A LOOK BEFORE WE LEAP – POLARITIES IN INDIAN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

Mr. BRIGHTON ANBU
Assistant Professor
Karunya School of Business, Leadership & Management
Karunya University
Coimbatore

Dr. P. VIKRAMAN
Associate Professor & Head, Department of Management Studies
Anna University, Regional Centre
Coimbatore
E-Mail: dr.p.vikkraman@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the management education in India. Education is the one which could strongly help in the process of nation building and also decides the future of an economy. Even a slight deviation could hamper the development from what it has been planned to achieve. Apart from feeding the young minds with knowledge and other required skills for their employability, it plays a key role to shape the behaviour within them. The paper deals with various factors that govern the management education in India. The present system of Management Education neither helps the student nor the prospective employers who recruit them after their graduation. Most business school failed to realize their responsibilities and roles towards the nation building and keenly focus to keep themselves on the top of the ladder.

KEYWORDS

1. INTRODUCTION

“If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people”, says a Chinese proverb, which completely bundles up the power of education. The noble service industry of Education is shouldering the greatest responsibility of re-creating lives of young pillars of a nation who shape and decide the future of an economy. The slightest deviation that education impacts on their thinking will result in a wide disparity on the destination of every individual as well as the environment in which they live. The increasing incidents of terrorism and high profile violence in the world feature some of the highly educated individuals from reputed institutions.

Educating young minds is not just about feeding them with the know-hows and employability skills. But beyond that it is about shaping their character for them to be responsible citizens with human considerations in the community they live in. Beginning from kindergarten till higher education, the system should ensure adequate infusion of moral values and life skills that will mould the individual’s character in pursuit of excellence in whichever field they specialize in.

2. MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

As the title suggests Management Education is about teaching and training an individual to manage oneself effectively so as to manage others, an organization and the nation as a whole. The need for educating people in management arose when countries were seeing immense growth in their businesses and boom in the economy. As a result, those who were technically qualified were given the responsibility to manage business and run them for a profit amidst cut throat competition. Since every individual is unique so is every business, and so the technical skills of an individual did not match with the administrative requirement of an organization. Organizations managed and run by highly qualified and experienced ‘technical individuals’ did not fare well in the business world, because their functioning lacked business acumen.

Realizing the truth that not all companies and organizations are the same and not all can be managed and developed by technically excellent people, some of the top Industrial Companies came up with the idea of educating people exclusively on management and its nuances by systematically identifying and mapping the skill sets of those who are trained to be a manager.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Extensive research has been performed on this ever green industry of Indian management education, by both national and international scholars, due to the global effect it imparts on various walks of life. To have better understanding of the functioning a management or a business school it is imperative that one must understand what a business school means. A
business school is a university-level institution that confers degrees in Business Administration. It teaches topics such as accounting, administration, finance, information systems, marketing, organizational behavior, public relations, strategy, human resource management, quantitative methods etc., (Meghe, Bharat 2010). The history of business administration education dates back to the early 1900s when the premier institutes in India such as the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) was established by the Government of India, along with Institute for Personnel Management, National Institute of Labor Management etc. Apart from providing requisite skills and abilities through various programs such as MBA or PGDM or MMM, to get going smoothly at the corporate world, it provides an opportunity to network with others and promotes cross-cultural diversities. It helps in equipping the executives with competencies and capabilities to take on the corporate challenges with confidence (Times Ascent, 2010).

The global management education community has grown substantially and now represents a diverse set of perspectives. Deans, directors of business schools, students, business advisory councils, administrative staff, and recruiters of graduates are all involved in shaping the future of management education. Though management education in India has primarily catered to the Indian students, there have been global factors that have determined its existence, growth and development in the last 25 years. Some of the most predominant factors that have impacted are the demographics of stake holders in the education, which include students, faculty, parents, investors, government, employers, policy makers etc., Integration of economics, technology and its use, responsibility to society, global availability of services are the other factors (GFME, 2008). These global factors place enormous responsibility on the academic sector specially the schools of business, which has to train and offer next generation of Indian business leaders. In recent years, India has seen the establishment of numerous institutions offering graduate management programs, most of which are private institutions. Given the relative infancy of graduate business education in India—the Indian Institutes of Management (IIM), Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), and a handful of other well established and highly reputable institutions apart—it is not clear whether international standards have been achieved within much of the sector (Kannan R Vijay, 2008). Which such ambiguity and high flying ambitions, it is essential for the whole of Indian Management Education fraternity to rewind and recheck its missions and objectives which form the core and foundation for its existence and growth.

2. CURRENT ISSUES IN INDIAN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

Indian Management Education has come a long way in fulfilling the demands and needs of a globalized
Indian economy by producing numerous management graduates year after year. Yet, reports show increasing numbers of management degree holders remaining unemployed or securing jobs based on their under graduate qualification, rather than capitalizing on their ‘flamboyant MBA degrees’. This opens up a large can of issues that exist between management education scenario and the actual employment scenario in the country. Some of the issues that take the top places and those which need to be addressed immediately before thinking about the future course of action will be:

i). Lack of Fundamental Knowledge:

Almost every management institute in the country receive a feedback from the prospective employers who visit their campuses to recruit their students each year, which repeatedly tell about the lack of basics or fundamental knowledge about management terms among the MBA students. Most B-Schools aspiring to showcase themselves as one among the top in the country, offer high profile inputs to their students, without grounding them firmly on the basics or foundation. This would not help neither the student nor the organization that recruits them.

ii). Un-Employability Due to Skill and Attitude Gap:

Not all students who score 8 GPA upon 10 are successful in their jobs. Researches show that most of the time it is the average and above average graduates who fare well in their jobs when compared to the good and excellent students while in school. If students are not taught to align their acquired knowledge with their in-built skills and attitude, nothing more disastrous can be done their lives. The worst failure of education is when it has made no impact on the behavior and actions of an individual.

iv). Opportunities for Freshman:

“WE CANNOT RECRUIT YOU NOW, BECAUSE YOU DON’T HAVE PRIOR EXPERIENCE” is a very common statement told to many freshmen who graduate with their MBA degrees and apply for job. If this remains as a standard practice by companies, where in the world will freshmen gain experiences to be eligible for a job? If organizations keep freshmen at bay and look out only for experienced people, the imbalance between demand and supply of MBA graduates will ever be on the increase. Every organization should have a quota for recruiting fresh graduates every year which indirectly benefits the company by bringing in young and energetic minds for fresh and new ideas from the academia.

v). Learning Environment:

The best answer for the question posted above, of where will a freshman gain experience to be eligible for a job straight after his graduation will be, to establish the most effective teaching and learning environments right within the management school. Every student who undergoes a program in
management should be given an opportunity to have a real time or at least a simulated experience of the business world so as to prepare them mentally to face the challenges of the real world. The teaching learning patterns of management schools in India has to be up graded to the global standards to address this issue.

vi). Quantum of Everything:

It is not uncommon these days to see a school of business inside every other Arts and Science college or Engineering College. Such is the quantum of opportunity that exits for anyone and everyone to gain access to a business degree. It is not surprising that the number of management graduates enrolling in and graduating every year is steadily on the increase given the number of institutions, both qualified and non-qualified opening up their doors to anyone who can afford to pay the fee, immaterial of the individuals’ skills, attitude and ability to become a business manager.

3. FUTURISTIC CHALLENGES FOR MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN INDIA

With the International doors to education remain wide open for Indian minds to yearn their degrees from world’s best institutions, it’s a daunting task for any Indian management school to cope and match with the global standards, in order to attract domestic aspirants. Some of the most notable challenges that Indian Management Education may face in the future could be:

i). Global In the Local:

With the Government of India opening its options for foreign investments in higher education, there will be at least a sizable number of foreign universities by 2020 which will have their campuses fully operational in India. Though the initial investments and deposits seem huge in the beginning, it will be a fairly smooth run for the foreign universities to break even, given the number of young aspirants who would throng to get their degrees from a University abroad with its campus next door.

ii). Technology Driven Education:

Gone are the days in most parts of the developed countries, where you had group of students walking in and out every day to meet their professors for an 8 hour sessions at school. Technological reforms have given enough flexibility to both students and faculty to decide and design their own ways of organizing their classes and evaluation, provided the end results such as contact hours, credits and continuous assessments are done within the given time frame. Technology that innovates for tomorrow has given leverage to educational institutions to organize virtual class sessions during any time in day fully depending on the availability of the students (the customers) and the faculty (the service provider).

iii). Sourcing the Right Faculty:
As technology innovates for tomorrow, so should the human resource that uses it. With the advent of a global economic boom and the markets opening up for highly qualified management personnel it will be a tough ask for a management school to attract, maintain and retain aptly qualified and updated teaching professionals at their schools of management. Sometimes, management fails badly where it is taught hardly.

Though recruitments strategies are taught to students at the business schools, sourcing the right talent for the business school with a blend of academic excellence, industry experience, research aptitude and a passion for teaching remains and will remain a challenge.

iv). Genuineness of Schools:

The increase in the number of business schools in the country has also seen the increase of non-accredited, unrecognized or even illegal institutions mushrooming all over the country. It is said such institutions have a strong political influence in coming into being (Phatak, 2005). The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) have recognized only 25 business schools in the country while there are numerous institutions offering programs without the accreditation. The University Grants Commission (UGC) which is the central governments’ representative in academia has very little impact in standardizing and ensuring legal form of management education to be offered in the country.

v). Under Prepared Intake:

85% of the business schools in India absorb fresh undergraduates who have absolutely no idea about the business world for which they step into a school to be trained and earn a degree. Though it sounds paradoxical while we say, ‘that’s what business schools are meant for’, the under prepared group of students stepping into the management class straight from their arts and science or engineering programs contribute very little for enhanced learning and information sharing. This forces the faculty to adopt the traditional pedagogy of chalk and talk or lecture method even at the post graduate level.

4. POLARITIES IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

Have you ever noticed that just when you think you may have found a solution to a problem another problem emerges? Then when you fix that problem, you find yourself back to your original issue? Perhaps you never had a problem that could be solved in the first place. You may have been dealing with a dilemma or a "polarity" that simply needed to be managed (Mike Caldwell, 2007).

Almost all management institutes in India face a similar situation trying to solve the so called ‘problems’ which probably has no solutions. They are primarily dilemmas or polarities that have to be managed rather than to be solved (Johnson Barry, 2001). Some of the probable dilemmas / polarities that
often exert a push and pull effect on management institutions can be:

i). **Quality versus Quantity of Input:**

Most of the institutions in India that offer programs on business administration are private owned entities and are required to self-sustain. The only and major source of income for a private school is their customers, who are the students. As the competition to grow and sustain increases, management institutions have drastically increased their intakes to attract more and more students who have the ability to pay either through their parent’s hard earned money or through easily available educational loans from the banks. Since the quantity has gone up, naturally the check on quality has fallen away. Business schools should figure out a way to balance both the quality of students they admit and also the number of students so that they do not manufacture individuals with a MBA degree year after year, who remain on the shelf for months, but nurture and contribute highly skilled and knowledgeable managers to develop the economy.

ii). **Capability versus Educational Qualification of Faculty:**

The misconception of ‘having a doctorate degree makes you a great teacher’ creates a world of paradox in the field of education. Not every doctorate degree holder holds the ability to communicate or teach what he knows to the students. This is even more different when it comes to management education, because it demands not only a doctorate degree, but also industry experience. As the generation of old and experienced teachers from the 20th century retire and the new generation emerges out of the 21st century, it is a tough ask for management schools to attract the right people. The accreditation agencies demand a doctorate degree for anyone to be a management teacher while the average age of a management teacher in India is 35 years. It is clearly an indicator that the individual either has a doctorate degree or reasonable years in industry when he appears for an interview at a business school.

iii). **Service Orientation vs. Business Orientation:**

In the ancient days, education was considered to be a service to the society which will mould and make people. Unfortunately, due to the high raised bars of standards and competition, even primary school education has become highly competitive and motivated by money. This effect has left huge impression on the business schools in India, especially those which are established alongside other facilities such as engineering or arts and science programs. As discussed earlier, institutions are poised in increasing their intakes and fee structures year after year thus de sanctifying the noble profession of education, which has to transform and mould young minds.
iv). **Head Knowledge vs. Ethical Practice:**

Continuing in the same lines of business orientation, students are taught to be **GO GETTERS and TREND SETTERS**, and how to survive in a red ocean scenario. Students are trained analytically to manage high end software’s and huge multinational budgets and also to present themselves in the most adorable way through soft skills training. But, sadly they are not taught to manage themselves inwardly, neglecting the human skills. This is clearly reflected in the increasing number of fraudulent activities in business houses, human rights violations through sexual harassments, gender discriminations, underworld connection and illegal business practices etc., Business schools should chalk out a realistic action plan to bridge the gap between heart and mind so as to give, socially ethical yet globally employable management graduates.

v). **The Governments’ Dilemma:**

With pressure building up on the ruling government to race against global giants such as the United States, Europe and China, the country’s policy makers face numerous polarities which they need to effectively manage. The primary dilemma would be to assess and offer accreditation to the already existing management schools in the country, though they may lack basic facilities or eligibility to offer a degree. The impact will be felt in the lives of the students who have enrolled and the parents who have invested in the lives of their children. It is remains a sensitive issue for the ministry of education to use the rule of thumb to cancel the license of such institutions, also because they have strong political support. The second dilemma would be the decision on opening doors for foreign universities to set up campuses in India. With Indian investors lined up for approval to start their programs in India, it would be a tough decision to make in permitting foreign competitors have their camps set up. Finally, the role of government is much vital at this juncture and it must evolve strategic approaches to create suitable employment avenues for the graduates to get placed. Retirement age in India plays a vital role in this issue. The longer a person stays in an organization, longer a freshman has to wait to get his job. Though it is not directly related, it has its own effects down the line.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Education reforms in India has seen consistent changes in the past few years with the Government going strong on imposing rules, regulations and laws to ensure the basic right to education. Public and private players in the education industry are offering a right blend of infrastructure, quality, affordability and accessibility to the citizens of the nation. Higher education has become the basic requirement to gain entry into the professional world of employment, which has given the schools of technology and business wider space to establish their presence.
in the society. With the economic doors of the country wide open for global expertise to come in, the competition is tightening up for national players in the industry to sketch out strategies that help them to sustain. Students of India have multiple options to choose from, be it public or private schools, national or international schools, full time or part time options etc., Management education has become more of a revenue generating business and creates a high profile societal status for the owners of such institutions, which has been one of the key reasons for many private players open up management institutions all over the country. Though the proceedings sound very positive, the downside of it is the fast mushrooming number of smaller, unrecognized schools which offer programs without the accreditation of national validation agencies such as the NAAC or UGC. Adding fuel to the fire are the under qualified faculty members, un-groomed young minds who get admitted into a business management program who have no clue about their own future plans yet are trained to determine the future of larger organizations. This sort of mix and match situation has to some extent tainted the image of management education, which is literally attracting huge incomes, while it just sucks in garbage and give our refined garbage to the society. This paper hence brings out the various issues that exist in the current scenario, the challenges that are ahead to be faced and the polarities that need to be managed effectively in order to bring back the glory of management education in the country. The government and regulatory authorities have to take stringent actions in controlling the spread of non-accredited institutions, set higher standards for existing business schools that match global requirements, conduct periodic and unbiased evaluations to ascertain consistency in performance, create a larger interface between the academia and industry which is primarily the user of the products from the schools and more importantly set slabs on fee structures which ensures that the best minds in the country benefit from the best academic facility available in the country. With India becoming a stronger economy and a competitor to global super powers, serious attention to the field of business education in the next 2-3 years is mandatory from the part of the government, industries, funding agencies, potential employers, parents, students and other stakeholders in making sure that the sanctity of the service is best maintained towards the next decade ending 2020.

5. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This paper has been a compilation of reports and reading from various authors who have conducted either quantitative or qualitative analysis on Indian Management Education in recent years. The paper has not employed any prescribed analytical data collection method nor used any data to perform a statistical analysis for comprehensive reporting. The observation made in the issues, challenges and the dilemmas were purely based on the authors reading and experience in the field of
management education for nearly a decade. There remains a wide scope for researching in this area focusing mainly on the challenges faced by today’s management institutions in India, the probable remedies they would require to effective face them and also manage the day to day polarities faced.

REFERENCES


