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The State & Impact Of Management Education In India

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If a more India centric approach is adopted, academics will be in a position to provide ideas and agendas to the Indian industry both home grown and MNC's; rather than either being mute spectator or majority of time being at the learning end.

"The study of management is in the same place as the study of medicine was, before the discovery of the circulation of blood. So people in management are still doing the equivalent of applying leeches, and all sorts of things that don't work."

- Art Kleiner, 27 February, 2004

"The leap from having a lot of self-confidence to being an arrogant jerk isn't that far. I worry that we set the stage for that sort of behavior in our B-schools. We unintentionally breed bullies."

- Robert Sutton, 18 June, 2004

The above is the perception of Management Guru's about Management Education in Europe and America.

The perception of common man in India about MBA is not very different from this. viz. in Gujarati MBA's are also called "Mane Badhu Avde" (I know everything) and in Hindi Maha Bekar Aulad" (The worst child). These acronyms may be highly exaggerated but have not come into existence out of thin air. These definitions have come into existence by watching MBA's performance in Indian home grown firms or family managed business. Majority of success of MBA's from premier institutes have come while they were working abroad or in a multi national company in India.

- It has yet to convincingly demonstrate a level of reasonable comfort with engaging Indian realities and positioning the latter within an indubitably Indian frame of philosophic reference and finally,

- It has failed to draw upon the creative diverse arsenal of Indian cultural traditions to formulate, design and implement specifically Indian solutions.

Overcoming these weaknesses constitutes some of the ingredients of the management challenge for this millennium.

For this to happen, management education will have to make a deliberate effort to outreach itself, where it begins to use the larger laboratory of society as a window and as a mirror to judge itself.

Management institute in India relied heavily on textbooks and cases from alien countries, particularly the US. This led to important questions. How relevant are those foreign models? What were the dangers of mechanical transplantation of the models which were successful elsewhere? This issue achieved special significance in the context of a country like India, a veritable repository of rich heritage and culture from which we draw inspiration and guidance.

In its 60th Independence year India has more or less established itself as a leader in information revolution. India was a leader in agriculture revolution along with China and Egypt. India missed out on Industrial revolution due to British rule and consequently lost the Advertising, Marketing and Management revolution. It was not that there was no advertising, marketing or management knowledge in India during this period, these disciplines were very much there but these disciplines did not grow as they would have otherwise. Chances are that if India was not ruled by the British, India would have been a leader in Industrial revolution also. Individuals of the generation applied all their knowledge and skill in the Independence as well as the social movement.

We can and should look at the treasure of valuable thoughts in individuals like Tilak, Subhash, Mahalonobis, Chakravarti Rajagopal etc. We learn from these inspiring sources many lessons, including management, because they applied their learning's for finding the solutions to the situation and problem which existed in India. These individuals deliberately made effort to outreach themselves, where

they used the larger laboratory of society to find solutions. There are no better punch lines than "Vande Mataram", "Freedom is my birth right", "Give me blood I will give you freedom" etc. "Jai Jawan Jai Kissan" by Lal Bahadur Shastri has not only defined the "Core Competence" of India but also has the approach of "Bottom of Pyramid". These individuals' thoughts and actions provide insights into ways and means of managing people, regarded as the most important resource of any segment of any society.

Till date, the most popular text book of marketing in India is by Prof. Philip Kotler. The first edition was printed in 1970. And even in 2006 the eleventh edition is still very popular! Till now majority of the prescribed reading materials are still from the Harvard Business Review. It is sad that inspite of the discipline being nearly 40 years old in India, there is hardly any "intellectual capital" of Indian origin. It is a collective failure. The Indian management fraternity has failed to generate substantial "intellectual capital" to make an impact even within India. There may be several reasons for this but it will be still called criminal. There are approximately 1500 management institutes in India with an average of 10 faculty per institute the number of management educationist in various discipline will mean 15,000 faculty. What do these faculties do? *They teach instead of professing.* They should be "*stating a point of view*".

For this to take place the management educationist will have to shift their reference point from west to India. It will change the structure and agenda of management knowledge. In India, there is always an experience of incompleteness if one does not get recognized by the west. Not to have a foreign degree or publication in foreign journal is to live like an intellectual proletariat in Indian universities. The anxiety to get recognized by the west is so chronic that when one works on indigenous resources, one borrows the tools of interpretation from the west. This has led to absurd situation in education. (Intention is not to say that there is nothing to learn from west). Now the professor while writing reminds himself writing is not important; what is important is where one publishes. And, this begins to repress their imagination, their words, and their ideas in order to give their consent to a particular logic of publication. *"Form becomes more important than the authenticity of*

expression."

If this changes and academics adopt a more India centric approach, academics will be in a position to provide ideas and agendas to the Indian industry both home grown and MNC's; rather than either being mute spectator or majority of time being at the learning end.

And while the search for motivated and inspiring teachers will continue to be one of the major problems the country will have to deal with, it is important to look at the management institutes itself. The institutes no longer remain a sacred zone of reflection and enquiry. Institutes have become placement consultants. Most Institutes do not think they have a role beyond awarding an MBA, PGDM or such similar degrees to students who are willing and able to pay their high fees. They seem to see their role as "imparting knowledge" on theories and concepts in management to such students, and to help them find suitable and highly paid placements in business and industry. This process of teaching makes students passive and dependent. Such teaching hardly develops in them the ability to apply knowledge to practical business problems, improving analytical and diagnostic skills, and developing the ability to take their own decisions. The teaching process does not help students develop imaginative and innovative solutions to deal with real life business situations. (May be one of the reasons of high suicide rates among students in professional colleges in recent years). Much less does it develop their ability to work as effective team members and leaders?

This process has slowly legitimized the process of ignoring poverty; the sense of community has ceased to have a place in social life. What is left is a barbaric freedom to pursue unlimited profit and power.

However all is not lost; the scene is not as bad as the above passage may force you to think. There is more than silver lining in the horizon. Small visible and invisible shifts are taking place in the field of management education; which will amount to tectonic shift. What is required is to continuously redefine curriculum based on India's ethos and requirement. A curriculum which should very subtly inscribe the following in the sub conscious of every individual management student:

"What one learns is of interest of his teacher, what one knows is of interest to

oneself, but the knowledge one puts to use is of interest to all humankind”.

This because, an insight into reality is the culmination of all kinds of discipline;

“Sarvasastra prayojanam, atmadarshanam”.



Author's Profile



Mr. Sandeep Singh is a Post Graduate in Rural Development and a Management Graduate from IIM Bangalore. He has been associated with various television channels. His articles have appeared in various newspapers and magazines. His areas of interest include Management, Marketing, Sales, Advertising, Rural Marketing and Education. Currently, he has taken a brake from regular job and is working to develop an Indian Model of Management Education blended with Western concept. Along with this he lectures at various management institutes.