

Re-orienting Management education towards a Skill Based Approach

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Abstract: *This paper suggests various reasons why the Management education in this country needs to be re-oriented. It talks of the methods of how this re-orientation needs to be done based on research experience. It discusses challenges like closing down of B-schools, growing under employment of MBA Graduates, and suggests practical solutions to the challenges of Higher education in India with special reference to management education. Several recommendations are made to improve the systems and knowledge acquisition models. This paper provides a broad understanding of the Challenges faced by various B-schools and management colleges in India.*

I. INTRODUCTION TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

It is time to evaluate the quality of business training being given to our young brains as we as a country has not been growing much in-terms of our financial condition. With an average of less than 8% economic growth in the last one decade, many thousands of business graduates have not been of much help. Average monthly salary of Management graduates in India at master degree level is less than 15000 Rs and the average of the B.Tech Graduates is slightly on the higher side being a bachelors degree. The investment of time and money into masters level is not really turning beneficial or profitable in terms of finances. The number of seats vacant are increasing each year. In the state of Maharashtra in the year 2011 were 2067 and 14 B-schools have applied for closing down being unable to attract admissions. It is pathetic all over the country that every state announces a high number of seats being left without admission is increasing in the percent each year. Andhra Pradesh has reported a close down of 134 Business colleges with 38% of the seats left vacant last academic year. It is not in AP alone but all over the country the B-schools are closing down. Those who start with commercial perspective are able to sustain as they do everything they can to attract the target but those who start colleges with a noble intention of spreading education and those trusts and charities which want to do something for the society are those who close down because it is becoming overwhelmingly expensive and competitive to be in the field and it is still difficult as they cannot compete with those who commercially invest in terms of infra and other attractions.

According to the book *21st Century Priorities in Engineering Education (page 62)*, the four Pillars of Education are: learner centric teaching, research excellence, outcome based quality supported by accreditation and innovation and entrepreneurship. There is a dire need for discussing the third pillar (outcome based quality supported by accreditation) in an extensive manner.

Some Challenges

There is a fall in the rate of placements attracted by the Business schools and colleges in the last two years when compared to the previous 8 years in the last decade. The employability rate still stands at around ten baring the top b-schools. It is not a happy scenario when we consider the growing costs of higher education each year. It is not easy to control the expensiveness as the prices are just being competitive. According to a TOI report Mr. DS Rawat, secretary general, ASSOCHAM stated "The quality of higher education in India across disciplines is poor and does not meet the needs of the corporate world"

He was also quoted to have said that "There is no quality control, the placements are not commensurate with fees being charged, the faculty are not good enough and there is no Infrastructure"

Change in the Institutional Approach

The secret of success for the most top universities lies in their teaching and their approach towards the learning process.

The changing approach of IITs and IIMs towards teaching and learning process kept their position as top education institutions in India. There are examples like edutainment, as three days after the release of Chak-De-India (Shahrukh Khan's hit movie) there was a presentation in IIM Ahmadabad on "*Management Lessons from Chak-De-India*" (Aug 2007). In September 2009, ISB (Indian School of Business, Hyderabad) has divided its students into groups of 6 and gave 5000 to each group and asked them to do some business in 10 days as part of their entrepreneurial training. This project focuses on changing the methodology of teaching, as quality of teaching often depends on the methodology too. A right method of teaching can make an average teacher deliver an effective session when it is executed well. To develop the teaching standards of our faculty, we need to motivate our faculty members to reduce imparting knowledge and increase facilitating the process of learning.

Driven by Faculty Innovation

The faculty members participate in this competition by sending at least one lesson plan prepared by him/her along with the methods and tools used. They also need to explain how this method is productive and how he/she executed it in the class room. The innovation could involve using a recent paper cutting or a recent video clipping to explain a particular concept, if the faculty member can justify, how this method is more effective than the other method. An ice breaker that relates to the content or a game that explains a concept can be reported. Some of the other methods could be a handout, a diagrammatic explanation (not the one from the text). It could be a mini project or a quiz contest or a group discussion. It could be a reading seminar or paper presentation method. This could also involve a case study or problem solving method, a role play or a group discussion or else a brain storming session or a personal interview method or an interaction with an industry expert. There could be a mini research or a short survey. A mind mapping session, a collage, an Analogy or a demonstration, which is used to enhance understanding of a key concept. If a particular new method is used or an old method is used in an innovative way to make sure that the point to be taught is successfully driven, then it is considered as innovation, as long as a complex concept is made easy to understand. The faculty members need to send a justification of the same in a page or two.

Outdated teaching

Most colleges teach theory based outdated courses. They do not teach courses like social media marketing, Event Management, Mass media communications management, Business negotiations, Mergers and Acquisitions...etc. It is very important to identify what is current in the market and teach to meet the requirements. 21st century learner can learn some principles and concepts all by himself/herself so the faculty members need to set the pre-requisites towards learning the theory and teach case based practical courses even in business management.;

Centre for Skill Development

Every B-school and MBA College need to have a Centre for Skill Development. This kind of a place benefits all the students and faculty as well. Often such skill development activities are many times skill development is an exercise ascribed to students/learners alone. Every Business school and management college needs to start a Centre for Skill Development for the benefit of all its students. It is ideal and a USP to have a Centre for Skill Development for a B school. Students are often found leaving the College without much development in their skills. It is important that institutions send out people with various skills. These institutions may choose to invite popular organizations or industries to hone the skills of the students. For example we can invite TMI (Toast masters International) for developing presentation skills of the learners. Mafoi certification for retail management helps develop skills related to Retail market. The success possibilities will be higher if the skills developed are more and better. This kind of effort will develop the chances of brighter careers. These skills will be based on the career options they would want. We need to help students hone their skills through this centre and we need faculty members to bring in their ideas related to establishing this centre. Those faculty members who can spare some time to study the market and share the relevant information with the students may nominate themselves to be a part of this kind of centres.

Entrepreneurship Development Cell

It is important to develop entrepreneurial skills in the students of Management studies. The growth of the number of colleges and the number of management students is exponentially increasing and the rate of

development in the market is not matching with this growth rate. Every year creating a 3, 60, 000 new managerial positions takes real big leap in the economic growth rate. As a result many MBA graduates get under employed and that effect falls on the whole sector of management studies. One of the major challenges of the academia in most parts of the world is that they are not abreast or ahead of the industry. They struggle to win the confidence of the industries thereby rarely we find industry chairs and industry sponsored laboratories. Very few premiere institutions are able to attract the attention of the industry. There are centres of excellence and sponsored laboratories where industries pilot their new projects and concepts but they are often not the true recognition of the academic excellence but are driven by the need of the launch pads for the industries. Every b-school and Management college needs to start a Career Counseling Centre for the benefit of all its students. It is ideal and a Unique Selling Proposition to have a CCC for a B school. Students are often found exploring known/popular avenues for their careers. There are many areas which students are not aware of and they do not get exposure towards many career options that are available. We need to help students learn /understand various career options available and the new avenues that are opening up in the market. We need faculty members to bring in their ideas related to establishing this centre. Those faculty members who can spare some time to study the market and share the relevant information with the students may nominate themselves to be a part of this centre. Please share your ideas before 26th of January 2013 (Saturday). The contributions of the faculty will be appreciated in this regard, look forward to hear from you soon

International Accreditations

There needs to be an assessment body which evaluates the transformation level of the students into professionals. Otherwise this country will produce more and more graduates who do not meet the employability level of the corporate companies which are derived and designed to meet the global needs of the market. Each session plan can be scrutinized to find out if the lesson delivery is planned in a manner which also imbibes some skills and some ability of applying the knowledge in a practical scenario. The role of accreditation bodies becomes more important with reference to their role in bridging the gap between places. Across the countries and continents, accreditation bodies ascertain similar quality of education. Taking the best out of various accreditation procedures will help excel in a multi-faceted way to the Indian educational Institutions. The focus on methodologies needs to turn as the key tools for the faculty members. Accreditations throw light upon the new and essential turns the education in 21st century must take, and they suggests some changes in the current classroom practices and help in dealing with challenges in the class room. They also help through some documentation practices to improve the process within stipulated time periods. Accreditation processes like IET, ABET, AACSB...etc have been proved useful by some leading colleges while some are still experimenting.

Industry Interaction as the Ground Work

The ground work begins at the course planning level. Course design or the curriculum design needs to be done with help and involvement of various companies which deal with this particular subject. The colleges need to identify the target group of employers and ask them to assist in the course design. The faculty members should be able to identify concepts which are needed for a life time and which are essential for the professional life and which are needed for academic progression and what areas need not necessarily be dealt elaborately. The faculty members need to choose the practical approach and not the theory delivery methods, each class should be made an experience, rather than just a listening session.

Industry Interaction Cell

Every B-school stands in need of industry interaction cell which constantly stays in touch with the industry. What is up to date when one joins a B-school becomes obsolete by the time one leaves the b-school. Our academic set-ups are not in a position to annually update the syllabus. So the faculty members need to go the extra mile of researching what industry needs, and what are the recent developments in the products designs and new manufacturing, marketing methods and new quality standards. It is not an outsider but a team of faculty need to shoulder this additional assignment. EQUIS, AMBA, ACBSP, AACSB are some of the International accreditation processes which are providing uniformity in educational standards across the globe for uniformity and quality standardization in Business education.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

Business schools need to recruit faculty with Industrial experience

B-schools may opt for international accreditations for meeting the global standards

Ask faculty to research and multi task after reducing the teaching work load
Establish centers at the schools for Skill Development and Industry interaction
Career counseling and placement Training Centers may be established
Periodical faculty development and training programmes
Entrepreneurship development needs to be one of the key goals
Introduce new courses in management and interesting teaching methods

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