

Management Education in India

- Need for Quality Standards

By Dr Manu N Kulkarni,

Introduction

Management education through BBA, MBA and so on in India have been imparted through three tier Management Institutes spread over the country. The first tier Institutes are the IIMs created in the sixties with US University collaboration like Harvard and MIT and are now flagship Institutes providing the quality products for the global and national enterprises. The second are those located in cities like Mumbai, Bangalore and other mega cities and do not carry the image of IIMs but these have some brand value links with bodies like All India Management Association and are spread over in hundreds across the country. The third tier Management Institutes located in small towns and growing Hill resorts like Rishikesh in Uttarkhand and they all brand themselves as approved by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and other National Quality Control bodies like National Accreditation Board for Education and Training and so on. Many of these MBA Certificate Institutes, as many as 4000 plus, have mushroomed across the country without any quality standards in teaching, research and handholding the students and make them employable. In Bangalore alone there are as many as 300 MBA Dukans - as one Tea Shop Keeper remarked ! These third tier institutes spend enormously on false Advertisements and claim to have top class faculty provide free lap tops, foreign trips and 100 per cent placement in branded banks, giant retail and manufacturing companies and so on. Some of these third tier institutes in small town are affiliated to State Universities like VTU in Karnataka and other State universities, where the seats are divided between merit students who pass the Common Admission Tests and State controlled entrance tests and so on and the remaining by payment of hefty donation hidden as fees to the Institutes. Sitting in Delhi bodies like UGC, AICTE have all earned corrupt reputation for their quality control and standards.

The BBA, MBA programmes launched by hundreds of Institutes across the country have become as shops for degrees and the quality standards have gone down over the years and poor quality standards are reflected in poor teaching faculty, poor research and consulting leading to poor placement of the students who pass out from such Institutes. The quality of these Institutes depend on critical factors like

- a) Quality of Faculty recruited
- b) Quality of Infrastructure provided
- C) Quality of Library and brainstorming discussion groups and seminars led by top Professional Management Gurus
- D) Last but not the least is the placement provided by the Institutes based on industry needs.

Quality of Faculty: Those who do not get jobs in industries , where salaries are higher, get into teaching jobs and the third tier Institutes are happy to give them teaching work and if you browse the flashy bulletins of these MBA Shops we never find the names of the faculty who teach subjects like Marketing, Finance and HR subjects. Despite the UGC requirements many of these third tier Institutes do not stipulate Ph.D requirements and even if they stipulate it is hard to get Ph.D Faculty because they prefer to get into First Tier Institutes than the third tier ones. Institutes also do not try to get Managers s from Industries to come and share their live experience which itself will go a long way to sharpen the student’s learning

Curriculum and Learning Modules:

The curriculum of Management Science as designed by many Top tier Institutes in India like the IIMS and Other Universities which have established Management Departments have their roots in the social sciences, engineering and physical sciences and mostly borrowed from the US and European Universities like Harvard and London . Most of the MBA curriculum in India, in the name of specialization , have been segregated into Finance, Marketing and HR subjects and there is a competition among the Faculty to win more students to take up their functional areas of HR or Marketing or Finance. Those who opt for HR mostly girls are looked upon as weak MBA’s , good in soft skills, as against those who specialized in Finance or Marketing as hard core areas who are trained to take up jobs in scammed Banks and retail stores.

Decades ago Peter Drucker – the father of Management discipline said “Good intentions are no excuse for incompetence” and the Indian Management Institutes with all their good intentions have never thought of teaching management discipline as a holistic , synthesizing solution oriented discipline. This is where the Stanford University’s Social Innovation ideas on Design thinking has assumed critical importance. In the words of Tim Brown and Jocelyn Wyatt of Stanford Social Innovation Group “Design thinking incorporates constituent or consumer insights in depth and rapid prototyping , all aimed at getting beyond the assumptions that block effective solutions. Designing thinking is inherently optimistic , constructive and experiential – addresses the needs of the people who will consume a product or a service and the infrastructure that enables it. Businesses are embracing design thinking because it helps them to be innovative, better differentiate their brands and bring their precuts and services to the markets faster. Non-profits are beginning to use design thinking as well to develop solutions to social problems. Design thinking crosses the traditional boundaries between public, for profit, and non-profit sectors ”

The much talked about case method of teaching in the Business schools have lost their sheen because they do not enable the students to think in holistic manner. **That case itself**

is meant for highlighting a **particular issue of the enterprise**. There is a need to break the thinking in “Silos” of the Faculty in Management discipline and that can be broken

only if the Faculty think of teaching with a design approach in mind. At present the specialization in terms of HR, Finance and Marketing have become too much isolated and as a result the MBA students miss the integrated approach for management discipline. Design style of teaching is all about a holistic approach for management thinking and always keep in mind solutions for entrepreneurial and organizational problems

Design teaching of management subjects should have the interrelated elements of various disciplines and not just narrow and isolated disciplines which have their own virtues but do not provide “solution thinking” for the students who enter after their MBA the world of business and entrepreneurship. Many nonprofit organizations and even the profit making ones like the VisionSpring – a low cost eye care provider in India has adopted such a design thinking approach in their operations. VisionSpring which had been selling reading glasses for adults, has now taken up comprehensive eye care to children and their design thinking covered kids and the adults alike in a holistic manner from eye care to providing eye glasses from childhood to adulthood.

The Faculty in many Management Institutes in India would strive well to think in terms of such design approaches through whatever curriculum they wish to cover in the classrooms, so that the Students would face the world of business and the world of reality and not just the world of perfection and idealism, which is no doubt good to be aware of but does not equip the students to face the world of reality. Design Teaching has to keep in mind the divergent and diversities that abound in the world of business and public affairs, so that the students when they are out in the market for Job search are able to face the interview with confidence and courage. Design thinking was the inspiration for Steve Jobs to bring to the market his famous iProducts. In the words of Steve Jobs all our thinking (and teaching according to this author) has to be based on three principles - simplicity, utility and beauty ! That is what Design thinking and teaching boils down to. The Welingkar Institute of Management Development and Research claims to have introduced Design Thinking Practices in their MBA programmes but we need to know more about it from the students who have graduated from that Institute.

Most of the Management Institutes in India stress more on “skills” and less on leadership practices. Our Financial Management Systems, marketing Strategies, HR practices, OB and OD interventions all stress how to get “more capital” out of “less cost”. We have Benchmarks and ISO standards for every processes in an enterprise but we do not have “tools” to judge the best leadership practices in an enterprise. We teach bottom lines and corporate governance with brand images but we do not teach students how to be a leader when disasters strike the enterprise, in situations when enterprises are attacked on poor environmental management and in situations when white collar crimes are committed.

Most of the MBA curriculum and teaching modules are not addressing social concerns, inclusive growth issues, disaster management and prevention issues and issues affecting the planet and how to manage it . Many corporate Honchos think it is the job of the State and Activist groups . In Asia natural and man made disasters resulted in US\$ 73 billion of economic loss in 2010. Our Management Graduates have to understand such issues of global –man made and natural disasters to tackle them and manage them. Disaster preparedness and Management are never considered as critical subjects although risk management of financial capital is considered as very important to be taught . Even the Top tier Institutes have not done much to teach such issues to the MBA students.

Traditional Marketing discipline has lost its sheen. Now authors like Scott Stratten talk of Un-Marketing a new type of conversation with customers by engaging them and is now called viral, social and authentic marketing (See www.unmarketing.com) Many institutes do not teach social marketing ,which is very much critical to understand inclusive growth issues.

Placement and Employability Issues

Satish Pradhan Chief of HR of Tata Sons remarked that Job and Placement events in IIMs have become like cattle fairs of Pushkar in Rajasthan, where good looking and smart cattle are sold for the highest bidder. Similarly smart looking IIM Graduates are picked up from big bidders like Banks and Multinationals . He received angry protests from IIM Heads Unfortunately the third tier Management Institutes are not even able to hold cattle fairs because their MBAs are found to be not “employable” and employability is now the new mantra of the Recruiters. The three partners involved in producing Management Graduates in the third tier have to be blamed for the poor placement viz the Bodies like AICTE, Universities which design the curriculum , the Institute Faculty who teach according to the curriculum and finally the Industries who recruit them. If the curriculum is unrelated to the needs of the Industries the fault lies with the Bodies who prescribe the Curriculum and the Industries who never tell their requirements to the Institutes who produce the Management Graduates At the end the graduates suffer Infosys spend lot of their own funds to make their recruits fit for them for several months after they are recruited. Why not industries spend some time to tell the Institutes their skill sets and how they can be employable for them. CII Quality Institute should take a lead to bring together the Third Tier Institutes, The Curriculum Prescription bodies like the Universities , the AICTE and the Industries who finally recruit the MBA’s and develop standards of teaching and subsequent placement In the end **Quality Mantra in Management Education is not about ISO Certification or Accreditation but it is all about how the Management Graduates find good jobs to meet the needs of the fast growing industries and the economy.**

