

THE JOURNEY OF AN INSTITUTION

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About the Author



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From a journey that began in 1985, National HRD Network (NHRDN), set up with the inspiring aim of spreading the movement of Human Resource Development (HRD) in the country, has entered its silver jubilee year. Over the past two and half decades, this institution has been built and mentored by outstanding leaders, committed office bearers, who have embraced the mission of creating an unparalleled network of the Human resource (HR) community that endeavored to further the vital cause, as trustees for the years gone by and for posterity too. Each member in turn contributed through his/her presence, participation and perpetuation of a unique bond. The underlying philosophy of the Network is that every human being has the potential to do remarkable things. *"Full many a gem of purest ray serene, The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear; Full many a flower is born to*

blush unseen, And waste its sweetness on the desert air" ; this poignant allusion from Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' underlines an imperative need to recognize, discover and nurture talent. This is reflective of the very nature of the HR profession – whose role is that of custodians and alchemists of human capital

The National HRD Network is an association of professionals, with the overarching commitment to promote the HRD movement in India and enhancing the capability of human resource professionals, enabling them to make an impactful contribution in enhancing competitiveness and creating value to society. The Network was initiated to focus the attention of organizations and concerned individuals on how to optimize human resources, through education,

training, research and experience sharing. 'The HRD process is an organization comprised of analyzing and matching the role and the person by developing the person in the role, developing the role for the person, developing equitability, developing self-renewing capability and coping with collective power'. It is a process by which employees in an organization are enabled to:

- Acquire capabilities to perform various tasks associated with their present and future roles;
- Develop their inner potential for self and organizational growth;
- Develop an organizational culture where networking relationships, teamwork and collaboration among different units is strong, contributing to organizational growth and individual well being.

"Humans are social animals endowed with reason", observed Aristotle. The very foundations of the HRD process, perhaps has its origins in the humanism of Renaissance of the 15 and 16th century and The Enlightenment of the 18th Century. The Renaissance celebrated the power of the individual and the works of masters such as Michelangelo, Ad Vinci and Brunelleschi stand testimony to the progress of man and his ability to achieve the unimaginable. The Enlightenment era, encompassing outstanding scientists and philosophers like Newton and Descartes, brilliant writers like Locke, Hume, Rousseau and Voltaire and Burke; was characterized by an optimistic and deeply held faith in the ability of human beings to further themselves by using reason progressively. Thinkers of The Enlightenment believed deeply in the premise that human beings are rational and have the potential to shape their destiny. Freedom, happiness and knowledge were recognized as the natural goals of the rational man. The *Encyclopedia*, a 35 volume monumental epitome of the

Enlightenment era, published by Denis Diderot mid 18th Century, celebrates the premise that man's route to knowledge is served by empirical methods enriched by contemplation and rational reflection, laying seeds for the development of social sciences.

The emergence of social sciences, in a world which had so far been concerned with physical sciences, influenced by the Industrial revolution which impacted commerce and business profoundly, recognized the increasing awareness of the variety of human experiences and the growing ethos of the cultural and social character of the human milieu and behaviour in society.

Adam Smith, in his '*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*' 1759, considered to be a psychological foundation of the much celebrated later work '*Wealth of Nations*' dwelt on the principles of human nature of which social institutions and social behavior could be deduced. Contemporary thought was centered on transformation in the way we lived, owing to burgeoning of population, entrepreneurship, changed conditions of labour, rising awareness of political masses, urbanization, advent of technology, new concepts of property and capital, and emergence of factory systems. Our lexicon welcomed new words hitherto never used such as *industry*, *capitalism*, *proletariat*, *commercialism* and interestingly *crisis* too. In the early 19th Century, August Comte, the French philosopher, highlighted the need for a new science, "one whose subject would be human beings as social animals."

The scientific enquiry into human behaviour and a deeper examination of social and environmental factors in the late 19th and 20th Century, the foundation for social sciences, assumed perhaps the anthropocentric view which places humans at the core and holds them to be

the point of origin pre-supposing the immense possibilities is a humanistic metaphor. The new field of 'management' started to gain in significance. Scientific management grew as a science from the work of Charles Babbage and further advanced by Frederick Taylor in his 1911 book 'The Principles of Scientific Management'. Harvard professor Elton Mayo, and the Hawthorne experiments at AT&T during 1928 to 1932, empirically discovered the importance of social conditions at work and that workers became a dynamic social group and laying the early inroads into the human relations approach to management. A decade later, the human relations school of thought, as an applied social science, got furthered by Chester Barnard, a practicing executive who highlighted the importance of a shared vision, in his 1938 classic 'The Functions of the Executive'.

As industry continued to evolve, human relations approach was found to be insufficient to address work environments and people issues in their emerging complexity, leading to the gradual emergence of the Human Resources school of thought as the natural progression, still anchored in humanism. Thinkers and management scientists immensely enriched this journey: Abraham Maslow's articulation of the hierarchy of needs, in his 1943 publication 'A Theory of Human Motivation'; Frederick Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory in his 1959 book 'The Motivation to Work'; Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y espoused in 'The Human Side of Enterprise' 1960; Gary Becker who developed the foundations of human capital theory. Early use of the term HRD, around 1964, is credited to Harbison and Myers, development economists, who proposed indicators for development in developing nations. Leonard Nadler, of George Washington University, is credited

to have formulated the contemporary concept and defining the field of 'human resource development', for the first time in 1969 which he redefined later in 1984 as "organized learning experiences in a definite time period to increase the possibility of job performance and growth". Even as we recognize HRD as a relatively recent development, in actual form it has been a well established practice over the past few decades with evolving contours.

India embraced the emerging concept of HRD quite early. Larsen & Toubro was the first organization that set up a dedicated and pioneering HRD department in 1974. Prof Udai Pareek and Prof TV Rao of IIM-A, whose seminal contributions to this field are widely acclaimed, outlined a philosophy for the new HRD system. XLRI set up the L&T Chair for HRD in 1983 (with Dr TV Rao as the first chair professor) and later the Centre for HRD. In the early 80's professional managers from enterprises such as L&T, Bank of Baroda, SAIL, TVS along with academicians from IIM-A and XLRI took the lead in designing and implementing HRD systems, and recognized the need to share these learning's and experiences. In a seminar held in Bombay in 1985, the need to further the movement of HRD by strengthening institutional mechanisms as well create a vibrant forum for interaction amongst HR professionals and promote the movement of HRD in the country. This gave rise to The National HRD Network on 2nd March 1985, which was later registered as a Society and Trust in Dec 1986. Signatories to the Memorandum of Association included Dr TV Rao, Fr E Abraham of XLRI, Dr KK Verma, Dr Anil Khandelwal, Dr DM Pestonjee, Mr GK Ghosh, Dr Kakoli Saha and Mr. JK Parikh. Today, The National HRD Network (NHRDN), today, a country wide presence with 30 chapters and home to 8000 members embodies the soul and spirit of human resources

professionals, is indeed an inimitable institution.

Institutions are understood and 'identified with a social purpose and permanence, transcending individual human lives and intentions, and with the making and enforcing of rules governing cooperative human behavior'. They have been a focus and object of study by social sciences, and play vital role in creating and strengthening social capital. David Putnam, the Harvard political scientist defines social capital, of the bonding and/or bridging kind, as the collective value of social networks and the inclinations from these networks to do things for each other, and can be measured by the extent of trust and reciprocity in a community between individuals, in both homogeneous and heterogeneous settings. What makes an institution endure? What factors govern the prospects of perpetuity? What drives the need to connect and collaborate? These are vital questions to reflect upon to unravel the components of institution building. Looking back at the annals of NHRD Network's history, may answer some of these questions and perhaps help raise some even more critical ones.

Core Vision and Values: the binding force

NHRDN, an association of professionals, has a well defined philosophy, as shared erstwhile, with the overarching commitment to promote the HRD movement in India and enhancing the capability of human resource professionals, enabling them to make an impactful contribution in enhancing competitiveness and creating value to society. It addresses growth of self, the organization and the society at large creating an uplifting and compelling framework of engagement of individuals in the Network. There is an established "Code of Conduct" that bind all members, and all meetings at the Board level or at the Chapter level commences

only after reading the code, and reaffirming our faith and intent in adhering to the principles. The abiding purpose of the Network and the remarkable possibilities of contributing through a collective process is the bedrock of this institution.

Membership: inclusive and representative

The Network is now a vibrant not-for-profit body of 8000 members, making it clearly the most representative association, particularly of the HR profession. It comprises industrial enterprises, academicians, practicing professionals and students, a rich and diverse community together for a collective cause. It is a bonding that gets enriched with members bringing in other members, attendees of events seeking to be part of the Network which has grown over the years and multiplied to such a large association; to learn and to serve

Constitutional Framework: path of corporate governance

The National HRD Network has a documented set of bye-laws that govern the function of the Executive Board and the Chapters of the Network. The Executive Board comprises the National President, Secretary, Treasurer, Past President, Elected Members, select Nominees, and the Chapter Presidents. Board Meetings are held every quarter, and accounts audited every year, without fail. The Chapters in turn follow the direction set by the Executive Board and play a critical role in enabling sustained levels of engagement, on one hand following the national agenda set, and on the other addressing the needs of the local members.

Leadership at the helm: succession and sustenance

NHRDN has been fortunate to have had at its helm, over the past 25 years, a

distinguished line of National Presidents from industry and academia that have continuously expanded the boundaries while staying steadfast with the Network's vision and objectives. There are well laid down processes that facilitate the succession plan for anointing the National President. A Search Committee comprising past Presidents of NHRD, distinguished academicians and renowned CEOs recommends who the baton should pass on to, duly ratified by the Executive Board. The Network's chief executives from its inception have been:

Charter of Action: strategy to execution

The vision of the Network and the agenda and tone set by the National President and the Executive Board finds translation into a wide range of activities that engage the members through the year. Monthly Meetings and Special events, Learning Centre workshops, Webinars, and special programs like "Meet a Mentor", seminars, conferences, training interventions, and informal get-togethers create multiple venues for networking, learning and growth. Books and papers are published to share developments in the field of HRD.

1986-89	Dr TV Rao	Professor IIM-A
1989-91	MRR Nair	Director Personnel, SAIL
1991-93	Dr Udai Pareek	Professor IHMR Jaipur
1993-94	VS Mahesh	Executive VP-HR, WIPRO
1994-95	Rajesh Vidyasagar	VP-HR, VST Industries
1995-97	Debashish Mitra	Group VP-HR, BILT
1997-00	Arvind Pande	Chairman, SAIL
2000-02	Arvind Agrawal	President - HR, RPG Group
2002-05	Dr Santrupt Misra	Director - HR&IT, Aditya Birla Group
2005-07	P Dwarakanath	Director-HR, GSK Consumer Healthcare
2007-09	Aquil Busrai	Executive Director, IBM

Empowerment: the power of grassroots

While the Executive Board serves the core purpose of setting directions to the Network, the 30 Chapters function with fair degree of empowerment. With the support and guidance of Regional Presidents, the Chapter leaders and office bearers such as Chapter President and Secretary of the respective Chapter provide the requisite leadership and guide the execution of activities at the Chapter level. The range of activities at the Chapter level, and the level of engagement constantly reenergizes the Network, drawing upon each other's capabilities and forging a symbiotic relationship between the local Chapters and the all India Network.

The HRD Newsletter published every month and the HRD Network Journal every quarter are vital institutional vehicles for dissemination of news and knowledge. The NHRDN also worked on a critical mission of identifying HR Competencies that meet the need to stay relevant and through a critical initiative termed as "HR Compass" build a continuous stream of assessors who in turn run assessment centers for professionals to equip themselves for a fulfilling role in their chosen profession. Keeping with the times, the NHRDN has created a web presence, built on the social networking platform Web2.0, that provides a rich and engaging virtual connect between all its members.

All of these interventions combine to provide a compelling value proposition for the members of the Network.

National Conference: committed to thought leadership

The National Conference convened by NHRDN, formerly every two years, and by increasing demand, now held annually is recognized as path breaking event. The venue is rotated across regions to enhance participation of the membership fraternity and allow for a rich diversity. It attracts speakers from all over the world, from academia and industry, and nearly a 1000 delegates come together to share and learn from experiences over a 2 to 3 day period. The National Conference not only remains a much awaited event, also serves the vital purpose of connecting members spread countrywide under a single roof aiding knowledge transfer.

award is also given to the chapter that demonstrates the greatest vitality and makes a unique contribution. The Network also instituted an award to recognize an Emerging Chapter. These awards are handed over at the National Conference.

Spirit of Volunteerism: an inspiring social purpose

A powerful aspect that has held together the Network is the amazing spirit of volunteerism that pervades the institution creating emotional glue that binds its members with a common cause. All office bearers work in an honorary capacity, sparing time from their professional pursuits, and commit themselves to executing the collective mission with selflessness, dedication and zeal. The keenness to serve and joy in bonding combines into an effective amalgam that sustains the overall ethos.

1985	Bombay	Recent Experiences in HRD Systems
1987	Madras	Alternative Approaches and Strategies of HRD
1989	New Delhi	Towards Organizational Effectiveness Through HRD
1994	Bombay	Role of HRD in the New Economic Environment
1996	Hyderabad	Challenges of Development: Aligning HR Processes
1998	New Delhi	Building A Globally Competitive India: Leading Through HR
2000	Hyderabad	Going Global: Leveraging India's Potential
2002	Mumbai	HR @ The Heart of Business
2004	Bangalore	Emerging Asia: An HR Agenda
2006	New Delhi	Future of Work: Mastering Change
2007	Kolkata	India's Century: The Challenge For Indian Business Leadership
2008	Chennai	HR's Next Agenda

The National Conference of 2009 is being held at Mumbai in November with the theme: Uncertainty to Certainty

National Awards: contributions recognized

The HRD Excellence Awards were instituted in 1989 to recognize and honour individuals and organizations that have made a significant contribution to the HRD movement in the country. Along with this, the Best Chapter

The journey of the National HRD Network provides insights into the growth of an institution. The fundamental bedrock of institution building presupposes the creation of a continuum that carries forth the core purpose of the association. Nurtured by committed leaders and fueled by new successors, the core vision remains resplendent; a flame that continues to ignite minds.

Paul Lawrence and Nitin Nohria, Harvard professors, have delved deep into the evolution of the human mind to deduce and discover what drives us to make the choices we make. The fundamental drivers that govern human motivation, identified in their book “Driven-How Human Nature Shapes our Choices” are: the **drive to acquire**- seek, control, retain objects and experience that we value; the **drive to bond**-build long term relationships of mutually caring commitment; the **drive to learn**-make sense of the world around us and of ourselves; and the

drive to defend-ourselves, our loved ones, our beliefs, and resources from harm. The evolution of the Network has over the

years has, in its natural course, addressed all these drives and thereby provided meaning and motivation to its members to help it become the institution it is.

Having traversed two and a half decades, it is now a good time perhaps to pause, reflect, refresh and reset. On the road ahead, Kahlil Gibran’s poetic words lend a gentle lesson to stay on course:

*At ebb tide I wrote
A line upon the sand
And gave it all my heart
And all my soul.
At flood tide I returned
To read what I had inscribed
And found my ignorance upon the shore.*

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