



Core Curriculum & Methodological Issues in Management Education in India

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT *Management education in India is growing in number by leaps and bounds but has not very well evolved qualitatively. The major factors contributing to the quantitative boost are observed containing the attractive placements, easy entry pattern, flexible pattern for pursuing management course, high number of institutes offering the course, etc. Whereas the basic reasons for its poor quality can be summarized as undue weightage on theory than practical exposure, conventional curriculum and traditional pedagogies, granting permission to institutes that are not sufficiently equipped with infrastructure, quality faculties, financial resources etc. This paper highlights one of the major limitations of management education being the traditional curriculum and the pedagogy adopted for the same. It focuses on the observations drawn from the point of what is and what ought to be. And last but not the least it provides for the areas where the changes need to be implemented.*

1.0 Introduction

Curriculum development in higher education is a matter of concern in India, given the challenges of a world undergoing rapid change. India is undergoing rapid change in its demographic, social, economic, political, educational and psychological dimensions. The paper attempts to explore the impact of this changing background on the curriculum of Business Management as taught in Management Institutions. The expectations of students and corporate professionals are studied with a view to suggesting suitable modifications in the current approach to the core curriculum and methodology of the business management studies.

The spectrum of aspirants for management education ranges from undergraduates to experienced and senior professionals, from employed personnel to entrepreneurs, from primary sectors like agriculture and mining to tertiary sectors like banking services to secondary sectors like manufacturing and production. Growing demand has led to varying needs and expectations from this field. The varied demographics of students opting for management studies results in equally varied perceptions about age, qualifications and experience for enrolment for MBA. Management courses being offered are aimed at meeting the various kinds of demands. This reflects in the numerous courses offering MBA or its equivalent. Therefore, one sees offers ranging from full time two year courses to one year, to six months to distance learning to online courses in management education.

A typical management curriculum should cover knowledge based, analytical, quantitative and skill based subjects. The present research is concerned with understanding the approach to the subject with reference to curriculum development and teaching methodology.

The evolution of the subject would be better understood with a brief review of the history of management education in the world. This would help provide a context to the evolution of this area and its relevance today. The sections below provide an overview of the evolution of management education globally, and a theoretical framework of the theories propounded.

2.0 Evolution of management education

The early years prior to the World War I laid some of the ground rules of industry support for business education. The ground for inclusion of other subjects was also laid in these years. Since management thought had not yet evolved into a strong body of independent principles, it had to be drawn from the roots of other academic subjects. Business educa-

tion, isolated from the institution of higher education was accused of being 'fragmented' and 'vocational'. The earliest institutions were finding their way as there were no set models or guidelines to follow. The thrust of the curricula was to prepare managers for functional roles with minimum inputs or 'interference' from society or academia.

The early decades of management education were driven by concepts of scientific management thought or Taylorism. By 1930, the scope for inclusion of various subjects had widened considerably. Research in areas of business accounting, psychology economics also provided an impetus to the need to include other subjects into the curricula of business education. Research by social scientists contributed hugely to the evolution of management thought and practice. The interwar years saw the growth of business schools. This growth also impacted the subject matter and faculty in business schools. Schools emphasised on practice without back up from adequate academic sources. This gave rise to questions on the academic value of business related courses.

Attempts to change this started in the early 1920s. The American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) was formed in 1916, with the objective of providing a forum for ideas and research. Publications of management literature were encouraged in order to facilitate integrate the various subjects in management studies. The Academy of Management founded in 1941 aimed to integrate the diversity of management thought and promote the teaching of the evolution of management theory. In the 40s, contributions and influence of Fayol, Weber, Chester Barnard reflected in the framework of management concepts, so far being dominated by Taylorism.

Social experiments of Mayo, Moreno and Lewin helped management students to understand the importance of an integrated approach to scientific analysis, psychology, sociology and economics. By the 40s, perspectives about management education had broadened and social research pioneered in the previous two decades started influencing the curricula in business schools. Herbert Simon's work, "Administrative Behavior" in 1945 provided the foundation for Organizational Behavior in business education. The move towards psychology, behaviour and communication was obvious by the 40s. The concept of "management by objectives", introduced by Drucker, and practiced by Sloan gained prominence. Management thought and education, post World War II, was largely influenced by Drucker, Koontz, Connell amongst others. "Strategic management" was discussed by McFarland

in the mid 70s. As a result of the number of theories in management by this time, Koontz coined the term "Management Theory Jungle". Koontz identified six approaches to management theory and further added five other approaches after the 60s.

The evolution of management education in North America has been divided into three distinct phases – Pre World War II, where management education was driven by Corporations, 40 years after the War being driven by academia and research leaning towards quantitative bias on structure and content and the post Economic Downturn in the 1980s, emphasizing on behavioral and leadership training and business ethics. – Dharni P.Sinha (2005).

The trends reveal a shift towards skill based learning process in the management studies across the world. There's a need to make the process need-based and student centric, with a recommended faculty – student interaction ratio of 30:70, where students activity is 70% of the time in the classroom. The teacher is more of a facilitator, with most time spent in preparation outside the classroom.

It may be concluded that in the past century, management education in America has evolved to incorporate knowledge, analytical skills and soft skills into the curriculum. The curricula and methodologies in leading institutes in America focus on preparing students for leadership roles.

3.0 Management education in India

According to Sinha, management education in India did not get industrial support, and skipped the first phase that American management education saw. Bowander, B. And Rao S.L (2004), in an exhaustive research paper, elaborated upon the evolution of management education, the challenges, and the curriculum and teaching methods globally, and in India.

Management education as a full time course was introduced in India with the IIM – Calcutta and Ahmedabad in 1962. Prior to this it was part time education for practising executives. (Sinha P.Dharni, 2005). In the early days, corporate houses in India were reluctant to recognize MBA as business education. Thus, management education at IIMs was driven by the Government and faculty. It is only in the past two decades or so that the demand for management graduates has increased.

Indian B-schools have seen unprecedented demand and change in the past decade. Globalization, policy shifts, Government funded institutes, unaided institutes, recognition of human capital are some of the key factors responsible for this change. Another significant factor is the recognition that standards of management education vary in B-schools across the nation. Hence, the demand for professional accreditation is also driving change, research and innovation.

While private initiative dominates a major chunk of management education in India, the Government plays a major role as regulator for approval, accreditation, norms and standards of institutions. While privatization of management education has enabled greater reach to a larger number of aspirants, it is observed that the quality has degraded. There has been severe criticism from various sections of society that the regulatory bodies have been unable to ensure implementation of set standards. Indian business education has to match up to the growing demands with corporate requirements.

Since inception, business education in India has been modeled on curricula of MIT, Caltech, Harvard and others. Even in this, B-schools have not really made consolidated efforts to update their curricula to match with global standards. The quantum of research is still marginal. B-schools in India continue to follow traditional teacher centric methods of instruction. Thus, faculty members are caught in the conflict of following the prescribed syllabi (designed by University or

Institute) and bringing updated information to the classroom. This conflict extends to the limitations of time and expectations in experimental pedagogy. The answer again, is research as a continuous process – research on the subject, curriculum and innovative approaches in teaching and providing skill-based knowledge to match the growing requirements of the corporate world. According to Rajan Saxena, "management programmes must be taught by a team of faculty from different disciplines" and that management education must be "contextual".

Indian B-schools have yet to emerge as strong research centers for academic excellence. The IIMs and a few other schools are known for research in curriculum and Indian case studies, but a lot more can be achieved. To sum up, the research output is not proportionate to the number of business schools in India. One of the major issues facing management education in India is the need for research. B-schools are grappling with shortage of qualified faculty members. The growth of MBA programmes in the country has been registered at 800%, BBA at 19% and Ph.D. in Management at 4%, since 1991. (Sinha P.Dharni, 2005).

This indicates the growing demand for qualified faculty and greater research in management institutions to cadre fruitful efforts in generating skilled management personnel. While privatization of management studies enables a larger section of population to access higher education, the challenges in ensuring academic excellence and research based curricula and pedagogies are also significant.

4.0 Critical analysis of management education

On one hand, business education is seen to be one of the most sought after courses, while on the other there is and has been criticism about the course curricula upgradation, training students and ethics in granting permissions to institutions.

"Too focused on 'scientific' research, business schools are hiring professors with limited real world experience and graduating students who are ill equipped to wrangle complex, unquantifiable issues – in other words, the stuff of management". -Bennis G. Warren & O'Toole James, (2005). Similar criticism has been levied by the press, researchers and academicians alike.

One of the most acrid criticisms is from Mintzberg (2009) - MBA education "prepares people to manage nothing". Mintzberg model highlights ten roles a manager has to play in an organization. The roles are classified into interpersonal – figurehead, leader, liaison; informational – monitor, disseminator, spokesperson; and decisional – entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, negotiator. 75 to 90% of these roles involve communication related activities which the current masses of management graduates are lacking.

One of the challenges faced is that business education needs to be established as a "genuine discipline ... to be credible"- Bowander, B, and Rao, S.L., (2004). There has been constant stress on research and innovative teaching practices and learner centric approach. The emphasis of management education has shifted in a big way to 'soft skills' and human approaches. The debates about quality of business education and upgrading the curricula has led to professional accreditation which can be possible only when there is a separate regulatory body for management education apart from technical education.

5.0 Evaluation & observations

Management education should be concerned about imparting knowledge and skills to students through application of theories and business conditions. Teaching methodology and innovation are a concern for stakeholders globally. It is a serious concern for regulatory bodies, management institutions, students and industries as well. There is a lack of fo-

used research on curriculum development and pedagogy for management education.

The responsibility of the instructor is to ensure appropriate delivery and training. The student – teacher ratio needs to be improved for effectiveness of the syllabus and teaching methodology. The subject of communication is recognized as a key area in B-schools across the globe. At best, there is a component of 'Soft Skills' that is introduced with the aim of grooming students for purposes of placement.

The present study attempts to understand the requirements of the stakeholders with respect to management education and address the concerns of the skill building through practical exposure in management institutions in India. The issues of curriculum and teaching methodology are studied with reference to practices globally and in the top management institutions in India.

6.0 Conclusion

MBA is seen as a route to glamorous positions and packages. Therefore academic backgrounds of students enrolling for business education range from conventional graduation courses like BBA, B.Com, B.A., B.Sc. to professional courses like B.E., B.Tech, etc. Management education has evolved over the past three decades. It has come to influence academic courses across the globe. Expectations of students, faculty and corporate recruiters must be considered in the process of curriculum planning and development. Studies about teaching methodology at management level are gaining momentum in US universities. Research in India requires more encouragement. Research on teaching methodology for the subjects is another area for exploration.

Curriculum Development and Instructional Design are critical success factors for any course. While research is increasingly strong in this area in institutions globally, the requirements of management students in India need to be addressed more specifically. The current syllabus prescribed is relevant, but inadequate. The syllabus needs to be revisited and modified to meet the increasing demands of the industry.

Fresh management recruits need to be trained by the organization. The HR managers are of the opinion that the recruits should be job ready at the time of joining in terms of skills imparted during the two year MBA program. The organization could then focus on training programmes related to the specific organizational culture. Malcolm Knowles, expert in the area of adult education discusses the concept of andragogy. According to Knowles, adults learn best when learning is experiential.

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