

REALIGNING INDIAN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION TOWARDS DEVELOPING EMPLOYABLE MANAGEMENT GRADUATES

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Abstract: “Give a bowl of rice to a man and you will feed him for a day. Teach him how to grow his own rice and you will save his life.” said Confucius the famous Chinese Philosopher. This quote can be seen in the context of developing skills for life and preparing an individual for life. In these turbulent times, economic situations govern the decisions of individuals and corporations. The corporations/organizations anticipate maximum output out of every investment that made. These investments include investment on Human Capital. The employees recruited are expected to perform productively from as early as being inducted. It is imperative that the industrial needs have to be fulfilled by the academic processes. The educational qualifications obtained by the employees have to translate into skills so that organizations spend the minimum on induction training. To ensure good quality of individuals with skills, it is essential for the education system to stay abreast with the changes and adapt its systems to meet the needs of the economy. The onus is now on the educational system to produce graduates and post-graduates of the quality that meet the expectations of the organizations.

In the next 7 years, India is expected to have the world’s largest youth population. Such a population can be translated into an advantage only if it can make productive contributions to the economy. Creating a productive workforce is the challenge faced by the Indian education system. Typically, the Higher Education courses are sought by the students who aim to start their careers at a professional level for higher salaries. The courses are intended to produce students that shall be able to perform at a workplace with minimal training at entry level. Appropriate and relevant course curriculum and teaching pedagogy are essential elements to ensure the realization of objectives of the curriculum. With specific reference to Management graduates, the skills exhibited by the graduates are far removed from the needs of the industry. In most cases, the management education in India produces candidates that need to be further trained for 6 months to 1 year when they join the workplace. This reduces the standards of compensation and leads to demotivation among the management students. In this situation, both industry and the students look forward to the education system to impart skills combined with required conceptual knowledge.

Management education, placed among the most highly placed professional courses is going through a major upheaval. The changing economic scenario has put pressure on the design and delivery of this course. Globally, universities and institutions are now required to focus on skill development rather than mere knowledge enhancement. To make the management courses purposeful, the curricula should focus towards managerial skills development as an output of the content taught and learnt. These courses vary in their duration between 3 to 4 years at the under-graduate level, 1 or 2 years at the post-graduate level. The essential skills developed shall cater to the work requirements as prescribed by Mintzberg – Informational,

Inter personal and Decisional. Although, these appear generic personality traits, the skill to deploy these traits in specific situations is a matter of training output. A stronger focus on the skills is directly proportional to better returns for the students and their employers. “Management is, above all, a practice where art, science, and craft meet” said the famous management thinker Henry Mintzberg. So the need is to create a pool of candidates who can master this combination to deliver in the field.

Scope of Research: This paper is an attempt to identify relevant changes in management education curriculum and pedagogy to align with the needs of the industry. Mintzberg’s model of managerial Roles is taken as the basis to study the changes required. The paper is limited in its scope to Indian scenario. With the dynamic economic situation prompting a major change in the Banking sector in India, the Banking industry is expected to grow as the largest service sector in India. The expansion of the industry through issuance of new banking licenses and policies towards inclusive banking, the sector is likely to employ around 20 lakh people in coming 5-10 years. About 50% of the workforce in the middle and junior levels in Public Sector banks in India are due for retirement in the near future. Thus the Banking industry will face a large demand for managerial skills at entry level specifically and across all levels in general. Thus, this industry is depicted as an illustrative Case Study. The results of this study may be further be extended to other industries.

Key words: Management Curriculum, Skill Development, Realigning Management Education

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to attempt identifying gaps between the management education curricula and industry skill demands. Upon identifying the gaps, the paper shall attempt to suggest methods to realign the curriculum to develop the students to suit the industry needs.

Research Gap: Research so far has identified that there is a need to develop Indian Management education to develop skills in the students. Research has also identified the skills required to make an individual employable. Existing literature also suggests the goal of management education to produce suitable candidates for managerial positions. The gap in research is to identify the industry specific skills and align the curriculum and management teaching pedagogy to build the required skills.

Research Problem: This paper deals with the problem of identifying changes in the management curriculum to impart education to produce individuals that can meet industry expectation as well as meet their own self-interest in higher education.

Objectives: The main objectives of the paper are to-

1. Study key aspects of Management Curriculum in select Indian B-Schools
2. Recognize the key aspects of Managerial Skills – with specific reference to the Banking Industry
3. Identify relevant changes in management education curriculum and pedagogy to align with the needs of the industry

Literature review: In the 1980s, the concept of employability was a “meta-characteristic” combining attitudes, knowledge and skills was considered to be an important determinant of employees’ labor market performance (Pearson, 1988). This concept holds well till day. MeritTrac, a premier assessment company reports that as of April, 2012 only 21% of Indian Management graduates and post-graduates were found employable. Developing the employability factors that ensure the employment of graduates and post-graduates require utmost attention of the academic institutions. While

attitude is a largely intrinsic individual trait, knowledge and skills are acquired through learning and training. Looking at various learning theories and methods, transfer of knowledge that happens in classroom settings is a passive process for the students, whereas transfer of skills and development of learning is an active process for both, the teacher and the taught (Michel Norbert, Cater II John James , Varela Otmar,2009).

A model illustrated for transferable skills development in engineering students (Chadha Deesha, 2006) shows us that absorption, reflection and application are essential elements to transfer knowledge into learning. Similar teaching strategies can be adopted to build essential managerial skills like problem solving and resource optimization Fischer and Silvern (1985) suggest that developing the environment to build thinking skills early, between 8-18 years is the key to inculcating analytical and thinking skills. This can be seen as the foundation to inculcate some crucial skills before higher education begins.

The awareness of the management teachers about how teacher-student relate to each other in the classroom would enhance their students' learning capacity and develop competency, the ability to translate pedagogical knowledge and make didactic choices for teaching considering the embedded assumptions and pedagogical dimensions of the learning processes (Villard and Vergara 2013). They further recommend that novice teachers should interact with the older and experienced ones and teachers should provide collective context.

Goyal and Parekh (2012) in their study on comparison of various pedagogies in management education have concluded that technology savviness among students and institutional support are the main hindrances in being able to use innovative pedagogy. Prof. Thillairajan (Associate Professor, Finance) (2011) of IIT Madras comments that when Heads of Companies are invited to sit in the classroom, listen and participate in the Case Study discussions it is a richer learning experience for the students. Indian Case studies give a better understanding of decision making in the decision making process in the contextual settings to Indian Students.

Managerial activities are categorized under Interpersonal, Informational and Decisional heads (Henry Mintzberg 1973). An overview at the skills required to perform these roles tell us that they are imparted through the primary and secondary education levels. Experiential methods of learning enhance the development of thinking and reasoning skills. Since management course combines conceptual and application skills, it should ensure that the students get the opportunities to experience these skills to create solutions for business problems.

It is therefore evident that the gap between teaching and skilling has to be bridged by appropriate environment, curriculum and teaching pedagogy so as to develop employable individuals.

Mintzberg's Managerial Roles			
Category	Role	Activity	Examples

Informational	Monitor	Seek and acquire work-related information	Scan/read trade press, periodicals, reports; attend seminars and training; maintain personal contacts
	Disseminator	Communicate/ disseminate information to others within the organization	Send memos and reports; inform staffers and subordinates of decisions
	Spokesperson	Communicate/transmit information to outsiders	Pass on memos, reports and informational materials; participate in conferences/meetings and report progress
Interpersonal	Figurehead	Perform social and legal duties, act as symbolic leader	Greet visitors, sign legal documents, attend ribbon cutting ceremonies, host receptions, etc.
	Leader	Direct and motivate subordinates, select and train employees	Includes almost all interactions with subordinates
	Liaison	Establish and maintain contacts within and outside the organization	Business correspondence, participation in meetings with representatives of other divisions or organizations.
Decisional	Entrepreneur	Identify new ideas and initiate improvement projects	Implement innovations; Plan for the future
	Disturbance Handler	Deals with disputes or problems and takes corrective action	Settle conflicts between subordinates; Choose strategic alternatives; Overcome crisis situations
	Resource Allocator	Decide where to apply resources	Draft and approve of plans, schedules, budgets; Set priorities
	Negotiator	Defends business interests	Participates in and directs negotiations within team, department, and organization
	Technical Expert ¹	Expert Providing expertise to projects. Serving as a consultant to internal or external projects.	

Fig.1: Mintzberg's Managerial Roles, Burgaz Berrin (1997)

¹Pavett M Cynthia.(1984) MANAGERIAL EDUCATION AND THE REAL WORLD: FOUNDATIONS FOR DESIGNING EDUCATIONAL TOOLS (<http://sbaweb.wayne.edu/~absel/bkl/vol11/11ap.pdf>)

Research Methodology: To fulfill the 3 objectives cited above, study was carried out in 3 Phases. The study was conducted over a period of 6 months in the latter part of 2013.

Phase I: Study key aspects of Management Curriculum in Indian B-Schools. The sample for this phase of study was randomly chosen across India.

Methodology: Secondary sources of information combined with primary resources have been used to meet the first objective. Members of Faculty of various management institutions were interviewed. This was a primary exploratory research phase to gather inputs on curricula, pedagogy used and skill transmission. The curricula of various Indian B-Schools were consulted through internet and other secondary sources. Both these methods yielded that most commonly adapted pedagogy was Class room lectures, Case Study method, Group Presentations and a 2-month internship in the corporate sector to give an exposure to workplace. A few institutions focused on language training, written skills, Behavior Lab and applied learning through live projects and studies.

Phase II: Identify the key aspects of Managerial Skills – with specific reference to Banking Industry. The sample for this phase was randomly chosen from various cities across India.

Methodology:

Step 1: A Focused Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted. The members of the FGD were 15 Senior Faculty members of various courses in B-Schools across India, 15 Senior Officials of Public and Private Banks across India, 5 Recruitment Consultants dealing in Banking Sector recruitment and 15 students of Tier – II Management Schools. The aim of the discussion was to identify the key criteria of employability of entry-level management graduates. As an output of the discussion 20 criteria emerged as key considerations that affected the entry-level employment of management graduated. These criteria were based on the Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes that were required to fulfill the managerial Roles of Mintzberg Model. They are:

1. Domain knowledge and Skills
2. General awareness
3. Academic background of subjects
4. Academic background of educational institute
5. Analytical Skills
6. Numerical Abilities
7. Adaptability and Flexibility
8. Written and Verbal Communication
9. Cultural Sensitivity
10. Persuasiveness
11. Research Skills
12. Team working skills

13. Personal values and ethics
14. Empathetic
15. Resourcefulness
16. Ability to perform under constraints
17. Gender of the Candidate
18. Perception of the recruiter
19. Geographical location
20. Parental education

Step 2: Based on the criteria emerging out of the FGD a questionnaire consisting of 52 statements was formulated. A survey was conducted using this questionnaire on a sample of 45 Senior Bank Officials including 20 from Public and 25 from Private Sector Banks. The study was conducted on a representative sample selected from Delhi-NCR. The sample chosen was identified as representative as the recruitment procedures followed in the Banks were identical for particular positions.

The responses were collected on a 5 – Point Likert Scale ranging from “un-important” to “very-important”. Factor analysis was conducted on the responses to 52 statements. Upon 25 iterations, 10 statements emerged as the Factors. These 10 statements were then identified corresponding to the Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes identified under various criteria of Mintzberg’s Model of Managerial Roles. The 10 components (Factors) that were identified are:

1. Understand work role, authority, do’s and don’ts
2. Collect, synthesize, organize and communicate in both written and oral medium.
3. Potential to lead
4. Ability to display tolerance, integrity and accountability
5. Evaluate possible actions in terms of related consequences.
6. Potential to manage several tasks according to priorities
7. Resource Allocator --Importance of resource allocation and team management
8. Importance of Domain Knowledge
9. Use technology tools with basic conceptual knowledge
10. Aptitude to apply theory to practice

Phase III: Arriving at suggestions to realign curriculum to develop required skills through expert opinions, observations and secondary resources.

Methodology:

Step1: The components identified were then suitably categorized under various roles given in Fig.1. The activity given under corresponding Role was used as the cue to categorization. The components identified were then slotted under the column head, “Examples of Skills to be displayed.”

Step2: The example statements in Fig. 1 were used as the cues for identifying the skills required in performing the activities. Based on the Skills to be displayed, appropriate Curriculum Content was identified.

Step 3: Further, specific pedagogical and evaluation tools were identified to fulfill the delivery of the curriculum.

Specific skills emerging out of the curriculum were the focus and not specific courses. Therefore references to specific courses, viz; Organizational Behaviour, Marketing Management, etc. were avoided by the authors.

As the 10 Factors were identified by the survey, the output is restricted to only the suitable categories and *not* to all the roles identified in the original model as given in Fig.1.

Mapping Mintzberg's Managerial Roles with Management Curriculum and Pedagogical tools²					
Category	Role	Activity	Examples of Skills to be displayed	Curriculum Content	Pedagogical Tools
Informational	Monitor	Seek and acquire work-related information	1. Understand work role, authority, do's and don'ts.	1. Organizational Structures and Dynamics	1. Conceptual understanding with experiential creation of organization's policies and processes. Evaluation: Creation of models and reports 2. Internships 3. Team teaching by cross-functional faculty members. Evaluation: Ability to identify and develop business processes.
	Disseminator	Communicate/ disseminate information to others within the organization	2. Collect, synthesize, organize and communicate in both written and oral medium.	1. English language and comprehension	1. Language Lab, and Interactive sessions 2. Written analysis exercises Evaluation: On the model of TOEFL Viva-Voce
Interpersonal	Leader	Direct and motivate subordinates, select and train employees	3. Potential to lead 4. Ability to display tolerance, integrity and accountability.	1. Leadership Skill Development 2. Organizational Behavior 3. Values and Ethics	1. Behavior/Human Lab 2. Outdoor trips and simulations 3. Simulations, field trips and practitioner experience Evaluation: Case Studies, Written Examination and Experiential performances

² The roles in the table are components identified for entry level managers in the primary survey conducted for this study. Thus, these are fewer than the number of roles suggested by Mintzberg

					4. Relationship of Society and Governance on management decisions Evaluation: Case Study and Written examination.
Decisional	Disturbance Handler	Deals with disputes or problems and takes corrective action	5. Evaluate possible actions in terms of related consequences. 6. Potential to manage several tasks according to priorities	1. Decision Making Science 2. Combination of Physical and Mental work with deadlines	1. Conceptual knowledge 2. Case Studies 3. Live Projects 4. Co-opted Projects/Courses 5. Team teaching by cross-functional faculty members. Evaluation: Simulated testing and experiential testing
	Resource Allocator	Decide where to apply resources	7. Resource Allocator -- Importance of resource allocation and team management	1. Resource Optimization 2. Team working and management skills	1. Entrepreneurship Projects/Exercise Evaluation: Model Creation and proving.
	Technical Expert ³	Expert Providing expertise to projects. Serving as a Consultant to internal or external projects.	8. Technical Expert – Importance of Domain Knowledge 9. Use of technology tools with basic conceptual knowledge 10. Aptitude to apply theory to practice	1. Domain knowledge application practice 2. Essential technology tools for work efficiency	1. Classroom sessions for core conceptual knowledge 2. Consulting Projects association, Short-term Industry Live Projects, Apprenticeship under observation for skill based courses. 3. Experiential learning to create ability to apply theory to practice 4. Case Studies with the participation of practitioners in the class room. 5. Live industry setting discussion of problems.

Fig. 2: Mintzberg's Model mapped with the curriculum and pedagogical tool. This model has been developed by the authors.

Findings: Based on the factors that emerged, the following were the findings--

1. Industry practitioners and Students find that the teaching staff (Faculty) is inclined more towards concepts and reading references rather than applied experience.

³Pavett M Cynthia.(1984) MANAGERIAL EDUCATION AND THE REAL WORLD: FOUNDATIONS FOR DESIGNING EDUCATIONAL TOOLS (<http://sbaweb.wayne.edu/~absel/bkl/vol11/11ap.pdf>)

2. It should be made mandatory for Faculty members to spend 3-6 months in a year to acquaint with current industrial technologies and issues. This will ensure appropriate skill transfer to the students.
3. The commonly adopted case study method is less effective when the cases are not based in India. The students can relate better to Indian settings and contexts. Also, the cases are not always positioned at junior managerial level so that the student can maximize the learnings.
4. The academic systems should build the ability in the students to absorb the concepts and develop skills to work in organizational settings. The education should help the students in acknowledging, accepting and adapting to working conditions through inculcating institutional values and discipline.
5. The communication skills that are developed should focus not only on writing and speaking, but emphasize on cognition and comprehension. This skill is further essential for the students to understand and comprehend customer queries and identify problems and solutions within the system. Among the inter-personal skills, the most important is potential to lead by setting personal example of molding self into the role, displaying appropriate authority and accepting relevant responsibility. These skills also require emotional intelligence and development of ethical value systems. Personal Effectiveness sessions should be designed and delivered to facilitate development of such skills. The students from institutes that trained students on these skills were preferred by the recruiters in terms of more numbers and better pay packages.
6. Business problem identification, framing and solving skills are essential to resolve critical issues. The students require skills to prioritize, plan and act in complex situations.
7. Resource Allocation and optimization is the key to managerial success. This is a skill which is less taught, but learnt better through observation and practice. Therefore all the courses that the student is taught may include exercises which cover this dimension of learning.
8. The students are given industry exposure through a 2-month internship, which by itself is not sufficient to inculcate managerial skills in students. Co-operative programs between Industry houses and academic institutions or academic research institutions are required to give better and varied understanding. Organizations, especially banks have collaborated with academic institutions to develop dedicated programs.
9. In keeping with the standards of English learning, the courses should be developed in lucid English, with references to Indian contexts. It is suggested by Industry experts that atleast 30-40% of the duration of the management course should be spent on live projects and internships or co-opted learning.
10. Among the existing processes of skills transfer, the major hindrance to teaching (input gathered from faculty members included in the FGD) appeared to be the low level of English comprehension among semi-urban and rural students. Further, essential critical thinking and logical reasoning skills were found low in majority of the students.

11. The last and the most crucial conclusion is, essential concepts shall be covered as courses and these courses shall be taken beyond classrooms to give practical orientation to the students.
12. This research, being directly relevant to the vast number of tier-II management schools that are facing crunch of skilled faculty resources and difficulty in meeting the industry expectations emphasizes the need to industry experience and exposure of the faculty members so that on the job skills are transferred along with essential conceptual knowledge.

Conclusion: To overcome the severe demand for skilled managerial workforce, Banks have designed specialized programs to develop a workforce equipped with the essential skills. Further, they have either started business arms that train potential employees in the required skills or have joined with professional management institutions to design and deliver specific skills based programs. This only reiterates the research finding that curriculum oriented to skills training succeeds in producing suitable candidates for business organizations.

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