groups, Other occupational associations (which may be complementary or competitive), Govt. bodies taking direct legislative and or administrative part in regulation of occupational activities, Educational and Training Institutes and other individuals, groups and

organizations, which may be internally differentiated with respect to knowledge, opinion and interests concerning a given occupation.

- 4 Degree of Organization: Two general approaches to the organization of Professions and professionalizing occupations have been developed. (1) Formal Organization Approach (2) Community Approach.

Formal Organization Approach: In this approach, the emphasis is on

- (a) Organizational mechanisms and techniques
- (b) The enumeration , registration and licensing of competent professionals
- (c) Codification of standards of practice and conduct
- (d) Application of formal control over members

Community Approach: The emphasis is on qualitative aspect of the relationship among a group of professionals and between a professional community and the wider society.

Goode lists the following characteristics of professional community:

- 1 Its members are bound by a sense of identity.
- 2 Once in it, a few leave it, so it is terminal or continuing status for most part
- 3 Its members share values in common
- 4 Its role identification vis-à-vis both members and non-members are agreed upon and are the same for all members
- 5 Within the area of communal action, there is a common language, which is understood only partially by outsiders
- 6 The community has power over its members
- 7 Its limits are reasonably clear, though they are not physical or geographical, but social.
- 8 Though it does not produce the next generation biologically, it does so socially through its control over selection of professional trainees and through its training process, it sends these recruits through adult Socialization process.

Turner and Hodge further enlist the following activities that relate directly to a profession. They are:

1. The development of substantive theory
2. The development of practical techniques
3. The transmission of substantive theory
4. The transmission of practical techniques
5. The provision of materials and equipment
6. The regulation of working conditions
7. The regulation of market conditions
8. The identification of practitioners and the recognition of qualification for practice

9. The promotion of standard practice
10. The promotion of internal relations between members
11. The promotion of public recognition

On the basis of all the above analysis, the following characteristics could be listed for Profession:

1. A high degree of generalized and systematic knowledge.
2. A profession has well defined intelligence requirements and it chooses the future professionals on the basis of possession of basic aptitude for practicing the profession.
3. Acquisition of knowledge requires a long period of Education, Training and Socialization.
4. Professional practice is often legally recognized by some form of licensure and these boards / Associations are manned by the members of the profession
5. A profession should claim to offer services not available elsewhere.
6. Its members are bound by a sense of identity, they share common value and there is always promotion of internal relations between the members of the same profession.
7. Members of a profession are bound by ethical code of conduct.
8. A Profession is well accepted by public and member roles are well defined and understood by public at large.
9. Practitioners are motivated by an ideal of altruistic service rather than the pursuit of material and economic gain

HRD Profession and Professionalism in India

It is against these criteria an attempt is made to examine if HRD can be identified to have attained the status of a Profession in India. An attempt is first made to review the existing body of knowledge in HRD. HRD here is used broadly to include all aspects of HR. Or HRM.

1. Knowledge Base of HRD in India
2. Requirements to be called a HRD Professional
3. Education and Training Facilities for HRD in India
4. Legal recognition and standards of HRD Profession- Licencing requirements
5. Services Offered by the Profession and their availability elsewhere
6. Sense of Identity and belongings in the Profession (HRD Community)
7. Code of conduct and ethics
8. Public acceptance and well defined member roles
9. Altruistic service than pursuit of material gain

Knowledge Base of HRD in India

Positives: There is well-developed knowledge base in HRD. There are at least over 100 books in HRD that have come into existence in the last three decades (see HRD Missionary by T. V. Rao). In

fact, the first text book on Training and Development was written in India much before the famous Handbook of Training and Development was published in the U. S. A. Lynton and Pareek (1967) published their book of Training for Development in 1967 a year before the ASTD Handbook was first published. This was in fact used as a text in most US Universities during that period.

The National HRD Network and the Academy of HRD are the two bodies that have produced over 40 books in the last 25 years. Most of these are already used as textbooks. A large part of the books by National HRD Network are experience sharing books and management is one field where successful experiences preceded theory building (for example MCKinsey's 7 S models came out of successful experiences of well run companies).

The books are varied and deal with all aspects of HRD starting from treating HRD in a national and broader context (see Rao, 1995) to treating it in an organizational context. There are books that expose theory and share experiences in various themes. For example the books cover various fields of HRD like the following:

- Introduction to HRD and Designing HRD systems
- Organization Development and Change Management
- Career Planning and Development
- Performance Management
- 360 Degree Feedback and Appraisals
- Counselling
- Organizational Learning and Learning Organizations
- Training and Development
- Organizational Behaviour and Personal Growth
- Basic Psychology and Principles of Psychology
- Creativity
- HRD for Different categories People (workmen, Public services, NGOs etc.)

The body of knowledge is growing. Most of the management schools are offering along with other disciplines specialization in HRD for research scholars. There are several research scholars trying to generate new knowledge in HRD. For example AHRD-XLRI programs it self-lists about twenty eight doctoral level research projects. XLRI and XUSHRM have Doctoral students pursuing HR.

Negatives: Although there are a number of books they lack sound theoretical base. They are mostly narrations of success experiences and are often written mainly to highlight success experiences. The knowledge base is highly contextual and not generalisable. For example, HRD in IT industry is highly situation specific and is limited not only to IT Industry but also to HRD issues of a particular period of time. There is very little fundamental Research, Development and theorization available. A good HRD should be based on a good understanding of human beings, their developmental needs, patterns and success experiences. A lot of HRD literature systems driven and often ignores the Human Being who is the centre point of study. Development is viewed almost synonymously with profitability and

anything that does not lead to profits of organization is ignored. Thus the HRD theory if any is one sided and half baked.

Doctoral researches haven't greatly contributed to our understanding of HRD though they may have given good evaluation of successful HRD interventions.

Though a high degree of generalized knowledge is there in the field of HRD, but it is not yet systematized. There are so many discrepancies in the courses offered by Indian universities that one cannot generalize the basic knowledge required by an HRD professional.

Balance: On balance while there is a good degree of knowledge base there is more specialization and without adequate preparation into the basics like Human Psychology, Personality Development and Learning theories. There is sufficient literature available on these dimensions and there is no need to reinvent the wheel. What is required is to systematize the body of knowledge by borrowing the knowledge from the other fields where basic knowledge exists. Education and Psychology, Organization Behaviour is the areas to borrow from. With a little effort it is possible to systematize the body of HRD knowledge in India.

Requirements to be called a HRD Professional

Concerns about professionalism and professionalization of HRD have been in existence since the last decade. A number of academics and practitioners have taken up the issue in the past. The issue of professionalising HRD was taken up by the National HRD Network in their 1990 symposium. The publications brought out for the symposium have highlighted the same (see Nair and Rao, 1990 and Rao, 1990 the two publications brought out especially on this theme of Professionalising HRD). Some of the papers presented in this are summarized below:

Gupta (1990) identified Training, Performance appraisal, and team building and role analysis as the more frequently used HRD practices in Indian Industry. Reward management and career planning, strategy formulation and OD are the less frequently used areas. He argued that for professional development of HRD professionals there should more self-directed learning, networking, mentors, and learning projects besides distance education programs.

Pareek in his article on "The Making of HRD Facilitator" argued that even line managers could work as HRD facilitators provided they focus on the following:

- Development of identity of individuals and roles in the organization
- Managing power effectively
- Creating synergies in organizations so that teams work effectively for organizational goals
- Achieving equity and justice by ensuring that persons who work in organizations are rewarded according to their contributions

Pareek argued that HRD managers need to integrate the above processes in their own roles without which they cannot become HRD facilitators. In sum, he concluded that." the making of HRD facilitators (both the line managers and HRD managers) involves a journey in human and organization processes, and need to be planned well to ensure its success." (P.115)

Dayal (1990) observed." Changing nature of employee expectations and organizational need for survival has made organizations feel the need for HRD, although HRD has its roots in humanistic

beliefs. HRD perspective has to grow beyond the humanistic and welfare goals and should center on the growth of the total person and ensure his involvement in the learning process.” (p.116). Dayal argues that in designing HRD programs the learning process, the cultural factors, the managerial orientations and administrative strategies need to be taken into consideration. The learning process should take into consideration that individuals learn from each other, experience builds self-confidence, and self-directed learning with organizational support and role enrichment can facilitate learning. He further argued that HRD should be for all employees and should not follow a selective approach. Individuals grow better in their own mold and in large organizations conscious efforts are needed to gain acceptance of HRD philosophy.

Kumar (1990) argued that it is the HRD manager who can orchestrate culture building, team development and facilitate change process. Outlining the future role of HRD Kumar pointed out that HRD will need to provide psychological infrastructure to make it easier for people to put down their roots in that setting and to belong. “Personal and social turbulence will drive people to seek an oasis of belonging. Having exhausted their search elsewhere, people may seek to settle in a professional space. HRD will have to facilitate this process” (p135). In addition Kumar emphasized the need to focus on building efficient leadership through envisioning, value building, process orientation and institution building. Line managers may need to take wider perspective of life and may need to spend time on other life issues. HRD may need to take a leadership role in this.

Mahesh (1990) argues that 90% of jobs being created in India are going to be in service sector. 95% of service staff contacts are with front line staff and over 90% are beyond the eyes of management. Less than 5% of unhappy customers will report a negative experience. He observed. “ Unfortunately, many organizations have suffered due to the inadequacy of our fellow professionals: Some have lost their credibility due to mistaken attachments to specific tools and approaches such as Sensitivity training, T. A., Gestalt therapy and so on. Others in the opposite end of the spectrum have reduced HRM to the mere working out of shady deals with union leaders and other power centers, raising manipulation to the level of a dubious art form. Consequently the profession is viewed either with contempt or suspicion, both within the industry and in the management schools” (p 140)

Positives: The HRD Managers Role is well defined since the time the above concerns have been expressed. See for example Rao (1990, 2010) on "The HRD Missionary" and in the references cited above.

It is the Academy of HRD that has first formulated some standard for HRD professionals. Realizing the need for professional preparation of those carrying HRD titles, AHRD has started HRD facilitators programs and subsequently the Diploma programs. The AHRD has laid the following as course requirements for preparation as HRD professional.

Negatives: While some books give the requirements and competencies of a HRD professional, these are not used fully nor are they well accepted. The courses offered and the prerequisites to be called a HRD professional are varied.

The discrepancy is not only in course content, but also in the name of basic degree offered. For example, any person who has pursued a course in any of the following may acquire a job in HRD. They are

- ❑ MBA with either HRD or Personnel as Specialization

- ❑ MSW with HRD as specialization
- ❑ Any one or two year diploma in PGDHRD/HRM / PM & IR
- ❑ MMS/PGDBM/ M.Psy (HRD) etc...

A person with any one of the above degree can be found as 'HRD Manager' in top industries.

This is very unlike Medicine or Law, where there is clear distinction between a degree and a diploma in course content, standardized number of years required to pursue these courses and the post that a person holds after completing a specialized course.

Well-defined prerequisites for a course are essential for practicing a profession. For example an Engineering student must have studied Physics, Chemistry and Maths up to standard 12th, and medicine student must have taken some compulsory courses in biology before entering the medicine education. This provides a base for future studies in the respective field.

In HRD, any graduate who has studied Commerce, Arts or Maths or even computers, can take up a course in Management and HRD. Even in MBA courses, a student merely chooses a specialization, which interests him, without taking any test or exam of basic aptitude for this particular field. It is high time the prerequisites for this important profession are defined.

Education and Training Facilities for HRD in India

Positives: In the last one-decade a number of Institutions have started Certification programs in HRD. Masters and Diploma programs are common. While professional bodies like the All India Management Association, Universities like the IGNOU offer Diploma and certification programs, Allahabad University and Andhra University offer Masters Programs. Institutions like XLRI, XUSHRM, SCMLD, Gitam University, IIM Ranchi, Symbiosis Institute and TISS offer PG Diplomas equivalent to Masters. The AHRD-XLRI program is the only program dedicated to HRD and has mostly part time candidates

Negatives: The courses are not standardized. Sometimes there is very inadequate emphasis on HRD. There is a mix up between HRD and HR. No standardization of the content and there are no agencies to maintain standards. AICTE does not come into picture for specialized diplomas. Professional bodies have not bothered to influence the curricula or standards. They are satisfied with getting good quality students to do entry-level jobs, which do not have any HRD, content and therefore do not bother about the academic preparation. Some of the recruiters themselves do not have adequate background in HRD and hence it is unrealistic to expect them to look for any standards

Balance: The education and training facilities have a long way to go. There is an urgent need to standardize the academic preparation and curricula.

A long period may again be relative term, but a degree in Law requires a minimum of three years of training and it is standardized everywhere. Similarly a medicine student undergoes 5 years of training and an engineering student has to spend four years in the institute for completing a degree course.

But since HRD has so many options and a variety of courses, a student may acquire a degree from 6 months to 2 years, depending upon the type of course in which he is enrolled. Further, a standardized MBA two years course offers specialization in second year of the course, hence a student of MBA acquires only one year of training in his respective field of specialization, which is relatively lesser time than any of the other courses mentioned above. This is another area that needs to be looked into.

Legal recognition and standards of HRD Profession- Licencing requirements

One of the most important criteria of professionalization is existence of a licensing association.

Bar association for law, Registration of medical practitioners is example of such associations. No person can legally practice these professions without getting enrolled in these associations. These associations provide a legitimate list of practicing professionals in a particular field.

In field of Management, associations like All India Management Association does exist, but registration is not mandatory for any practicing manager and it does not give any license for practicing management as a profession to its members. It is entirely up to the interest of a practicing professional to get himself registered for the same. AIMA also does not provide exhaustive list of all practicing managers of India.

Similarly, in HRD, associations like HRD Network, exists, but registration and licensing is not offered by it. It serves as a platform for practicing managers to interact with and share experiences with each other. In future, if we need professionalization of HRD, govt. bodies should recognize such networks and some licensing procedure might be included.

Strengths: None

Weaknesses: Existence of a large number of HRD professionals who are not qualified to be called as HRD professionals - are not likely to allow any licensing program. Hence bodies like National HRD Network have not been able to make much progress.

Balance: It is high time professionals standards are defined and licensing arrangements are made. All those who are to be titled as HRD Managers need to undergo a periodic renewal and examination system to continue practice. There should be nationwide norms and standards of practice.

Services Offered by the Profession and their availability elsewhere

Strengths: there are certain services offered by HRD Professionals that cannot be offered by others. These include, counselling services, facilitation of learning, creation of learning networks, OD interventions. Monitoring human processes, potential assessment, psychological testing, career counselling, team building, designing of human systems etc. Several case studies of mentors who have successfully performed these services are available.

Weaknesses: Due to inadequate preparation in the past of some HRD Managers and inappropriate handling by them of basic human processes and excessive mix up of HRD roles with personnel administration and HR management, HRD has got into disrepute. The public image of HRD is a highly undeserved negative image. This was perpetuated by some of the self styled HR Department managers who had no idea of Development and human psychology. In addition some of the line managers with right aptitude and without professionals preparation have done very well in performing select specialized HRD roles (for example leadership development of team work or performance management etc.). This has eroded the credibility of HRD. It will need a lot of work to create an identity for HRD.

Balance: Undo the damage already done. A massive movement of educating the public is required. The services to be offered by HRD need to be defined and publicized. The service quality needs to be improved tremendously.

Sense of Identity and belongingness in the Profession (HRD Community)

Strengths: HRD Identity is well accepted in the country. The HRD professionals are treated as a separate breed. Professional bodies like National HRD Network, NIPM and ISTD have facilitated the development of a common identity.

Weaknesses: The bondage and identity is not strong as admissions to these bodies are open to all without any qualifications and assessment of the appropriateness of the member.

Balance: Identity based on belonging to a profession on the basis of expert knowledge rather than on the basis of payment of fee is needed. It is high time these bodies start separate professional membership that symbolizes license to practice HRD.

Code of conduct and ethics

There is no code of conduct or ethics accepted and enforced for HRD Managers in India. This is a sensitive profession as a HRD manager can make or mar careers of a large number of individuals. It is unfortunate that after so many years of development of this field there are no code of ethics and values for HRD Managers. It is high time that the professionals' bodies formulate and enforce the same. The standards and ethics formulated by the Academy of HRD, USA is noteworthy in here (see www.ahrd.org). The National HRD Network has evolved a code of conduct but it is only read out and not applied. One of the criticisms is that a few of the office bearers themselves don't abide by the code and there is no mechanism to enforce the code. In the absence it is difficult to counter the perception that some of the office bearers are promoting activities for their individual interests than those of the mission of the body.

Public acceptance and well defined member roles

Public recognition is a very important aspect of any profession. Since medicine and law deals with issues concerning public and society, and their services are offered directly to the public at large, they have got the desired recognition easily. But field like HRD does not offer its services to society. The clients of HRD are organizations and their employees. Moreover, since organizations have not developed HRD as their most important part, but a corollary, this recognition becomes difficult to achieve. Perhaps, Marketing and Production have more public recognition than HRD due to their visibly and presence felt by public.

As far as member roles are concerned, HRD is most ambiguous branch of management. The functions carried by HRD departments are so diverse, that role clarity does not exist in this field. A manager with the designation of 'HRD Manager' might be performing any or all of the tasks like Welfare officer, IR, Personnel manager, Recruitment and selection officer. It is time that organizations stop using the designation 'HRD Manager' as a decorative title and practicing professionals must not accept such title

It would be very beneficial for HRD if there is role clarity among practicing professionals and public at large.

Altruistic service than pursuit of material gain

Though HRD Values always emphasize on this issue, but there is no serious emphasis on the same. Since there is no licensure and thus violation of this value have any effect on the professional status of an HRD person.

Research in HRD

The purpose of Research is to generate knowledge and further the field of a profession. Medical researches lead to invention of new drugs, understanding phenomenon and solve problems. Similarly research in HRD aims at identifying a problem, generating the alternatives and solving it.

The Research in HRD is not yet developed like medical researchers. The Academicians, HRD professionals and leading institutes of Management are taking active interest in HR related research. IIM Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Luck now and Kolkata have promoted research in HRD. IITs have also started Ph.Ds in Management and Human Resource Management. IIM A has produced around 30 FPMs in HRD since from 1978 to 2015.

Institutions like Academy of HRD; Ahmedabad has its unique Fellow Program in HRD, initially in collaboration with XLRI, Jamshedpur and produced around 25 Fellows. Currently it has over 70 candidates in process.

Universities and private institutes are also promoting the research in HRD. This kind of interest in research would definitely further the field of HRD.

Professional Bodies:

There are three prominent national level Professional Bodies including the ISTD, NIPM and NHRDN. Two of them have a post graduate Diploma or other form of certification programs.

Has Indian HRD Attained the Status of a Profession?

The earlier discussion indicates the following in favour of recognizing hr. as a Profession:

- HRD in India: It has body of knowledge though a lot more needs to be done to put all relevant knowledge together. The HRD knowledge base is highly contextual and perhaps more appropriate to India;
- It has professional bodies though the professional bodies need to be more concerned about the profession and has to start playing gate keeping role rather than self serving role of exchanging experiences and offering programs for already qualified people. They need to provide mentors, fund knowledge generation, set and maintain standards, promote entry and exit into the profession and establish and maintain professional standards
- It has a set of educational programs though these need to be standardized. The Academy of HRD, Ahmedabad has made some attempts in the past but it needs to be pursued.
- Has well defined roles and competencies, understood though sometimes wrongly by the public. The NHT RDN is in the process of developing a Competency model for HR professionals and a team is working on this to evolve assessment methods etc.

However, HRD in India,

- Does not have a standardized system of preparation of HR professionals
- Does not have a regulatory and licensing mechanism;
- Does not have a code of conduct, ethics and values accepted and practiced and regulated,
- Is still materialistic in orientation and is not public service oriented;

- Should have an identity through professional bodies and the identity is more with the body and for temporary periods of time than with the profession itself.

In spite lot of developments in terms of multiplication of educational programs, professional bodies, research programs, judged against the criteria needed to be called a profession and as compared to the development of this profession abroad, and in other fields it may be concluded that:

- i) The body of knowledge and text books lack basic understanding of HRD (for example theories of learning and personality development may have to find appropriate place in literature and text books and HRD applications in different contexts should be outlined and be not restricted to corporate sector which only a small part of the population serve);
- ii) The basics are neither taught nor followed by the professionals;
- iii) There is no strictly enforced code of conduct, ethics and values for the profession;
- iv) And the professional bodies have shied away from formulating norm, values, certification requirements etc.
- v) There is no licensing mechanism to practice; and
- vi) Mentorship lacking except at an informal level.

Judged against these criteria required to be profession, it may be concluded that HRD in India, unlike in the west can at best can be called still an occupation or a preoccupation of a few and has not acquired the status of a profession. To be qualified as a profession it has a long way to go.

It is high time that academics, professional bodies and reputed institutions professing and championing the cause of Human Resource Development take time and make efforts to do the following:

1. Define basics and outline what constitutes Human Resource Development, the competencies required to be called a HRD professionals;
2. Introduce a certification mechanism for recognition of qualified HRD Professionals and or Facilitators;
3. Define and enforce a code of conduct including standards, ethics and values;
4. Make efforts to make available the body of knowledge at one place or at various places of preparation of HRD professionals;
5. Put mechanisms in place that distinguish HRD Professionals from others and help them to contribute to the society at large through their organizations, practice and work;
6. Step up the basic and applied research in HRD area; and
7. Create a reflective and rejuvenating HRD community.

These are just a few steps and many more need to be undertaken to make HRD contributes to the society. Strong will power and positive efforts taken by the organizations and HR practicing professionals may change this scenario. one must remember that professions like Medicine and Law have a history of two centuries and they acquired the status of profession after going through many stages of development. HRD is a recent field and in future, and in due course of time, it may also develop into a profession like Law and Medicine.

HROne

In the light of all these Project HROne is conceptualised by the author of this paper along with Xavier University School of HRM, XLRI Jamshedpur. As a first step an attempt is being made to gather information about all HR professionals in the country.

Objective: To put together all HR Professionals in the country on One Platform and enabling them to connect, network, grow and contribute to the building of the profession and nation.

At this point of time we define a HR professional loosely as.. “ anyone who practices HR as an occupation preferably after going through an education or training program of study or self study”. This definition is broad and inclusive and eventually may be changed as the profession grows and attains legal status as a profession. Thus HROne includes al self proclaimed HR Professionals and does not subject them through and screening.

This initiative will extend to :

1. All academic Institutions offering courses in HR including Universities and others
2. All Professional bodies in HR across the country (NIPM, ISTD, NHRDN, ISABS, LMAs, IPA, etc.)
3. Formal and informal networks on Social media including Face book, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn; Yahoo other groups
4. Industry, Government, NGOs, and all other employing agencies etc for registration

ⁱ <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/4650.html>

ⁱⁱ Rao, T. V. (2003) Future of HRD, Macmillan India, New Delhi