

## INDIAN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION CURRICULUM & INDUSTRY EXPECTATIONS - DIAGNOSING AND FILLING THE GAP

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### ABSTRACT

The management education in India took practical shape during early sixties with establishment of institutions like Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) to train young minds in the art & science of management. Since then many universities have started Faculty of Management Studies and various other management institutions have also come up to cater to the growing demand of managers, both locally and globally. However, LPG (liberalization, privatization and globalization) have made a ground for popping up of hundreds of private, commercialized management courses and institutes. Changing economic conditions and intensification of global competition have given management education an increasingly key role in the success of business houses. Except IIMs and other statutory institutions in India, nearly 95% of higher education institutions (HEIs) have been directly or indirectly regulated and monitored by University Grants Commission (UGC) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), under siege of the Ministry of Education, Government of India. The model curriculum, which is devised by UGC and AICTE guides, by and large, the board of studies (BoS) of universities, academic councils of autonomous and stand-alone institutions. What is the quality of the model curriculum? How often it is updated? Does that model curriculum ensure updated learning and make students industry-ready? The condition is still worse for affiliated colleges of universities, including engineering and management institutions, which are compelled to follow the curriculum prescribed by the university, hardly reviewed for over a decade.

Thus, this paper will focus on current scenario of managing management institutions & education in India, diagnosing the gap between management education curriculum & industry expectations. This paper also examines the effort that has to be put in changing management education curriculum to assure quality and meet industry expectations.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Gap, Industry Expectations, Management Education, Management Graduate Skill set

### I. INTRODUCTION

The management education in India took practical shape during early sixties with establishment of Indian Institutes of Management to train young minds in the art & science of management. Since then many universities have started faculty of management studies and various other management institutions have also come up to cater to the growing demand of managers, both locally and globally.

However, liberalization, privatization and globalization have made a ground for popping up of hundreds of private, commercialized management courses and institutes. Most of which do not have even basic infrastructure, what to talk about their managerial professionalism. The very attitude, quality, ethics, standards, openness, creativity, logistics etc, required for any professional course are missing in most of these institutions.

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## **II. MANAGEMENT GRADUATE SKILL SET - THREE-SKILL APPROACH BY KATZ**

Katz (1955) proposed a three-skill approach for managers and suggested the relative importance of these skills with varying managerial levels. He acknowledged that corporate leaders and administrators must be capable of directing activities of other persons and undertake the responsibility for achieving certain objectives through these efforts. With this approach, successful corporate/business administration rests on 3 basic skills – technical, human and conceptual.

**Technical Skill** – Technical skills involves specialized knowledge and the ability to use the tools and techniques of the specific discipline effectively. This skill calls for an understanding of and proficiency in a specific kind of activity involving methods, processes, procedures or techniques. Such skills are similar to those of surgeons, musicians and accountants.

**Human Skill** – Human skills involve the ability of a manager to work effectively as a group member and to build co-operative effort within the team that he leads. Human skill is concerned with working with people just as technical skill is primarily concerned with processes. This skill is reflected in the individual's perception of his superiors, peers and subordinates and in the way he behaves subsequently. This skill must be naturally developed and unconsciously and consistently demonstrated in the individual's managerial action.

**Conceptual Skill** – The ability to see the enterprise as one entity lies in the extent to which an individual possesses conceptual skills. Conceptual skills include recognizing various functions of an organization, their interdependence, relationship between individual business and the industry, community, political, social and economic forces of the nation as a whole. The success of a manager lies in the recognition of all these relationships and then act in a way that advances the overall welfare of the organization. This overall success is dependent on the conceptual skills in establishing and carrying out policy decisions and hence this skill is the unifying, coordinating and important ingredient of a successful manager.

There is a need to distinguish between the three skills of performing the technical activities (technical skills), understanding and motivating individuals and groups (human skills) and coordinating and integrating all the activities and the interests of the organization toward a common objective (conceptual skills). Though in practice all these 3 types of skills are interrelated and is difficult to separate based on their importance, it is essential to understand the varying importance at different levels of responsibility.

Datar, Garvin & Cullen (2010) list eight areas that business schools seem to be weak in. These are:

1. Gaining a global perspective: managing institutional, economic and cultural diversity
2. Developing leadership skills: learning to build with others

3. Honing integration skills: framing problems holistically and incorporating judgment and intuition into analytical decision making
4. Recognizing organizational realities and implementing effectively: understanding the politics of organizational behaviour
5. Acting creatively and innovatively
6. Thinking critically and communicating effectively
7. Understanding the roles, responsibilities, and purpose of business: balancing the financial and non-financial objectives of business and multiple stakeholders demands
8. Understanding the limits of models and markets

We use this outline to answer the following question: In the Indian context, what insights can employers offer on the knowing, doing and being aspects of the formation of an MBA graduate, that management education institutes can use to “rebalance” their curriculum?

The board of studies (BoS) of universities, academic councils of autonomous and stand-alone institutions must spot the importance of the three key skills in various stages of managers (Entry-level, Mid-level, and Top-level) and must design MBA/PGDM curriculum to address this changing needs of business. This consciousness is essential for a successful MBA/PGDM program.

Management curriculum should focus on imparting and developing these key skills during course.

### III. CHANGING PHASE OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

Management education has entered a period of thoughtful transition and is predominantly driven by technology, globalization, and demographics besides other socio-economic dynamics.

The six exogenous pressures on the management education system by Durand and Dameron:

1. Liberal democracy & free market capitalism
2. Aging
3. The rise of BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China)
4. Rise of knowledge economy
5. New governance mechanisms
6. Dominance of English as the language of business

All of these, besides issues that are country specific, are creating a massive reorientation in the way in which B-schools need to operate to ensure sustainable competitive advantage. However, there is also a growing concern on the quality of B-schools which do not belong to the top league but have the responsibility of imparting management education offering certain benefits which are branded essentials of MBA graduates. The growing demand for business education cannot be leveraged for commercial success alone but more care must be taken to ensure academic relevance. This combination of quality & relevance makes the changing phase of management education very crucial.

An observation/statement made by Mr. Shiv Shivakumar, Group Executive President-Corporate Strategy and Business Development at Aditya Birla Group and a former President

of the All India Management Association (AIMA) will give complete picture of management education in India. The observation/statement is:

“India produces upwards of 400,000 MBAs a year. Only in 20 schools is the starting salary more than the fees paid. And only 19% of the MBAs are technically qualified to take up jobs”.

The common features of most of the management/business education except IIMs, and about fifty or less other institutes are:

- Superficial coverage of Indian business and socio-economic environment with little global perspective
- More emphasis on the theoretical aspects and very less practical orientation and skill development
- Wide coverage to fundamental and functional aspects of management
- Half-baked case material that too without sincere efforts to develop analytical skills.
- Least industry – academic interface
- Lack of research base
- Ritualistic outdoor and experimental learning
- Brain drain and shifting of well-qualified and experienced faculty either to different institutes or to industry
- Lack of industrial experience of faculty, infrastructure, access to global literature etc.

#### **IV. PRESENT SCENARIO**

The emergence of global village with IT revolution has brought fastest ever changes in all walks of life in an unprecedented manner. More and more economic alliances, multinational corporations, global hi-tech managers, e-business etc., are governing the business scene today. The competition has taken a major leap forward from local to universal demands where value addition in the key to survival of the fittest.

In the light of the above, a total revamping of the existing system is urgently required. We have to build up a dynamic and open system which can become a source of preparing young management professional with harmonious development. London Business School in a study recently identified the knowledge, skill and attributes needed for young leaders for success.

**TABLE I: THE NEW GLOBAL CAPABILITIES ACCORDING TO ANDREWS & TYSON**

Knowledge	Skills	Attributes
Global Macro Economics	Managing diverse cultures	Unyielding integrity
Global Finance	Dealing with ambiguity, uncertainty and paradox decision making.	Worldly awareness
Global strategy	Accountability	Thrive on change
Organization structure and dynamics	Managing performance	Judgment & Institution
Competitive Micro Economics	Project Management	Demanding excellence
Decision sciences	Ability to make complex simple	Perseverance and tenacity
Global Marketing & Management	Presentation skills	Adaptability & responsiveness
Sales & Account Management	Listening & Observation	Curiosity & creativity
Technology Management	Networking & Collaboration	Self-awareness
Accounting	Team building & Team work	Self-confidence to involve others
Human Resource Management	Talent assessment	Boundless energy to motivate & energize
Corporate Governance	Interpersonal skills/giving feed back	Judging performance
		Capacity & desire to learn, coachable

If Indian industry has to compete globally, we need executives with world class talent. The issue is how to inculcate a global mindset, though managers may act only locally.

For this development, first of all there should be a dynamic and sound curriculum for the management courses.

A comparison between Indian and Foreign Universities reveals that the latter is more contemporary in nature and flexible.

## V. THE GAP

The gap between industry expectation and management education may be due to:

- Slow Innovation
- The curriculum perpetuates the routine rituals. The updating of curriculum is lengthy and complex process in universities/institutions.
- Stand still mind set
- The students feel that degree is more important than the quality of curriculum. They have a mindset of curriculum being irrelevant and they shall get employment because of university degree.
- Under emphasis of skill development techniques
- Management curricula have been developed like combination of science & commerce and not as combination of arts, commerce and science. The courses are generalized and poorly serving specific needs of corporate world. The curricula do not stimulate decision – making skills and problem-solving skills.
- Irrational weightages to many subjects
- Irrespective of utility and importance of subjects, equal weightage is given to all subjects in the curricula in most universities.
- Weak applicability of curriculum
- Students are not stimulated to apply principles of management to solve practical problems of contemporary nature. Courses like TQM, Quantitative analysis, Research Methodology are taught like theory subjects and lack application-based orientation.
- Inadequate industry exposure of students

Management education has intake from multidiscipline graduates in commerce, science, engineering and arts. Who are fresh or recent pass outs? These students find it difficult to understand practical implementation of management theories and hence start from scratch and come out croppers.

It is also criticized that most MBA's are

- They are too theoretical and analytical rather than oriented
- They lack interpersonal and communication skills.
- They are very poor in team work

Also, students from science background find it difficult with accounts and finance courses and students from commerce back ground find difficulty in understanding mathematical, statistical courses.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Making curriculum dynamic with annual review and updating as per industry trends and focus. The Board of Studies of universities should ensure annual revision in the curriculum. It should be clear that business management is for “business of making students competent”.

Also, universities can go for different MBA courses for different backgrounds or a bridge course may be introduced for the students from different backgrounds to cope up with courses.

- Skill Development

Functional traits & soft skills to be comprehensively addressed. The industry requires students with comprehensive knowledge and professional skills embedded with appropriate attitude. The thrust of curriculum should be in developing leadership skills, time management, innovation and creativity, social responsibility etc. Industry looks forward to include these ideas in the curriculum.

- Comprehensive focus on quantitative statistical tools

Relationships of surveys, quantitative methods, experiments and decision making should be amply exemplified.

- Case development

Case studies have always been regarded as most important element in management education, but most curricula lack proper Indian cases. Industry-Institutes cooperation is essential for case development on Indian business issues. On the one hand, the industry should take initiative in this direction, on the other, the curriculum should motivate faculty and students for case development.

- General awareness

Annual subscription of at least two business magazines by students, to be included in curriculum. Due weightage, grade points should be attached for general knowledge.

- Industry exposure for MBA aspirants

As it is difficult to learn swimming without going into the water, industry experience for candidate should become desirable for admission in MBA.

- Effectiveness audit

The subject syllabus should address the objectives, should be clearly defined by the faculty to the students. Audit should be conducted for assessing the effectiveness of the curriculum in terms of achieving the objectives.

- Communication skill development

Video Audio role-playing is recommended to refine their body language and speech. An exam should be conducted through video recorded clippings.

- Pedagogy

Curriculum should suggest teaching style and be indicative of learning/techniques. Faculty members at various colleges in India have varied teaching experiences. Most B-Schools had their genesis within a decade. In the present scenario, the curriculum should not only indicate teaching style for teachers but also hint at the learning techniques for students to ensure maximum benefit out of the curriculum.

- Evaluation

Means of evaluation for each subject should be clearly mentioned as per the requirement of the subject on a dynamic scale. Curricula should be developed on the line / of –E.S.U.

- a. Essential as stated by industry i.e. leadership, social responsibility, dealing with egos, persuasions, innovation, creativity, general awareness, computer proficiency and so on.
- b. Supportive as desired by the Industry i.e. time management, sensitivity, environmental alertness, patience, morality, values.
- c. Unconventional themes: - Like unlearning techniques, tools of perseverance, team workmanship, ethical and spiritual intelligence.



## VII. CONCLUSION

Indian corporate world evidently expecting certain functional roles to be filled by management graduates. These roles include client handling to brand management, business development to operations management, financial management to strategic management, human resources management to learning & development management. What is expected by the employers in addition is a hands-on approach to work. This indicates that while rebalancing their curriculum, business schools must retain a focus on their current strength in the “Knowing” dimension, while augmenting their stress on the “Doing” dimension.

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