

## EXCELLENCE IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

**\*Dr. P. David Jawahar**

### **Abstract**

*Management Education, in India has come a long way. As recently as the 1990s, there were only a few institutions that offered management education and were invariably considered elite and generally out of reach for the common man. There has been a quantum jump in recent years in terms of changes in educational policies and the subsequent establishment of Management Education institutions. Today, literally thousands of management graduates pass out each year. What should have been glad tidings is hardly good news. A closer scrutiny shows that the litmus test of a good management programme is in the Campus Placements that follow. Though there are thousands of management programmes on offer throughout India, the hard but undeniable truth is the industry values only a hundred or so programmes. The others don't matter! The sad part is that the institutions that don't matter to the industry also know this fact (and are hardly bothered by it) and are running the show for other ulterior purposes. This article is not meant for them and it must be categorically stated that they do not fall under the category of institutions that strive for excellence. Before I proceed further I need to clarify that industry acceptance is absolutely necessary because that is proof of the quality of the programme, the institution and the student.*

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### **1. The Selection**

The first thing that separates the better institutions from the lesser ones is their meticulous choice of students. Any compromise at this stage can only lead to a dilution of programme quality. Though there are a number of arguments put forward as to why compromises need to be made in admissions, enough methods exist to overcome all these challenges. On the issue of admission of students it is much preferred that a multi stage admission procedure be followed. A rigorous admission test such as the CAT, XAT, or MAT may be employed. The second stage necessarily should include a group discussion and the final stage should be the personal interview. Though the learned courts in India are clear that the subjective component of evaluation should not exceed 15%, it is the opinion of the author and other like minded academicians/administrators that this restriction really does not help in the selection of the most suitable candidates for management education programme.

### **2. The Curriculum and Delivery**

The second factor that separates the good from the bad institutions is the curriculum and the delivery system. The curriculum needs to be alive, responsive and vibrant. Ideally, a body such as the Board of Studies should meet at least twice a year to review the

prescribed syllabus. Even this is an indicative number only. The basic principles that should govern the framing of syllabus are - 1. Does the course meet the needs of the industry? 2. Does the syllabus look into emerging fields of interest to society/ industry and students? Unfortunately, in conventional systems syllabi are set and reviewed once in 3 years or more and are hence outdated and does not add value to students. Needless to say the constitution of the Board of Studies should include academicians, practitioners and the actual delivery agents (the teachers).

The other related issue is the delivery system. There is a very sad tendency amongst the teaching community to “teach”. This should be replaced by the urge to allow students to explore and discover. Spoon feeding is probably the most effective way to kill a management programme. The delivery system can ideally include about 40% of lectures, 20% of project work, 20% of assignments, and 20% of contemporary reading. The teachers, in the modern context need to take on the role of moderators and facilitators. Undoubtedly, dedication on the part of teachers will easily outweigh the talent of teachers.

### 3. The Evaluation

The third major factor is the evaluation of the students. Traditionally, testing of students has been either too easy or too tough on the student community. And, very often the student is able to easily predict the testing method. There needs to be a paradigm shift in our mindsets  
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when it comes to evaluations. The first principle is that the student should be tested on what he has learnt. The second principle should be to test the student on what he would be expected to use in the industry. The third principle is that the student should be tested to see how he makes the relationship between theory and practice. Therefore, more innovative methods of testing need to be devised. The written test and the importance given to it must be reviewed. Ideally the written component should not exceed 40%; the other 60% can include components like presentations, quizzes, mini projects, current events evaluations, case analysis, and similar items. But, in the opinion of this author, probably the most important issue that needs to be factored into the evaluation process is the need to have group evaluations. The idea behind this is that industry values group efforts more than individual brilliance and hence the evaluations should help students to work better in groups.

Of course, any attempt to say that the above said is the beginning and end of excellence in management education is both naïve and absolutely incomplete. But, it is true that these issues are the starting points and the cardinal coordinates for managerial excellence. A few other issues that matter are also listed below:

1. Faculty strength cannot be over emphasized. The universal principle that peanuts satisfy only monkeys is sometimes so shamelessly

forgotten by administrators. Faculty need a decent pay packet, but more importantly need the space to research, publish, consult and do industry oriented work. It is absolutely the responsibility of the organisation to provide the time, resources and opportunity to its faculty members. It is heartbreaking that faculty members are not even being acknowledged as important stake holders in many organisations.

2. Infrastructure is another requirement. Meeting AICTE prescriptions is not the point. The infrastructure should provide ease of access/use and a learning ambience. Be it the library, the computer lab, the class room or the extra-curricular activities room – all should speak the same message i.e. facilitating learning.
3. Industry tie ups is another important feature of good management education. It is imperative that the management education institutions identify and tie up with at least a dozen industrial organisations. These organisations can contribute in terms of executive and summer placements, industry visits, consultation opportunities for

faculty, participation in board of studies meetings, and framing of syllabus.

4. Last but not the least is the role of a leader for heading the b-school. Most organisations take the easy route of selecting a very senior person to head operations. The key issue is not one of seniority alone but of scholarship, motivation skills, team building skills and the ability to generate and share vision.

**Conclusion:** To authenticate the claims made in this essay, the authors calls for a closer scrutiny of the more successful management programmes in India and around the world. A clear pattern emerges in terms of their philosophy and their approach to management education. Those who belittle the success of the IIMs as being fuelled by huge financial assistances from the government (and no requirement to show any return on investment) would do well to look at alternate models like Indian School of Business, and Great Lakes Institute of Management to see how it makes perfect business sense to invest in management education. There is huge projected demand for good management graduates and enough space for more management education institutions. Therefore, let us join hands in building greater management education institutions that are not simply good in India but acknowledged as good around the world.

**About the Author:**

**\* Dr. P. David Jawahar is Professor at the Bharathidasan Institute of Management, Trichy.**

**Quotable Quotes**

- Nothing is impossible for a man who doesn't have to do it himself.
- There is just no doubt about the standards of right & wrong, as long as you apply to others
- A man who is calm in the midst of all round adversity, has perhaps fixed a scapegoat already.
- Behind every intolerance, there is incompetence; behind every anger, there is fear.
- Even a very dishonest man, wants honest employees, honest relatives, honest judiciary etc.
- If you don't plan for the results, you will get the consequences.
- Leadership involves a reasonable degree of selflessness; a truly selfish person just can't be a leader
- There are at least 3 versions to any event; what others tell you , what you understand and the truth