

REINVENTING MANAGEMENT EDUCATION- SEARCH FOR A PARADIGM

Management Insight
13(2) 1 - 5
<https://doi.org/10.21844/mijia.v13i02.11262>

Pramod Pathak*, Abhishek Pathak**

Email: ppathak.ism@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Management education has come a long way as far as its existence concerned. However, doubts today are being raised about its impact, its efficacy and its utility. Recent write ups in popular US media including the prestigious 'New York Times' suggests that questions are now being raised about validity of the curriculum. Exposes about unfair practices and unethical behavior at the work place in growing number in recent times are pointers to the reality that review of the Management education paradigm is called for now. What is being taught needs to be evaluated and what is being not taught needs to be pondered over. The present article is a review paper based on the discussions and deliberations that are on regarding the state of Management education and what we in India need to mull over.

Keywords : Management Education, Emotional ability, Character building, Ethical practices

THE BACKDROP

It was sometime in the 1980s that a popular book titled "What they don't teach at Harvard Business School" was published and the author Mark H. McCormack very succinctly brought out a point- "what they can't teach you at a business school".

In the very preface of the book, the author says that the best lesson anyone can learn from a business school is an awareness of what it can't teach well. Some three decades later the business schools in US are realizing this. The author in rather tongue in cheek remark says that if Thomas Edison had gone to business school we would all be reading by larger candles. If those few recent news stories published in some of the leading dailies of US are any indication, it is almost settled that the MBA education is no longer about the conventional subjects that they teach in business schools like Finance, Marketing, Accounts & Economics to name a few. The

compass is turning towards more esoteric subjects that veer around social justice/ moral issues. Even the students are realizing that ethical issues and not finances are businesses' most important responsibility according to a survey of business school students worldwide conducted by a United Nations group and Macquarie University in Australia.

THE PRESENT SCENE

Till recently business leaders were concentrating more on delivering products but the focus now is on issues that are more related to social justice/ morality. According to Leanne Meyer of Carnegie Mellon Tepper School of Business expectations from business leaders are changing. Why this is happening is not difficult to find out. Big companies have indulged in rampant unethical behaviour for profit motive and ethics is back in currency. The creation of fake accounts by Wells Fargo or sexual harassment at Fox news

**Professor, **Research Scholar; Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology (ISM) Dhanbad (Jharkhand)*

or improprieties at Uber are just a few examples that suggest why there is need to emphasize ethics. Rightly then are the Business Schools of US trying to reinvent Management Education as stories of Uber and its sensational business success and rampant corporate misbehaviour is becoming a part of MBA syllabus. For long has the Management education talked about what is happening in the business world. It is time to talk about what ought to happen.

It was more than 500 hundred years ago that Sir Thomas More had raised a basic question- Why enterprises fail? And the probable answer was due to poor management. However, what is poor management and what is good management is still not clear. That is even after more than eleven and half decades since Amos Tuck University gave the first management degree. So we are teaching without knowing what should be taught. It is just the bandwagon effect that is driving school after school to deliver Management degree. Peter Drucker, one of the most prolific of Management writers had once said that "management is doing right things". But what are those right things. At least we are now trying to find out. And rightly is being ethics emphasized. For Ethics is the science of right and the wrong. Management students must learn to discriminate.

NEED TO EVOLVE

There is need, therefore, to change the Management Education paradigm. Not that there have been no changes in the past 100 years or so as far as Management Education is concerned. However, those changes have been largely cosmetic. So there has been disproportionate infiltration of technology in education pushing the right content to the wrong side. It has been as if technology is management and management is technology. We must realize that technology at its best is only a tool for management and not substitute. The other change has been the cost of Management Education. A case in point is a top

management institute of India. In the mid-70s the yearly expenses inclusive of boarding and lodging was around Rs 3500/-. Forty years down the line it is something around 15Lakh, that is somewhere near 500 times. Has the worth gone that many fold? There is need to examine. If doubts about Management education curriculum are being raised in US, India must follow suit because our MBA is based on US model.

It is against this backdrop that we need to think of a new model of management education for India. After all India was once upon a time supposed to be a world leader in education with two of the top class global centers of higher learning in the Indian Subcontinent- the Takshashila and Nalanda. These universities were house to a few thousand students from world over. From there we have certainly come to a very sorry pass where none of our universities figure in the world quality rankings. There is need to introspect. More so, for management education institutes which churn out management graduates in droves. And yet most of our public institutions appear to be in shambles- greatly mismanaged, largely out of sync with times. Whether it is the large non-performing assets of the public sector banks or the poor productivity of the public sector industries. There is need to look inwards why excellence takes a back seat and performance gets mired in misdeeds.

THE INDIAN IMPERATIVE

In the aeons of history India had a glorious mention. Little wonder, referring to that India, the internationally acclaimed Indologist A L Bhasam had written 'The wonder that was India', his famous account of this great civilisation. And it was a wonder. We had the world's leading universities, we had world's first global civilisation, and we were good at about everything the world is talking today. Our mathematics, our medicine, our education, our societal value system

were all awe inspiring. It was this wonder that Columbus had set to discover and Vasco de Gama accidently found. We were the world's first knowledge society. That was the ancient India referred to in popular history as the Golden Bird, the *sone ki chidiya*. But the forces of history change destinies of nations and civilisations.

Though rigorous and methodologically sound research studies are not there to prove, careful and scientific observations on the basis of historical events would suggest that there may be something, we may call temporal determinism that shapes destinies of civilisations and nations. How it determines may be a subject of enquiry but that it does can be established beyond reasonable degree of doubt. The same forces have pushed India to its present position in the comity of nations where we find ourselves at lowly positions on various global parameters of transparency, development, health, education, integrity, wellbeing etc. Though, the authenticity of all these indices may be questioned by many an enthusiast Indians, the facts definitely suggest that we have slipped and slipped significantly in our march from ancient to the modern through the medieval period. There is need for some genuine soul searching, some objective introspection to find out the reasons. And of all the reasons that may be found the one that is easily identifiable is the decline in our value system. There was a time when our value system was our strength there is a time when our value system is our weakness. It is not without reason that we often talk about, in the words of our former President, "time for the nation to reset its moral compass ... we must look deep into our conscience and find out where we have faltered". It won't be difficult because the questions arising in US today throw enough cues.

It will be interesting to note that the discussion that is going on in US today on the status of Management Education and the opinion expressed in the popular media was already talked

about by one of the famous educationist and statesman Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the founder of Banaras Hindu University. While mooted the proposal for establishing BHU in 1905 Malaviya Ji had mentioned the following as the objective. His vision of education as enshrined there was "mere industrial advancement cannot ensure happiness and prosperity to any people; nor can it raise them in the scale of nations.... Formation of character is even more important for the wellbeing of the individual and of the community than cultivation of intellect. Hence it is that the proposed university has placed formation of character in youth as one of its principal objectives. It will seek not merely to turn out men as engineers, scientists, doctors, merchants, theologians, but also as men of high character, probity and honour.... It will be a nursery of good citizens instead of only a mint for hallmarking a certain standard of knowledge". He had emphasized on character building as the key aspect of education more than eleven decades ago.

The crisis of the present day society is that wealth accumulation has become the benchmark of excellence in the society and people are running madly after it. And Management education has accentuated it. But this is antithetical to the very idea of spiritual prosperity, the laudable objective of human existence which veers around values as given in the ancient Indian thought. We need to realise the significance of those golden words of wisdom – when wealth is lost, nothing is lost, when health is lost something is lost, when character is lost everything is lost. It needs to be understood that honesty is contagious, addictive and rewarding too. Only, it has to be promoted, it has to be conditioned. Incidentally, all our rewarding experiences are conditioned. It is this conditioning that we need to achieve through education.

THE WAY FORWARD

The objective of development of the modern

Management Education system was to strengthen the capacity and capability of students for effective utilization of resources. However, we defined effective utilization wrongly. In the process, the virtue of goodness got lost in the pursuit of material gains. We now learn that the pace of development has become unsustainable. Growth and prosperity have not brought significant improvement to quality of life of the humanity at large. We still live in a world where around one billion people live in abject poverty. A quarter of the developing world's population lacks access to safe drinking water, and almost half of it has no electricity. More than a hundred million children, most of them girls are not getting the chance to go to Schools. This and much more.

Envy, pride, greed, ego, these have been the curse of humanity. A man's ego may or may not be fountainhead of his progress. But it certainly is the fountainhead of his and other's problems. We know that wars begin in minds rather than battlefield. This is the reason why humanity has failed to live up to the reputation of being the most glorious of nature's creation. We could conquer moon but we could not conquer hunger. We could transplant human hearts, but we have not been successful in changing hearts. We designed foolproof security systems, but failed to correct the insecurity syndrome mankind is suffering from. We have worked ourselves to material prosperity, but could not attain happiness.

Management Schools should be a nursery of good citizens instead of only mint for hallmarking a certain statement of knowledge. The ultimate goal of education, and the avowed one also, should be prosperity of the soul. It is the prosperity of the soul that needs to be referred to as human development. But what we have witnessed is that economic development has become the be all and end all of education. Things could not have been different and that is why we find that even though the world has become rich in terms

of GDP, more and more poor inhabit the earth today. Growth and prosperity have not brought significant improvement to people's quality of life. Globalization has resulted in dollarization, filling coffers but emptying souls. We give away peace prizes, but live under the threat of wars. We have been giving Noble prizes for economics, yet misery and want prevail in most parts of the globe. There is starvation everywhere, the starvation of the body, and the starvation of the soul. We find that mankind has ceased to be a feeling being. Plight of his brethren does not pain him. Education then has to achieve the desired goal.

Perhaps the shift towards that goal is gradually taking place. Some leading business schools are responding by drawing on the social sciences including behavioral economics and Psychology. The Stanford Graduate School of Business has its ethics class taught by two political scientists of which one is an expert in behavior and the other is in game theory. The focus is on understanding human nature rather than manipulating human behavior.

CONCLUSION

There was a time when intelligence, whatever that meant, was key to effective management. But as humankind became more knowledgeable, the realization dawned that there is more to effective management than intelligence only. Emotional ability was considered to be the other important factor. However experience taught otherwise and it was found that smart operators could manipulate emotions of others with their communicative and acting skills, like what the politicians do. Thus it now boils down to integrity, values and ethics- the three essentials for effective management. Poverty of character, poverty of integrity, poverty of values and ethics are creating more problems than anything else. If we need to reinvent Management education, we need to focus on these competencies which will

determine the success or failure of all other competencies. How to do these? Not easy to find out but there are examples to suggest that learning from lives of leaders with proven integrity has great inspirational value and often influences personality. The content of the course must include a sizable section on life and time of such personalities. Character building must be emphasized along with technical competence development. Management needs to be redefined and contours of Management education must be redrawn. Systems are only as good or bad as the basic ingredient, the human being, constituting it. If this is spurious, system cannot be perfect. And if this is perfect you would not need a system. The focus needs to shift from efficient systems to

ethical practices.

REFERENCES

- Gelles D, Miller Claire C (2017), Business Schools Now Teaching #Me Too, N.F.L. Protests and Trump, The New York Times December 25, US.
- McCormack Mark H (1984), What they don't teach you at Harvard Business School, Collins, Great Britain.
- Pathak P, et. al. (2014), Reinventing the Society- The search for a paradigm Macmillan, New Dehli.
- Pathak P, (1995), Do MBAs deliver results, The Economic Times September 25, New Delhi.
- Pathak P, (2010), Principles of Management, Zeitgeist Asia, Volume 3, No 1- July, New Delhi.