

How Should Management Education Go In The NEP Regime?

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ABSTRACT

We often display our proud feeling of being a citizen of a country that already has played a constructive role in the many aspects of human life – be it ethics – values – morality, social obligations, nature worship, and respect, belief in co-existence, and more so our traditional educational system. Little seems to be visible now in practice; reasons are many. However, the most affected happens to be our educational system, of which we have been a part, that almost is turning up into a disaster because we have a substantial population which is young and zealous, which is devoid of opportunities against their expectations, which is not skilled and trained as the modern work set-up needs, obviously without compromising on ethics, values or morality.

Independent India, as we know that post-1947 is almost seven decades and a half old, and still struggling to find a place in World-class education! We have realized quite late that a country's education must suit its own environment and requirements. We borrowed all ideas from the West, did not understand if it would result in the desired output, and implemented it blindly. The other part is more troublesome – the infrastructure being discussed here. Land of Nalanda and Takshshila is bruised on the education front. No major difference exists in Management education. Here too, objectives have been defeated; instead of producing entrepreneurs, we have batch production of managerial 'clerks', a brigade that could not make our Industries self-reliant. Instead, MNCs/TNCs captured the cream for their betterment. This paper tries to identify the incongruence of management education with the emerging corporate or entrepreneurial business requirements and suggests measures that could be undertaken in general and under the light of the draft of the National Education Policy likely to be implemented from 2022 across educational verticals.

Keywords: Collaborative learning, Management education, Quality education.

Adhyayan: A Journal of Management Sciences (2020); DOI: 10.21567/adhyayan.v10i2.3

INTRODUCTION

It has been quite long ever since Management education started in India after the Britishers left for their homeland. It is essential to mention this because education has been severely affected during the non-British era till today! India boasts up of having around a thousand Universities operating currently under the umbrella of the UGC (967 to be precise, of which 54 are central Universities, 125 are deemed to be Universities, 418 are state Universities, and 370 are private Universities probably operating under State University Regulations as applicable). More than six thousand colleges in India have the distinction of operating management programme. We have many layers of such Institutions – the Government established IIMs (multilocation), Management Departments in many of the IITs (multilocation), such Departments in

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How to cite this article: Kumar, A., & Pathak, P. (2020). How Should Management Education Go In The NEP Regime?. *Adhyayan: A Journal of Management Sciences*, 10(2):17-21.

Source of support: Nil

Conflict of interest: None

Central Universities, Deemed to be Universities, State Government and Private Universities and of course, the standalone Institutions, either affiliated or autonomous apart from the Distance Education Council approved Institutions, especially Open Universities in states across India on the lines of IGNOU. More so, there are technical Universities in many states that run their MBA programmes through institutional affiliations.

There is a jostle for supremacy amongst the four older IIMs (A-B-C-L) on various academic and research parameters and conformance to the corporate and consultancy services. The other ones form the next layer. As per the Ministry of Education (Higher Education Department), Government of India, Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) are institutions of excellence that provide consultancy services and quality management education and training and research in various sectors of the Indian economy. In fact, the very establishment of such Institutions implies developing the entrepreneur cadres across the nation so as to create more jobs for the skilled or semi-skilled workforce available in the near vicinity. This entrepreneurial engine is expected to boost self-reliance for livelihood.

More than five lakh management graduates are churned out each year in India, and merely 10% get absorbed or are worth some placement, eye-opening figures indeed. Top Institutions from each of the above layers can place their students but a large number of them apart from these turn out to be mere degree holders, many not even fit to start their own ventures, may be even on a very small scale. Leave aside the placement opportunities; the skill baggage remains poor even after the fanciful programmes being administered on students. If one evaluates the causes, there are many, let us go through each.

The Institutions have been increasingly growing ever since the formal launch of Liberalization, Privatization, Globalization (LPG) was launched in 1991. The craze for managerial jobs were on the upswing. The private sector saw a sudden spurt in Management Institutions. Concerned regulatory bodies issued clearances paving the way for new educational institutions to be set up; this also became a safe haven for conversion of black assets to white. Those with better infrastructure charged a premium and grew very fast. Those with an uncompromising attitude on quality roped in qualified trainers and teachers, found out the shape of the next decade's industrial opportunities and presented their programmes attuned to such needs and customizing them to suit specific jobs. Even Industry started to look to such options bearing in mind the cost they need to incur upon each new employee's joining. Hence, Industry endorsed programmes too sprouted up. Apart from the managerial cadre, there were bigger requirements at the operational level, and hence the second or third layer Institutions sneaked in for the same. The remaining had to remain satisfied with mere educational degree providers, and most of such

Institutions were the state University Departments or the affiliated institutions to them. Seats increased, more applications started pouring in for management programmes as it had some face value in society, but it lasted till around the year 2006-08. The recession played spoilsport. Supply exceeded demand. Quality kept its journey southwards, at all levels of input, processing and hence, output. The next decade witnessed a downturn for management programmes, exceptions apart. Corona crisis of 2019-20-21 further added wounds to such woes creating a further disparity between institutions besides aggravating mismatch between demand and supply.

Suddenly sprang up the skill and digital propositions. One was the expected outcome, while the other was the platform or the catalyst. None of them served to be deliverables. Institutions were struggling for survival. Instead of regulatory bodies receiving more applications for opening new Institutions, they received them more for closure! This is something to ponder for.

THE NEP BANNER

As far as higher education is concerned as a part of National Education Policy (or precisely NEP), there are eleven criteria mentioned in the draft report. These are related to quality and forward-looking vision for the Higher Education System, Institutional Restructuring and Consolidation, More holistic and multi-disciplinary education, optimal learning environments and support for students, motivated-energized and capable faculty, equity and inclusion in higher education, teacher education, reimagining vocational education, catalyzing quality academic research, transforming the regulatory system of higher education, effective governance and leadership for our Higher Educational Institutions (or HEIs).

Quality Imperatives

As far as quality is concerned, it is undoubtedly a long-term affair and not overnight through a flip package. Let us pick up these one by one. Vision needs to be aligned to the national vision. All educational institutions should focus on nation-building (*Rashtra Nirman*). This can happen only if we can identify the areas in which HEIs play a major role in prevailing and upcoming typical Indian environments. Quality of education in HEIs demands the same from school-level education, students who eventually complete schooling move towards HEIs. Quality is relative, not absolute. Hence, within this framework the learning ambience coupled with values education should



pave the way for better sensible citizens for whom nation comes first. Skill education should be for the regional requirements and then national. Just merely enhancing the Gross Enrolment ratio is not going to fulfill the task. Every Institution is unique in itself, each has certain attributes, and the Government should try to derive the maximum benefit to suit the region's needs. Management education is highly personality and skill based and a generic education nowadays, must for every individual in a regime where resources seem to fastly deplete. Why cannot every curriculum have management modules! Optimization comes through practice, make the learners work on thinking about optimization in all their activities. And we shall see the difference!

Operational Issues

In the earlier part, the different structures prevalent in Management education have been discussed. Undoubtedly, it casts a plethora of misunderstandings related to programme nomenclature and its administration. Institutions vying for quality say standalone systems are better, affiliations not. Some say, a lot of regulation spells doom for management education. Few complain about the governance system's involvement in deciding about the inflows (resources, students). State Universities, Central Universities, Technical Universities have no coordination amongst themselves. MBA programmes run under Technical Universities in India are like a batch production system across the state, churning out MBAs irrespective of the pass-outs, knowing about their future or Institutions delivering value to them. Those who are able to find jobs for them, claim to be better Institutions in terms of the viability of such an education. Moreover, they open up several other courses of similar nature without enhancing faculty resources and thus finding newer ways of faculty optimization – since faculty remuneration head is the most vulnerable of all! So allow freedom to organize them and do optimization as per the need, not as per the will of the regulatory or governing body. The latter's role should be to monitor the quality initiatives irrespective of what resources they have. Resources can be stretched at occasions but obtaining mental fit is difficult. Inter-Institutional collaboration (Collaborative learning) is the most sought for attribute in Institutional restructuring in this era.

Nature

Management education base is multi-disciplinary; hence, the potential to fill any sort of color exists.

Management education heavily draws on Psychology, Economics, Data Science, Statistics, Engineering, Anthropology, to name a few. In fact, it is ready to accommodate and embrace any such stream that helps in decision-making. The Choice based credit system is a very good step towards developing an individual based upon his or her innate strengths. However, the pool, the bigger the better, asks for more trained resources in faculty and learning resources. Let the Institutes leverage out on this. Capabilities cannot be common, Institutional DNA is bound to differ and this is the beauty of diversity in Management Education. In fact this helps in developing several other fields of study concurrently. International Affairs, politics, defense are few such fields that need management integration. Medical Science and correlated or supporting fields need to embrace Management education much more.

Student support

As far as student support systems are concerned, we seem to have done good if not best. Information Technology has undoubtedly played a very crucial role towards the same. Counseling and guidance need to be properly augmented. India is witness to generating graduates without any objectives for a career. Mindsets still exist that a Government job will fetch one with all ease and comforts of life, no one wishes to step out of the comfort cauldron. The misconception as above can only be shed by counseling and guidance. Jobs become easy when one enjoys doing it. The student support system in HEIs helps to develop a student-centered curriculum and fulfills students' emotional, developmental, social needs, and acts as a prerequisite for successful scholastic performance. Culture plays the vital role here. Even in the International context, we need to educate the learners on the cross-culturalism, which will be increasingly observed in the years to come. Institutions are even arranging for such guidance in preparing for the UGC NET or PhD entrance tests or even courses of ICSI, ICWA and ICAI during the evening. Incubation Centres are yet another way of making the dreams being realized for the young generation. Scholarships of any nature should involve both – merit and need.

Faculty Issues

For all these, faculty capability needs to be understood. Faculty is not only a teacher or a researcher but also a path-finder for students. Certain criteria must be fixed with basics while relaxing in a few is needed to tackle the current quality faculty crisis across different

learning verticals in the country. A faculty member is the Institutions' backbone while students are the lifeline. We must understand that any Institution will be able to survive or excel depending upon the teacher. Teacher in management education needs to possess holistic development. He or She has to be undoubtedly master of one but then sufficient control over related subjects too is necessary after all the variety factor needs to be countered. Doctoral degree holders only to teach in Universities are a welcome decision but that does not ensure flair for teaching. Why cannot we have a separate Management education training bridge course for new teaching aspirants from 2022? Trainers need to be drawn from a pool of noted academicians superannuated from premier institutions in the country and abroad and rigorous training needs to be done for a minimum six months and only such certified professionals need to enter the classes. Moreover, the demand shall be of versatile faculty at both UG and PG levels. Allied areas too need to be equally given preference because more and more fields would be finding places in Management education.

Research

Issues pertaining to research happen to be crucial. One must understand that research is not a cup of tea for all. Research is necessary in terms of mindset. Quest for new knowledge should be the first criterion for a quality teacher. From anything to everything, avid reading is recommended because we will surely encounter management anecdotes from any literature and provide a starting point for case writing. Enough of Harvard and Kellogg cases have been sold and studied in India and they were purposely done to catch the professional to their homeland. There should be a national case depository in Management where teachers can contribute their original findings from daily life encounters but with a management mindset. Case publishing should be made mandatory at Institutions, especially with Associate Professor and above owing to the experience which they carry.

Publications

As far as publishing is concerned, our education system in Management still demands foreign indexing, it is not understood why we still do not possess a relevant indexing that should be mandatory for publishing. Parameters should be such that original work is accepted. Merely running after data and analysis won't serve the purpose. Both qualitative and quantitative research are necessary and in languages other than

Hindi and English to showcase our vibrant culture and uniqueness of our country's happenings. The current UGC care list needs thorough revamping. Publication of Journal should be made mandatory for each HEI and slowly quality infused into it with a robust methodology which should be evolving.

Currently, publication of books with contributions from everywhere is in vogue; people are happily contributing to chapterization, good enough for newer dimensions and thoughts but then orientation needs to exist, societal, industrial or economic. Conference proceedings or special journal volume (thematic) should continue, at least writing ability improves in this Internet world where original ideas seem to be missing due to abnormal dependence on Web services. Digital Library too is mandatory for accessibility throughout. It is good to see many Indian authors now writing textbooks and it is for the Government to ensure such basic text writing occurs in all Indian languages – this shall propel our Management education with greater speed, why should management education remain exclusive to a few, skills need to be imparted to every layer of our societal fabric.

Corporate connect

The Institution-Industry Interface is necessary. Both should understand each other's requirements and work synergistically. Using students to meet corporate targets by enterprises results in dual losses on the longer run, first student during such project interface in internships creates a very poor mental impression as the student has come to witness the corporate culture, second the enterprise brand loses its sheen and becomes lesser acceptable within the young brigade, although reputed enterprises still understand the need to train the trainee on various aspects of organization life! Internships should be held after the third semester when functional areas have been relatively covered well and organizations can garner the trainee's potential and look them towards hiring them since they would be closer to the placement scene, just a semester away. And internships should be done for not less than ten weeks to make the trainees understand corporate life's nuances. The Industry-Institution Interface should become more region-centric because of obvious reasons – easy access to both parties, increasing the feeling to help the region grow economically and socially, and creating excellent business hubs for more and more local people for whom the entrepreneur is like God! Language is a big issue in marketing, yet another reason for the argument.



Flexible Administration

Universities must understand that management education cannot be run with rigidities as changes in the business environment keep changing daily in the current context. Most of our Universities still teach what has become obsolete long time back. Undoubtedly, fundamental concepts remain unchanged, but then newer knowledge augmentation is the responsibility of the intellectual. Do not appoint superannuated teachers for heading any Institution further; instead, their role should be advisory and also they need to keep a tap on the modern needs both in terms of the process and content. They should be roped in for policy formulation as they have lived a long academic life, but then policies need to be flexible and adaptive to contemporary requirements within both the national (First) and then the Global (second) framework. The trimester-semester imbroglio seems to be a differentiating factor and must add on to more such flexibility. CBCS already calls for greater flexibility. Institutions are inviting students to design their own

courses (of course with proper guidance), what else can be thought of? Do not treat management education the same way engineering or science education goes; this is the underlying principle for the NEP to work upon.

CONCLUSION

The National Education Policy Draft points out various changes on many fronts. However, real change will be felt only when indigenously developed models are brought to practice. Moreover, we need to address numerous issues before a final draft get ready to be implemented from 2022. Let the academia come together and address the crucial issues as opportunity never arrives many times. It is time for us to build a new nation, self-reliant and strong, that the generations of the future expect from us.

REFERENCE

National Education Policy 2020 (Ministry of HRD, Government of India); pp 35-52