



## Role and Competencies of Indian HRD Professionals

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### **Abstract:**

*The purpose of present study is to find the extent of importance of various HRD roles and competencies and demonstration of them by HRD professionals in India. ASTD competency model (2004) is the basis for designing the questionnaires covering HRD roles and competencies. Based on the data collected from 120 HRD professionals and another 120 line professionals, this study finds that there is an agreement between line managers and HRD professionals in the rank order of the HRD roles, and competencies. However there is a significant difference between HRD professionals and line managers on the top ranking roles and competencies. HRD professionals need to improve their performance in the project manager role. They have to improve their skills in analyzing needs and proposing solutions, and interpersonal competencies to make line managers satisfied with the HRD services.*

### **1. Introduction**

Human Resource development (HRD) is organized learning experiences provided by employer within a specific period to bring out the possibility of performance improvement and / or personal growth. Training, education and development are the activity areas of HRD (Nadler, and Nadler 1989). It is a set of systematic and planned activities designed by an organization to provide its members with the opportunities to learn necessary skills to meet current and future job demands (Werner and DeSimone, 2006). It encompasses a range of organizational practices that focus on learning, training, career development and lifelong learning, organizational development (Mankin, 2009). It is a process by which the employees of an organization are helped, in a continuous, planned way, to: 1) acquire or sharpen capabilities required to perform various functions associated with their present or expected future roles, 2) develop their general capabilities as individuals and discover and exploit their own potentials for their own and/or organizational development purposes, and 3) develop an organizational culture in which supervisor-subordinate relationships, teamwork, and collaboration among sub-units are strong and contribute to the professional wellbeing, motivation, and pride of employees (T. V. Rao, 1985). Having realized the importance HRD, organizations are making efforts to align their HRD with business and expect HRD professionals to meet the business expectations. In order to meet the expectations, HRD Professionals should possess and demonstrate a set of specific competencies while performing their HRD roles. The present study makes an attempt to find out the competencies required and demonstrated by HRD professionals in the Indian setting.

### **2. ASTD HRD Competencies Studies**

American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) has sponsored many HRD competency studies over the years. The first study conducted by Pinto and Walker (1978) revealed that analyzing and diagnosing needs, determining appropriate training approaches, designing and developing programs, developing material resources, managing internal and external resources, developing and counseling individuals, preparing job-or performance-related training, conducting classroom training, developing groups and organization, conducting research on training, managing working relationship, managing training function, and managing professional self-development are the major areas of training and development professionals. The second study conducted by McLagan and McCullough (1983) established a human resource "wheel", a definition of training and development, 102 critical outputs for training and development field, four role clusters and a matrix of 15 roles/31 competencies for training and development professionals. The third study conducted by McLagan (1989) was expansion of 1983 study going beyond training and naming the field as human resource development. It defined HRD as 'the integrated use of training and development, organizational development, career development to improve individual, group, and organizational effectiveness'. It identified 35 competencies for HRD and summarized 11 roles for HRD professionals. Going beyond traditional training and development, Rothwell (1996) developed models for human performance improvement (HPI) which explored the roles, competencies, and

outputs of HPI work. He listed the trends in the key areas such as performance, business, learning, organizational structure, and technology. He pinpointed 15 core and 38 supporting competencies of HPI. Piskurich and Sanders (1998) examined the roles, competencies, and outputs that HRD professionals need to implement. Rothwell, Sanders and Soper, (1999) inquired on competencies required for the success in the field of workplace learning and performance (WLP). The field is defined as integrated use of learning and other interventions for the purpose of improving individual and organizational performance. This research developed models for workplace learning and performance. This consisted of roles such as the manager, the analyst, the intervention selector, the intervention designer and developer, the intervention implementer, the change leader, and the evaluator. Further the study pinpointed 52 competencies that are classified into six groups, namely analytical competencies, technical competencies, leadership, business competencies, interpersonal competencies, and technological competencies. As a natural evolution of 1999 research, Bernthal, Colteryahn, Davis, Naughton, Rothwell, and Wellins (2004) conceptualized a model which includes three layers of knowledge and skill areas, competencies, areas of expertise, and roles. The model identified 12 foundational competencies for WLP professionals and classified them into three groups. Group one consisted of interpersonal competencies such as building trust, communicating effectively, influencing stakeholders, leveraging diversity, and networking and partnering. Group two covered business management competencies such as analyzing needs and proposing solutions, applying business acumen, driving results, planning and implementing assignments, and thinking strategically. Group three included personal competencies such as demonstrating adoptability, and modeling personal development. The model identified specific WLP areas of expertise such as designing learning, improving human performance, delivering training, measuring and evaluating, facilitating organizational change, managing the learning function, coaching, managing organizational knowledge, and career planning and talent management. These were positioned above the competencies because they direct and supplement the foundational competencies through special skills and knowledge. All the areas of expertise rely on specialized technologies to leverage and support them. The model placed four WLP roles, namely project manager, professional specialist, business partner, and learning strategist, above the areas of expertise because WLP profession requires a certain combination of competencies and areas of expertise to perform the roles effectively.

### 3. The Present Study

The overall purpose of present study is to find the extent of importance of various HRD roles and competencies and demonstration of them by HRD professionals in India. Two questionnaires are designed for this study covering the competencies identified by ASTD competency model (2004). Questionnaire one is aimed at collecting information from HRD professionals to find out the extent of importance of the HRD roles and competencies. Questionnaire two is aimed at collecting information from line professionals to assess the extent of demonstration of the same HRD roles and competencies by HRD professionals while performing their roles and responsibilities. Questionnaire one is administered among HRD professionals working in different types of organizations in India with a request to answer the items on a five-point scale, one being 'unnecessary' and five being 'essential' for HRD professionals. Questionnaire two is administered among line professionals of the same organizations with a request to answer the items on a five-point scale, one being 'not at all demonstrated' by HRD professional and five being 'always almost demonstrated'. To respond to these questions, the respondent needs to have enough exposure to HRD function in their respective organizations. Therefore, the questionnaire is distributed to the executives who have a minimum of two years of work experience. All together 245 filled-in questionnaires are received from the executives representing 10 different organizations in India. After reviewing all the questionnaires 240 questionnaires (120 HRD professionals and 120 line professionals) are considered for analysis. The data collected has been subjected to reliability test. Overall reliability was 0.96 (Cronbach's alpha value). Descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages are used for the analysis of demographic information of the respondents. Mean scores, standard deviations, and paired t-tests are employed for analyzing HRD roles and competencies data.

### 4. Demographics of the Respondents

Table 1 presents type of industry of respondents, their level of management and their work experience. Based on the nature of industry, 29.17% of respondents represent auto sector. 20% belong to various manufacturing units (e.g., companies making agro Products, electronics, fast moving consumer products, pharmaceuticals, and steel). 16.67% of the respondents work for construction industry. 14.17% represents engineering service organizations. The remaining is distributed to oil and gas, project management, technology services, telecommunications, and utilities and services. It can be seen that there is an equal representation of line and HRD professionals in all types of industries. As far as level of management of the respondents is concerned, 38.75% of them are holding senior positions; 44.17% are in the middle level; and the remaining belonging to junior level management. With respect to their work experience, overall, 38.33% has two to five years of work experience; 20.83% has put up six to ten years of experience; 18.33% has 11 to 15 years; and 22.50% has 16 and above years of work experience. The average year of work experience of the respondents is calculated as 10.23 years. However, it is calculated that line professionals have higher average work experience (14.03 years) than the HRD professionals (6.41 years).

| Type of Industry             | HRD Professionals | Line Professionals | Total       |
|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Auto Sector                  | 35 (29.17)        | 35 (29.17)         | 70 (29.17)  |
| Construction                 | 20 (16.67)        | 20 (16.67)         | 40 (16.67)  |
| Engineering                  | 17 (14.17)        | 17 (14.17)         | 34 (14.17)  |
| Manufacturing                | 24 (20)           | 24 (20)            | 48 (20)     |
| Oil & Gas                    | 4 (3.33)          | 4 (3.33)           | 8 (3.33)    |
| Power                        | 2 (1.67)          | 2 (1.67)           | 4 (1.67)    |
| Project Management           | 2 (1.67)          | 2 (1.67)           | 4 (1.67)    |
| Technology Services          | 9 (7.5)           | 9 (7.5)            | 18 (7.5)    |
| Telecommunications           | 2 (1.67)          | 2 (1.67)           | 4 (1.67)    |
| Utilities & Services         | 5 (4.17)          | 5 (4.17)           | 10 (4.17)   |
| <b>Level of Management</b>   |                   |                    |             |
| Junior                       | 31 (25.83)        | 10 (8.33)          | 41 (17.08)  |
| Middle                       | 54 (45)           | 52 (43.33)         | 106 (44.17) |
| Senior                       | 53 (29.17)        | 58 (48.33)         | 93 (38.75)  |
| <b>Experience (in years)</b> |                   |                    |             |
| 2 to 5                       | 68 (56.67)        | 24 (20)            | 92 (38.33)  |
| 6 to 10                      | 29 (24.17)        | 21 (17.5)          | 50 (20.83)  |
| 11 to 15                     | 14 (11.67)        | 30 (25)            | 44 (18.33)  |
| 16 and above                 | 9 (7.5)           | 45 (37.5)          | 54 (22.50)  |

Table 1: Type of Industry, Level of Management and Experience of Respondents

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

As presented in Table 2, overall 80% of the respondents are men and the remaining 20% are women. It can be observed that women respondents are found be higher in HRD professionals group than their counterparts. Out of total respondents, over 50% of the respondents are within the age group of 25 to 34 years. 34.17% has 35 to 44 years and the remainder of the respondents are 45 and above years of age. However, it is calculated that line professionals have higher average age (37.51 years) than the HRD professionals (33.06 years). The educational qualifications of the respondents range from Diploma in Engineering to Doctor of Philosophy. It is significant to note that a majority (69.58%) of the respondents have possessed postgraduate qualification.

| Gender                            | HRD Professionals | Line Professionals | Total       |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Female                            | 43 (35.83)        | 5 (4.17)           | 48 (20)     |
| Male                              | 77 (64.17)        | 115 (95.83)        | 192 (80)    |
| <b>Age (in years)</b>             |                   |                    |             |
| 25 to 34                          | 75 (62.5)         | 48 (40)            | 123 (51.25) |
| 35 to 44                          | 33 (27.5)         | 49 (40.83)         | 82 (34.17)  |
| 45 Above                          | 12 (10)           | 23 (19.17)         | 35 (14.58)  |
| <b>Educational qualifications</b> |                   |                    |             |
| Diploma                           | 14 (11.67)        | 0                  | 14 (5.83)   |
| Graduation                        | 56 (46.67)        | 1 (0.83)           | 57 (23.75)  |
| Post-graduation                   | 48 (40.00)        | 119 (99.17)        | 167 (69.58) |
| Ph.D.                             | 2 (1.66)          | 0                  | 2 (0.83)    |

Table 2: Gender, Age and Qualifications of Respondents

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

When HRD professionals and line professionals were asked to state the approximate percentage of coverage of HRD roles and competencies in the items of the questionnaire, they have mentioned that the items in the questionnaire have covered approximately 80%. The HRD professionals were asked to mention their primary area of responsibility in HRD. The line professionals were asked to mention the primary area of HRD responsibility they considered while responding to the questionnaire. As presented in Table 3, a majority of HRD professionals are HRD generalist assigned with all HRD responsibilities. A majority of line managers also considered the role of HRD generalist while rating the demonstration of HRD roles and competencies. The other primary areas of responsibilities include learning and development (9.58%); performance management (7.50%); career planning and talent management (5.42); and organizational change and development (4.17%).

| Primary Area of Responsibility      | HRD Professionals | Line Professionals | Total       |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Career planning & talent management | 5 (4.17)          | 8 (6.67)           | 13 (5.42)   |
| Performance Management              | 8 (6.67)          | 10 (8.33)          | 18 (7.5)    |
| Knowledge management                | 1 (0.83)          | 1 (0.83)           | 2 (0.83)    |
| Learning and development            | 17 (14.17)        | 6 (5)              | 23 (9.58)   |
| Organizational change & development | 6 (5)             | 4 (3.33)           | 10 (4.17)   |
| HRD Generalist                      | 73 (60.83)        | 91 (75.83)         | 164 (68.33) |
| Others                              | 10 (8.33)         | 0                  | 10 (4.17)   |

Table 3: Primary Area of Responsibility in HRD  
 Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

**5. HRD Roles**

As presented in Figure 1, the top most important role of HRD professionals is professional specialist. This is followed by learning strategist, project manager and business partner roles. It is significant to note that based on the means scores, one can see consistency between ASTD (2004) study and the present study in the ranking of the most important role and least important role. It is interesting to note that the line managers have also rated the HRD roles in the same order. However there is a difference between extent of importance and demonstration. The difference is more significant in performing the roles of business partner and project manager. The line managers expect that HRD professionals should demonstrate the roles with application of business and industry knowledge and ensuring effective execution of HRD initiatives. The line managers also expect adequate support from HRD professionals in their HRD activities.

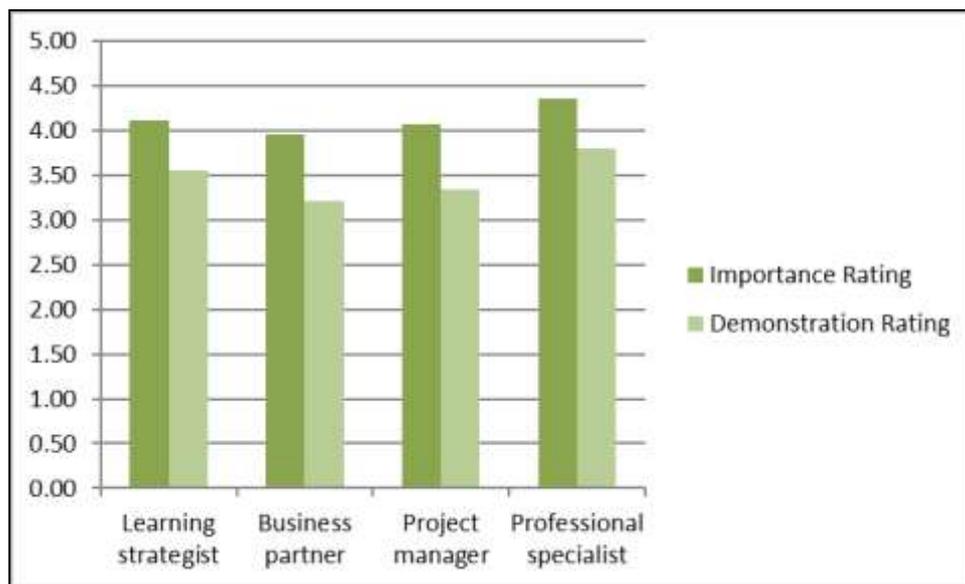


Figure 1: HRD Roles

**6. Business Management Competencies**

Based on the mean score, it can be stated that ‘analyzing needs and proposing solutions’ has emerged as the top most important business management competency required for HRD professionals in ASTD (2004) study. However, it could be seen from Figure 2, that this study has ranked ‘planning and implementing assignments’ in the first place. When compared to importance rating of HRD professionals and demonstration rating of line professionals, significant difference is found on the aspects of analyzing needs and proposing solutions, driving results, planning and implementing assignments, and thinking strategically. However on the aspect of applying business acumen, not such significant difference is observed.

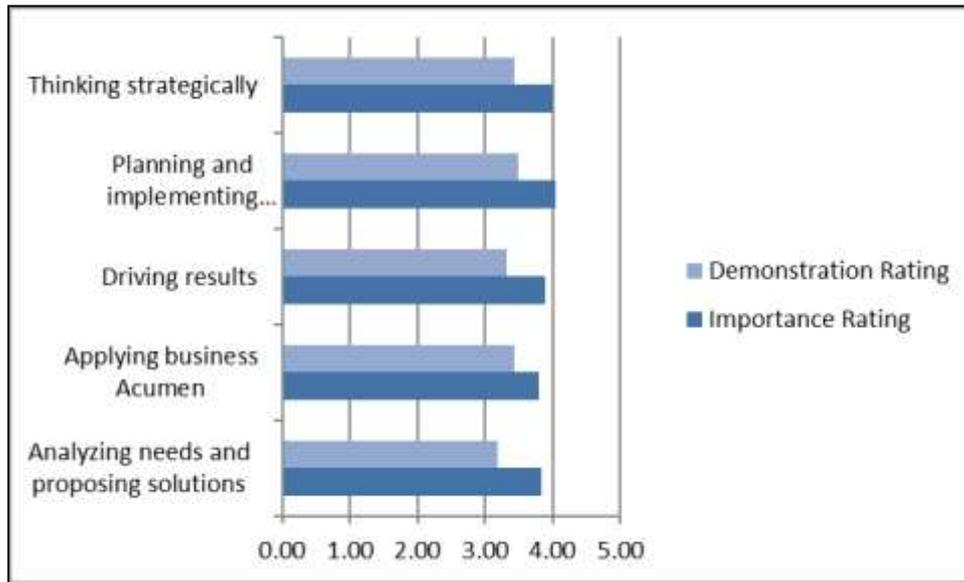


Figure 2: Business Management Competencies

**7. Interpersonal Competencies**

It seems that by and large there is consistency in terms of ranking of importance of interpersonal competencies between this study and ASTD (2004) study. Building trust and communicating effectively have been emerged as the top most important aspects under this domain of competency. As presented in Figure 3, there is a significant gap between the importance rating and demonstration rating. There is a gap on the aspects of building trust and communicating effectively, which are the top most important aspects of this domain. However there is not much significant gap between importance and demonstration on the aspect of influencing stakeholders. The overall difference between the importance rating and demonstration rating is also significant.

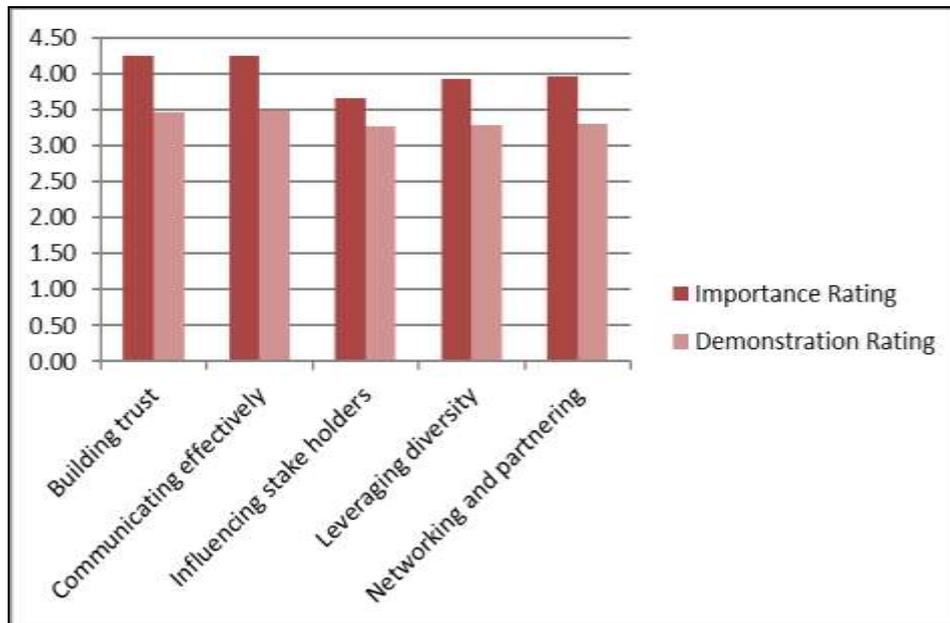


Figure 3: Interpersonal Competencies

**8. Personal Competencies**

Based on the mean scores, it can be stated that ASTD (2004) study has identified demonstrating adoptability in the first position under personal competencies. However this study has identified modeling personal development in the first position. However there is not much significant difference in the mean scores on these two aspects in this present study. As indicated in Figure 4, there is a significant difference between the required and demonstrated personal competencies of HRD professionals.

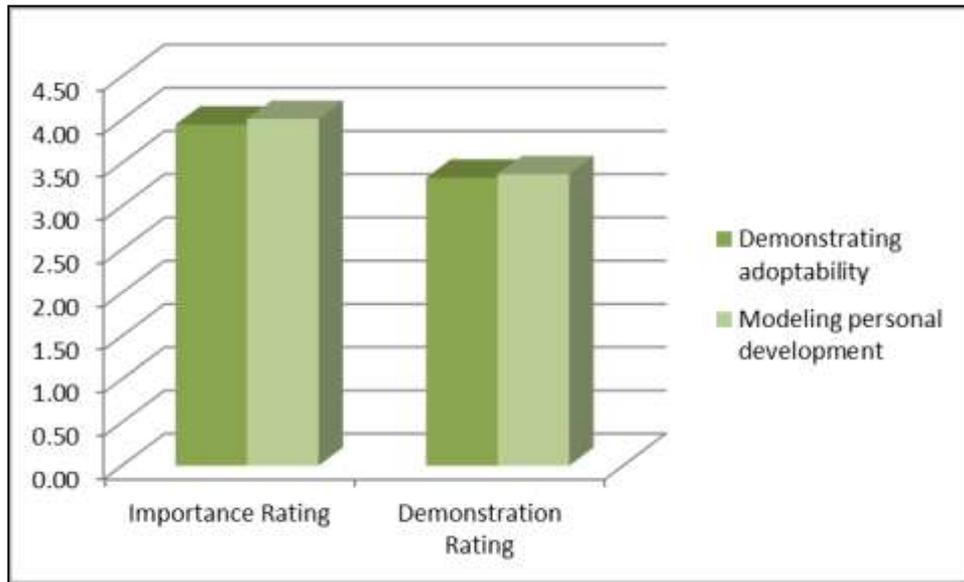


Figure 4: Personal Competencies

**9. Areas of Expertise**

It could be seen from Figure 5 that career and talent management, designing training, delivering training, facilitating organizational change, and improving employee performance are the most important areas of experience as the average rating of all these areas is 4.0 and above on a five-point scale. The next level of areas include coaching, measuring and evaluating, managing organizational knowledge, and managing learning function as the average score of this areas range from 3.86 to 3.72. Based on these scores, it can be said that all the areas of expertise are very important for effective performance of HRD professionals. However there is a significant difference between importance rating and demonstration rating in the areas of improving employee performance, and career and talent management. Facilitating organizational change, designing training, and coaching areas have come under the next level of gap. It is interesting note that there is no significant gap between importance rating and demonstration rating on the area of managing learning function.

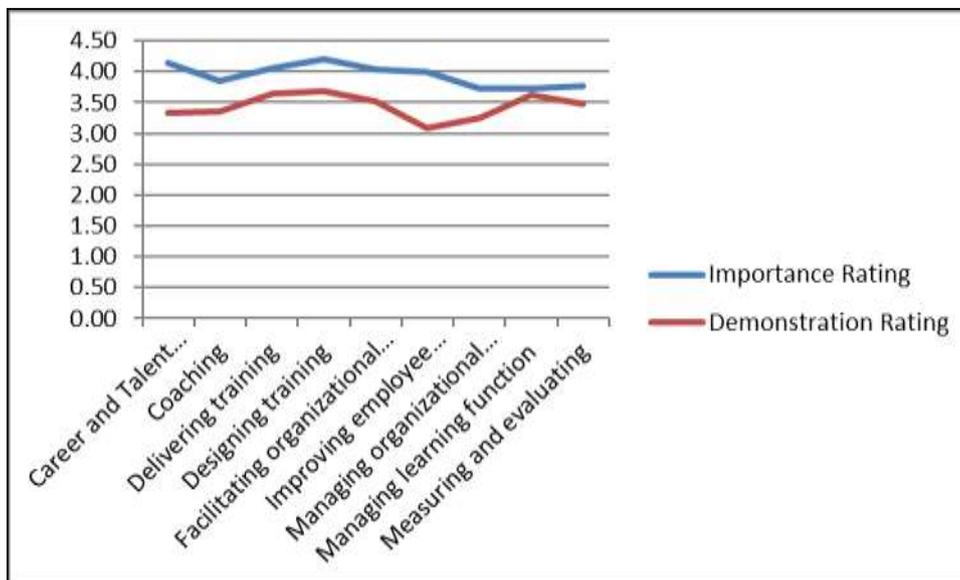


Figure 5: Areas of Expertise

**10. The Top Ranking Roles, competencies, and Area of Expertise**

Professional specialist role has emerged as the first rank role for the WLP professionals in India, followed by learning strategist role. Building trust and communicating effectively have secured top ranks among the competencies. These are following by planning and implementing assignments and thinking strategically. With regard to areas of expertise, designing training has emerged as top one area followed by career and talent management. Considering a score of four on five-point scale, the very important competencies emerged in this study are presented in Figure 6. It is significant to note that the top ranking competencies in importance rating have secured top ranking in demonstration of those competencies. However there a gap between importance scores given by HRD professionals and demonstration scores given line professionals.

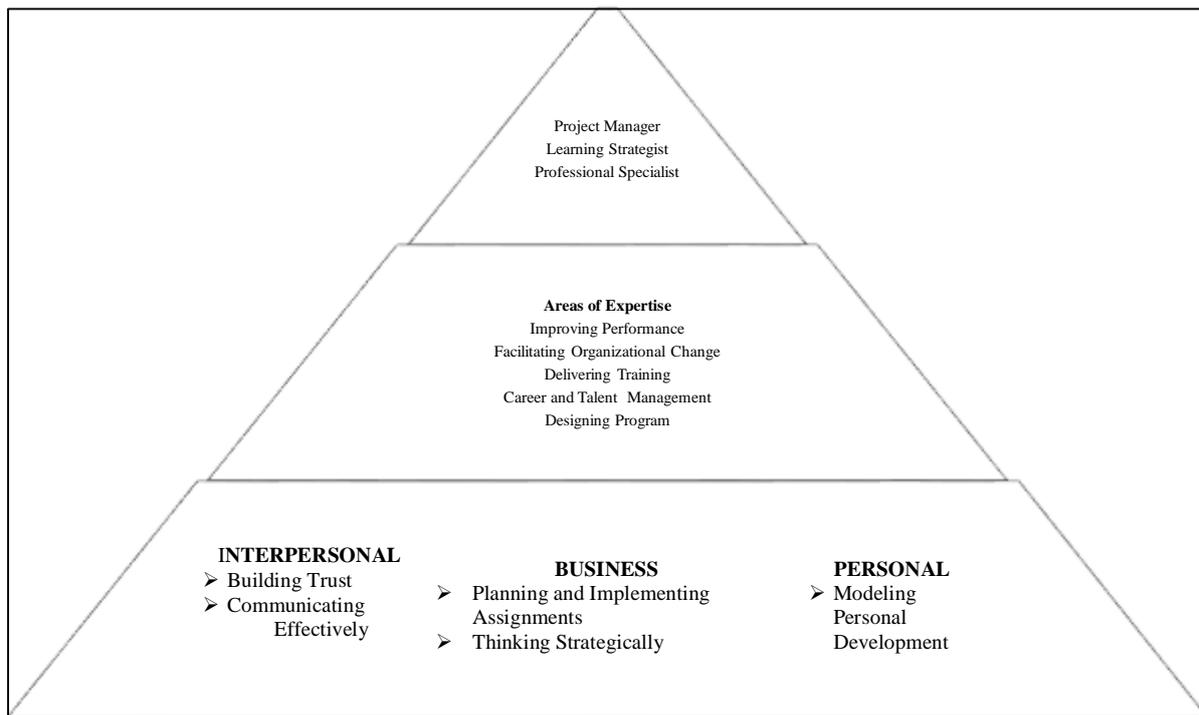


Figure 6: Top Ranking HRD Competencies

### 11. Gaps Analysis

In addition to mean score differences, the results of paired t-test (appendix) indicate that there is a significant gap between importance rating by HRD professionals and demonstration rating by line professionals. The areas of significant gap between competencies required and competencies demonstrated are as follows:

HRD roles

1. Project manager role
2. Business partner role

Business management competencies

3. Analyzing needs and proposing solutions

Interpersonal competencies

4. Building trust
5. Communicating effectively
6. Leveraging diversity and
7. Networking and partnering

Personal competencies

8. Demonstrating adoptability
9. Modeling personal development

Areas of expertise

10. Improving employee performance
11. Career and talent management

### 12. Conclusion

Overall it can be concluded that there is an agreement achieved between line managers and HRD professionals in the rank order of the HRD roles, and competencies. However there is a significant difference between HRD professionals and line managers on the top ranking roles and competencies. HRD professionals need to improve their performance in the project manager role. They have to improve their skills in analyzing needs and proposing solutions, and interpersonal competencies to make line managers satisfied with the HRD services. Career and talent management, and improving employee performance are two major areas of expertise of HRD professionals in which they have to demonstrate their competencies to the satisfaction of line managers.

### 13. Implications

The findings of study have implications for HRD professionals and organizations. Having achieved agreement between line managers and HRD professionals in the rank order of HRD roles and competencies, HRD professionals have to make attempts to bridge the gap. A training and development program may be undertaken to bridge the gaps identified in this study, particularly in the areas of interpersonal competencies such as building trust, communication, diversity and networking. The second program would be on analyzing needs and proposing solutions. The third program may be undertaken in the areas of expertise of career and talent management, and improving employee performance. HRD professionals should start showing tangible benefits to the organizations through their HRD initiatives. Thus this study indicates developmental areas for HRD professionals. Organizations

may use the findings of this study to select right professionals to be deployed in HRD field. The performance of HRD professionals may be rated based on the demonstration of the required competencies.

#### 14. Limitations

This is the first study of its kind in India to compare to study HRD competencies required from HRD professionals' view point and the to assess the extent of demonstration of these competencies from the line managers' point of view . Though the study provides meaningful insights on HRD competencies in India, there are certain limitations to this study. One is that the source of information is self-reports of HR professionals and line managers. The limited size of the sample is another limitation. The distribution of the sample of organizations in terms of nature of business is not even. Another limitation of the study is that the study has confined itself to the HRD competencies that are identified by ASTD without finding their relevance to Indian setting.

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**Appendix**

**Importance and Demonstration Ratings - Means, Standard Deviations, Mean difference and Paired t-Test Results**

| <b>HRD Roles</b>                        | <b>Importance Rating</b> | <b>SD</b> | <b>Demonstration Rating</b> | <b>SD</b> | <b>MD</b> | <b>t</b> | <b>p</b> |
|---|--------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Learning strategist                     | 4.12                     | 0.74      | 3.55                        | 0.75      | 0.57      | 5.74     | .000     |
| Business partner                        | 3.95                     | 0.89      | 3.22                        | 0.83      | 0.73      | 6.32     | .000     |
| Project manager                         | 4.07                     | 0.73      | 3.35                        | 0.73      | 0.72      | 8.09     | .000     |
| Professional specialist                 | 4.36                     | 0.78      | 3.80                        | 0.87      | 0.56      | 5.42     | .000     |
| <b>Business Management Competencies</b> |                          |           |                             |           |           |          |          |
| Analyzing needs and proposing solutions | 3.83                     | 0.71      | 3.18                        | 0.83      | 0.64      | 6.82     | .000     |
| Applying business Acumen                | 3.78                     | 0.76      | 3.43                        | 0.79      | 0.36      | 3.45     | .001     |
| Driving results                         | 3.88                     | 0.73      | 3.33                        | 0.78      | 0.56      | 6.09     | .000     |
| Planning and implementing assignments   | 4.04                     | 0.81      | 3.50                        | 0.69      | 0.54      | 5.32     | .000     |
| Thinking strategically                  | 4.00                     | 0.77      | 3.44                        | 0.71      | 0.56      | 5.81     | .000     |
| <b>Interpersonal Competencies</b>       |                          |           |                             |           |           |          |          |
| Building trust                          | 4.26                     | 0.89      | 3.47                        | 0.99      | 0.79      | 6.56     | .000     |
| Communicating effectively               | 4.26                     | 0.72      | 3.49                        | 0.88      | 0.77      | 7.49     | .000     |
| Influencing stake holders               | 3.66                     | 0.99      | 3.28                        | 0.91      | 0.38      | 3.30     | .001     |
| Leveraging diversity                    | 3.93                     | 0.83      | 3.29                        | 0.92      | 0.63      | 5.88     | .000     |
| Networking and partnering               | 3.98                     | 0.83      | 3.30                        | 0.98      | 0.68      | 5.64     | .000     |
| <b>Personal competencies</b>            |                          |           |                             |           |           |          |          |
| Demonstrating adoptability              | 3.95                     | 0.75      | 3.33                        | 0.84      | 0.62      | 5.99     | .000     |
| Modeling personal development           | 4.01                     | 0.77      | 3.37                        | 0.73      | 0.64      | 6.51     | .000     |
| <b>Areas of Expertise</b>               |                          |           |                             |           |           |          |          |
| Career and Talent Management            | 4.15                     | 0.85      | 3.33                        | 0.96      | 0.82      | 6.67     | .000     |
| Coaching                                | 3.86                     | 0.80      | 3.35                        | 0.96      | 0.51      | 4.58     | .000     |
| Delivering training                     | 4.05                     | 0.99      | 3.63                        | 0.74      | 0.42      | 3.51     | .001     |
| Designing training                      | 4.21                     | 0.98      | 3.69                        | 0.85      | 0.52      | 4.39     | .000     |
| Facilitating organizational change      | 4.03                     | 0.79      | 3.52                        | 0.87      | 0.52      | 4.82     | .000     |
| Improving employee performance          | 4.00                     | 0.89      | 3.09                        | 1.02      | 0.91      | 7.29     | .000     |
| Managing organizational knowledge       | 3.72                     | 0.97      | 3.25                        | 0.97      | 0.46      | 3.60     | .000     |
| Managing learning function              | 3.72                     | 0.98      | 3.63                        | 0.78      | 0.09      | 0.80     | .426     |
| Measuring and evaluating                | 3.77                     | 0.91      | 3.48                        | 0.89      | 0.28      | 2.33     | .021     |