

# An Indian MBA program - Context, Content and Confidence!

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## Abstract

In its 100+ year history, the MBA program has evolved on many dimensions and has remained unchanged in some areas. There appears from the experience of African, Chinese and Indian management education that there is need to balance the objective and functional area focused western paradigm with a more humane and subjective paradigm of the east. There is also strong evidence that making the program culturally relevant is important. This study explores the current need to work towards a 'Indian-MBA' and considers the context for this need, the availability of Indian content that is relevant to management education and the mind-set required to build a uniquely Indian MBA, which can be done in phases as all the present business schools follow the western model. Secondary research on experience of other nations attempting to bring local and indigenous content into the MBA program, courses based on Indian content offered within India at various schools, and types and extent of uniquely Indian content useful to management students was taken up as part of this study. The findings clearly indicate a lot of local and useful content being available and many universities already offering different courses based on Indian content. The future needs the confidence among faculty, academic administrators and regulators to offer uniquely Indian courses and soon a uniquely Indian MBA.

**Keywords:** Ancient Wisdom, MBA, Management Education, MBA Curriculum, MBA Content, Management Courses, Self-management

## Introduction

“Whatever sphere of the human mind you may select for your special study, whether it be language or religion or mythology or philosophy, whether it be laws or customs, primitive art or primitive science, everywhere you have to go to India, whether you like it or not, because some of the most valuable and instructive materials in the history of man are treasured in India and in India only.”

-(Müller, 1883)

In recent years India has evolved as important part of the global economy with many Indian multinational companies having come into being. Management education in India has also grown tremendously with the many IIM's, Central, State and Private Universities, as well as AICTE approved independent management schools, all offering the MBA or its equivalent PGDM programs. Indian business has acquired substantial business experience which can replace the western

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text books and case studies which dominate the Indian MBA programs. Is a uniquely Indian MBA program curriculum and delivery possible? Is it needed? This study specifically explores the context and need for Indian management schools to bring more local and indigenous content, the availability of content and the lack of it in an academic friendly format, and the prerequisites to have the confidence among faculty and others to offer courses based on local content.

## Context

Management education has over its 100 year existence gone through many iterations, while some

components have remained unchanged, much has changed based on new knowledge as well as new environments.

In a recent book on the history of management education, one IIM professor concludes that “The history of management in India is not a story of pursuit of technological efficiencies or profits. Instead, it has been fashioned out of power, the colonizer's power. Sometimes, this has happened by the direct visible invocation of authority to create laws defining the course of management. At other times, power has operated in more subtle and enduring ways by influencing perceptions of what counts as “management” or even “Indian” and simultaneously illegitimizing existing native practices and/or valourising a few ancient texts. Emerging as a part of the imperial efforts of managing a colony, English as a language has remained integral to defining the character of modern western management in India, its contents and constituents. Consequently, the Indian in all the above attempts at Indianizing management outlined above are accessorized to a core western management theory in vogue.....Even though it is common knowledge that traditional practices such as use of jobbers and personal networks continued to be practiced even in contemporary India, modern management in India in its quest to overcome inferiority and become a developed nation has continued to ignore such living traditions! Hardly any conversation has occurred between traditional business practice and modern management.”(Jammulamadaka, 2020).

Western Management philosophy based on western values, beliefs and work ethic has dominated the world ever since the MBA program came into existence. Now, regional and indigenous knowledge systems are being tapped to find solutions for today's management issues. One African Professor Ganiyu (2018) opines that “Western management philosophy and thought have been around for millennia; however, the

supremacy of its concepts and writings has become a subject of criticisms in Africa. There is a huge gap in African management education which calls for redesigning of management curriculum to affirm African social orientation and self-determination that will enable new forms of learning and knowledge required to tackle complex global challenges”. This is true for China, India and other cultures as well.

It is important to realise that transplanting management knowledge from one culture to another may not work as Patel and Schaefer (2009) in their study argues: “An important managerial implication of our study is that it raises questions about the compatibility between management systems and processes created in one context and their impact on ethical behaviours in another. Consider the example of codes of ethics. .... We suggest that ethical codes created in the context of one cultural pattern (whether at national, organisational or another level) are unlikely to be accepted by the employees and to be implemented if transplanted into a different cultural pattern”

One can draw parallels to management education in Africa for India. In a book about indigenisation of management curriculum in Africa, the editors concluded among other things that “Business schools and managers could find ways to adapt their courses, management practices and marketing strategies to incorporate the uniqueness of African markets identified in the book. .... In the chapter on indigenous financial management, the author identified Ubuntu as 'rich with consideration for compassion and communality' and this will help businesses that incorporate its principles to have competitive advantages in African markets..... The editors and contributors of this book advocate for the development of case studies by business schools on the indigenous management practices in Africa..... Thus, aligning management teaching and practice with African way of life and socio-economic realities will ensure the rapid socio-

economic development of the continent” (Uzo and Meru, 2018). The same can be said about India, in fact more vehemently. Unique business practices, cultural mores, knowledge abound in a civilization that has a history of 3000 yrs. of international trade, many can offer interesting solutions to management problems today apart from drawing management practices to be based on relevant culture, beliefs, and ethos.

In an article focussed on exhorting indigenous theory development and local industrial research in management, authors Panda and Gupta (2007) states “academic scholars in institutions in the domain of business management education need to disseminate contextually relevant knowledge amongst the current and future corporate executives (current students of business management). They also need to take a step forward and collaborate with corporate executives to understand the problems they are grappling with. That would help the academic community to develop relevant and context specific indigenous knowledge, including theories, concepts and frameworks, which further need to be converted into workable knowledge and disseminated in the forms of guide books amongst the corporate executives, which would then be tested for 'relevance' in the field. Absence of such an effort in the past can be seen in the coverage of reading materials in various Business Schools in India. Most business schools keep on prescribing either Indian editions of American and British text books or books by Indian authors in a predominant western tradition”

Prof Sanjoy Mukerjee of IIM Shillong in his article (Mukherjee, 2019) writes “In the wake of all-pervasive globalization and the triumph of capitalism and consumerism, education and especially dominant mainstream management education in its structured and conventional form, has responded by churning out 'products' equipped to combat the aggressive competition under the

demands of the forces of the market. Business schools thus have become more like the assembly line of a manufacturing behemoth where the thrust on quantity has overshadowed the quest for quality and human excellence. Excessive predominance of the analytical, logical and quantitatively oriented left brain activity has led to a certain level of numbing of the creative, intuitive and holistic right brain development”. He then goes on to explain in detail what one can learn from Noble Laureate Rabindranath Tagore's experiments with education which may be useful for management education and includes concepts such as Holistic Education for Modern Management (including learning from nature), Development of Emotional and Aesthetic Faculties, Exalted Model of Man (the spiritual being), Liberal Arts and Management, Social Responsibility and Inclusive Thinking, Engagement in Human Values and Ethics, Space for Silence and Solitude as well as Sustainability. While the author has chosen important points of difference from the common westernised management education, strong examples and references to each of these connecting them with Rabindranath Tagore would have made it a stronger article for the western audience. Adding the man making aspects of 'Indian Management' to the management tools emphasised by western management education is likely to create well rounded, ethical leaders for India and the world.

In a comprehensive article on management education in India, Panda (2015) states that many committees set up to look at management education in India have found the need to contextualize and develop local content as one of the critical issues. In the article he states “The challenges ahead for business schools in India, as identified by many of these committees are:

- a. need to promote research culture
- b. need to develop the quality of faculty in various business schools
- c. need to develop and use course materials

relevant to Indian context.

All these factors seem to have affected the quality of education imparted in business schools in India. Without valid and tested management theories that fit the Indian context, business education and schools in India may lose their relevance..... Contextualisation of management education is particularly important as cultural roots of non-western societies, including India are distinctly different from the Western cultures. A deep knowledge of the local context is critical.” Panda and Gupta (2007) have also urged scholars in India to develop indigenous organisation theories that captures the essence and nuances of the context of organisations in India. The need for course material relevant to Indian context has been identified as an important missing component for many decades now, however, research has been insufficient, interest of professors and educational administrators, and students has been limited as borrowing from the west is generally fast, inexpensive and adds some bling. Unfortunately, there is no coherent body of knowledge called 'Indian management' or 'Bharatiya Management' till recently. Independent researchers have done work all of which is not available under one umbrella. Indian management has something really unique and rich to offer apart from knowledge that is relevant to the context.

“Management thinking today, based in neoliberalism, gears economies, businesses, and whole societies toward constant material growth and achievement of wealth, defined as monetary or financial wealth. In terms of management learning, the dominance of the managerialist/capitalist ideology reinforces existing dominance structures that have long suppressed the voice—and values—of Indigenous peoples. Drawing from work by Indigenous scholars, we focus on the Indigenous wisdom which has the potential to offer a very different form of economy and different sets of managerial values that orient businesses and

other institutions towards fostering relationship, responsibility, reciprocity and redistribution for shared wellbeing..... In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, we argue for a pivot towards recognizing, collaborating with, integrating, and renewing management and business school mind-sets by incorporating Indigenous wisdom to build a world in which all—including non-human beings—can flourish” (Pio & Waddock, 2021). While this excerpt is not specifically about India, it is about indigenous wisdom, which is a strength for India and needs to come to the fore in business schools.

The context for an Indian MBA goes beyond a simple cultural fit, it offers much needed opportunities for hitherto unheard yet useful voices. “Indigenous business education recognises that the concepts and practices of business education, whether at under- or postgraduate levels, can only be of benefit when they are anchored in the social architecture of the community, people, processes, structures and technologies it professes to serve. Indigenous business education, therefore, must reflect and support development for Indigenous peoples as scholars, managers and community. In particular, it must respond to the contextualised / localised needs of the communities in which it is practiced. Against this context, postcolonial thinking becomes very useful for the authentic articulation of Indigenous voice in business education” (Pearson & Chatterjee, 2010; Fitzgibbons & Humphries, 2011; Ruwhiu, 2014).

America is also looking at indigenous knowledge to bolster management education. “The Alaska Native Knowledge Network (2008) has a suite of principles, which could be usefully adapted and applied in management education contexts. Some examples of these principles that are directly useful to management education are as follows: (a) identify and critically assess dominant paradigms and seek to understand how the “other” is framed, (b) recognize complexities and yet be culturally

inclusive, (c) provide in depth and contextualized understandings of lived cultures, (d) acknowledge and develop sensitivity to cultural protocols and research ethics, and (e) use appropriate pedagogical and assessment strategies that recognize alternative ways and means of knowing. Management educators could also be consciously deliberative about how they build capabilities of those finishing management degrees to be (a) critically aware of and able to deconstruct their own cultural situatedness, (b) value all forms of knowledge, (c) understand Indigenous cultures, and (d) practice appropriate professional skills” (Nursey-Bray and Haugstetter, 2010).

According to Kirkbride (1992) “The essence of traditional Chinese culture can be said to reside in the philosophical traditions of Confucianism and Taoism which continue to underpin Chinese values and behaviour, despite the effects of geographical movement and changing political systems. There has also been increasing empirical work on Chinese values and the psychology of the Chinese. .... we have attempted to extract some key themes which depict central aspects of Chinese value orientations and psychological processes. These are: harmony, conformity, power distance, collectivism, "face", and shame”..... Thus Chinese cultural values affect Chinese managerial behaviour and thus limit the transferability of western managerial practice. Finally, at the cognitive level we may suggest, following Redding, that Chinese managers conceptualize managerial-related notions (such as causality and time) differently from managers in the West..... As we have argued, Chinese cultural values also affect the content of training and development processes and thus set limits to the export of western managerial techniques, practices and processes”. India has its own values and philosophy which may be similar to the other eastern cultures, yet different. For example, Sustainability, Dharma, Inner management, and acceptance are some uniquely Indian themes.

The context for an Indian MBA is about the need for the program to adapt to the differences in culture, business practices, wisdom, and beliefs. India has unique business models and geography which also calls for more local content in the management programs. Another aspect of context is that management as a discipline, appears to find that a greater emphasis is needed in the man making aspects of the curriculum whether it is values, ethics, or skills. In this area Indian content may offer some interesting insights and solutions.

### **East and West**

There is a definite context for an Indian MBA and with 3000+ institutions offering the MBA program, creating managers for India and the world, the need is to look at the content for such programs. It is evidently clear that while indigenous content is necessary, there is a need to blend it with the popular and well established western concepts developed over the recent 100-200 years.

There is growing realisation that while there is an 'Indian way', it is a necessary to synthesize it with the western way to get the best results in a globalised world. Sapre (2010) states that “The debate over tradition and Westernization is examined against the background of India's exposure to Western ideas through its system of higher education. To realize the potential of management, a shift is proposed from the predominantly centralized, bureaucratic model of educational administration to a managerial-professional model that would synthesize Western and indigenous perspectives. Attempts to discover the 'Indian-ness' of Indian management are reviewed. The concept of leadership is examined in terms of Western theories and compared with the traditional view projected in Indian scriptures. The recent shift in Western management thought is reviewed in terms of its promise for a synthesis with the Eastern perspective”.

According to Du and Chang (2012), Global MBA programs should include a focus on the compatibilities between Western teaching approaches and Eastern thinking. In this way, tensions and contradictions between “foreign” and “local” thoughts and practices will be minimized.

The need to decolonise the curriculum has been much discussed in management literature however, the need to blend the western concepts with local ideas has also found place and emphasis in literature. “Redesigning management curricula requires significant paradigm shift towards the expansion of capabilities founded on knowledge development instead of transmission of management idea that lacks practical basis. Thus, redesigning management curricula should not only be culture sensitive, it must be acceptable by the society they are meant to serve. Therefore, both academics and business practitioners should actively embrace the campaign towards management curriculum renewal as an avenue to expedite processes that open up opportunities for decolonising the content of management curriculum” (Ganiyu, 2018).

“The West has taught us how to organise efficiently using technological innovations like information technology and bio-technology in a market economy. The East however advocates a holistic approach with respect to human happiness through a balanced view on environmental protection and distribution of purchasing power to avoid the disaster implied in the Western model...In view of the above we need to modify our Management Education curriculum..... Such a curriculum will then combine the Best of the East and the West by simultaneous development of the left and right side of the brain resulting in a breed of new generation managers to meet the challenges of the new millennium.” (Chowdhury, 2000).

Dr. Sankaran's study (Sankaran, 2007) on the impact of culture on TQM implementation is one of

the articles that discusses some differences with the popular western ways. His paper has argued against the conventional wisdom in TQM literature that hierarchy is not conducive for TQM implementation and shown how in the Indian context, hierarchy, operationalised through the guru-shishya relationship based on the nurturance of subordinates can aid the learning orientation of organisational members and facilitate TQM implementation. Further, paper argues that the implementers of TQM in India need to appreciate the finer dynamics of hierarchy and collectivism so as not to implant a western model in an Indian situation.

Dr. Jai B.P. Sinha has worked in the area for a long time and has written a book entitled Culture and Organizational Behaviour (Sage Texts). He talks about the advantage of greater context sensitivity among Indians and the confluence of Western and Indian cultural influences. “the heightened sensitivity of Indians to the people, the time, and the ecology in the choice of their behaviour enables them to use both traditional social and western values selectively. Thus, social as well as organisational behaviour manifestly appear to be inconsistent and contradictory, but they are adaptive. The traditional social values often get priority over the contemporary western values in affecting behaviour. However, in certain contexts, the latter may function as a primary mode sidelining the salience of the traditional values. This holds a promise that Indian organisations can meet the challenges in the increasingly competitive Indian business environment..... some of us have been trying to identify the dominant Indian values as a part of our plan to understand the impact of Indian culture on organisational behaviour. Our lists of values have varied a bit over time. However, there are five which are common and present a contrast to western values. They are the preference for (a) group embeddedness over individual's autonomy and freedom, (b) hierarchy over egalitarianism, (c) personalised in contrast to contractual

relationships, (a) harmony and tolerance rather than confrontation and rational solution of a problem, and (e) discharging one's duty and obligations to family, friends, and relatives rather than making decisions on rights and merits of a case.” (Sinha, 2002).

Dr Sankaran's concept of embedment settles the best way to integrate the western and Indian in a curriculum and is the best last word on the subject. “To be effective and be truly global, Indian scholars have to question the fundamental paradigms on which Western social sciences theories are founded. The need of the hour is synthesis, not scientific dissection to the point of destruction. The spirit of Embedment overcomes dissection and narrow reductionism. It does not view anything from the West as antithetical to Indic thinking; on the other hand, it tries to see how close it is to any of the ideas within the vast array of diverse thoughts and philosophies in India. This would be a way to pre-empt what Malhotra (2011) has observed as “digestion” of Indic ideas by the West. Embedment would also a) familiarize Indian scholars who write in English with their ancient scholarly traditions b) contribute to global scholarship and c) interpret ancient ideas for current times and have a more dynamic relationship between local wisdom traditions and global applicability. The sense of binary contradiction and exclusivity, which is the hallmark of Western scholarship, can and has to be modulated (and even avoided depending on the situation) with Embedment” (Sankaran, 2021).

In a globalised world, especially in India, it is more about the context than if the concept emanated from the west or the east. What better place to bring context into the picture than India, the home of 'Dharma' which places greatest emphasis on 'context' to decide what is right or wrong.

### **Graduate Attributes**

Having seen the context for and the need for a

balance between western and eastern paradigms in an Indian MBA and before getting into the content of such a program, it is worthwhile to consider graduate attributes and program outcomes. This is not the major theme of this article even as a lot of research has been done in this area. It is suffice to consider some research articles and their findings to give a quick orientation to graduate attributes and program outcomes expected from an MBA program.

Today, according to Correia (2014): “A technology revolution combined with globalization and the crossing of cultural frontiers must force higher education to rethink curricula. Employers demand work-ready graduates who can think critically, solve problems, show initiative—and who are entrepreneurial, flexible, and adaptive. Prospective students demand educational programs that offer flexibility plus relevant and applicable content. Thus, contemporary curricular perspectives in higher education need to meet these evolving educational needs. Learning and innovation skills (e.g., creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration), information, media/technology, and life/career skills (e.g., initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, leadership, and responsibility) are at the heart of such a curriculum reconfiguration (The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011). Emerging conceptions of curricula should take into consideration this plethora of demands as a way to face, understand, and evaluate an incessantly changing world”. While this is in the context of higher education in general, it surely applies to Management education in great measure.

An interesting way to look at the key foundations of a business education would be to consider aspects like those listed by Intezari and Pauleen (2014) of New Zealand. They posit: “We first discuss three key factors that fundamentally affect the conduct of business—human, knowledge, and the environment—as well as their characteristics and

interactions. We then argue that managing the interaction between these factors to effectively deal with the complexity and unpredictability of a rapidly changing business world requires the appropriate application of wisdom, in particular ethics in the form of practical, moral, and epistemic virtues. We propose that these three virtues are the link between the three factors and more effective decision-making and action taking in an unpredictable business world.” One cannot but agree, especially since the great Indian epic Bhagwat Gita has a very similar message

Literature is filled with reviews of the MBA curriculum and this has spawned 3-4 generations of MBA curriculum. “Carnall (1995) predicts that the third generation of MBA programs will emerge after the beginning of the twenty-first century. He identifies the main characteristics of third-generation MBA programs as the following: (1) curriculum: a balance between rational/analytical, intuitive, and judgmental approaches; (2) delivery systems: informational integrated delivery systems including action learning, projects, distance learning, and traditional methods; (3) learning and learning context: learning occurring both at universities and at businesses through practice, and the importance of partnership models for multinational learning opportunities; (4) assessment and evaluation: theory-practice, active learning, and focus on skills and competencies in addition to cognitive orientation and quality of international focus. Compared with the first two generations of MBA programs, third-generation MBA programs have more features of the International MBA (IMBA) programs, which emphasize developing business competencies, cultural skills, and a global mind-set as essential for success anywhere in the world.” (Du and Chang, 2012)

Prof T.V. Rao (Rao, 2007) of IIM Ahmedabad lists 25 competencies needed for managers and also those that Indian managers need to hone and those

that they generally already have. The competencies listed based on substantial literature survey of key authors included Character (including integrity or coherence between thought, word and deeds, and commitment), Vision and global thinking, Value driven, Initiative and pro-activity, High energy and activity level, Continuous learning and learning from various sources, Ability to develop juniors and build leadership competencies across the organization or department, Unconventionality and openness to others' ideas, Risk taking and encouraging risks, Creativity, Persistence, Having a teachable point of view, Openness to change and proactively managing change, High degree of self-awareness and focus on self-renewal, Result oriented, Ability to empower, reward, and recognize others continuously, A sense of priority and purpose, Integrating ability, Know when to leave, Bounce back from mistakes, Cultural sensitivity and ability to seek and manage diversity, Communication skills, Social skills dealing with adeptness at inducing desirable response, Interpersonal skills and team work coming out of respect for others and free from biases, and Strategic thinking.

### **An Indian MBA**

Dr.Sankaran's working paper which was published as a book chapter in a book on 'Bharatiya Management' begins with “The purpose of this paper is to outline briefly what the contours of an inclusive management program would be that is more trans-disciplinary in character. What would it be if we were to redesign the entire MBA curriculum and infuse it with more inclusiveness, mindfulness and the basic temper exemplified by Indic temperament? At a basic level, contemporary MBA programs are predicated on 1) micro economic theory of utility maximization and 2) neoclassical theory of the firm etc. This paper is an attempt to argue for a new program design rooted in holism and human consciousness” (Sankaran, 2020). He suggests fundamental changes to the



program as the Indic world view and paradigms are quite different from the western approach. Some examples from his long list of desired thrust within the program include broader aspects like cyclic view of reality, shifting from leader/follower type of leadership to moral and situational leadership, moving from idea of human control towards dharma, understanding of karma and the grand order etc. He also lists some micro concepts like creating the understanding that economies of scale has another dimension of creating problems for some stake holders, sustainability consideration in every decision etc. The list is quite long, however, it is important to understand that there are many who are considering a whole new approach to the basic beliefs and values being created in a MBA program.

The evolution of the Indian MBA might take many years and involve many iterations. The first step could be to incorporate some courses within the present MBA program like many institutions have begun to do. As faculty get greater exposure and deeper understanding of the Indian way, more courses and eventually a whole new program can be designed. The flip side of this step by step approach must also be evaluated. Learning both the western and Indian concepts in connection with building one's managerial personality might cause confusion. A program based entirely on Indian content which is limited in many aspects might create good managers without the toolkit to manage in a globalized world.

Most of the content that is unique to India is in terms of fundamental values, personality, communications, culture and a few unique business models as well. One approach in curriculum design could be to visualize a program that provides an Indian framework for creating an ideal manager in terms of the values, beliefs, and personality, while using the western management methods to provide the managerial toolkit which includes templates, tools, and methods in every

functional area. It is not to say that there are no managerial tools and templates unique to Indian knowledge. Tantrayukti for example provides a comprehensive, refreshingly different template to present an argument.

There is a context for evolving an Indian MBA program and it appears there is substantial content that is readily available even if not curated or repurposed for managers.

## **Content**

The MBA program anywhere in the world has always focussed on the USA for creation of content. USA is the global centre of business which is connected to everywhere, and, it is therefore natural that many innovations and new ways of doing business have emanated from the US. USA has also been the pioneer in offering management programs. The focus of this article is limited to 'Indian' content relevant for management education. 'Indian Content' is not limited to what has been created or curated in India for management education. It covers all the content created in India, knowledge based on Indian ancient and contemporary wisdom from the Vedas to Vivekananda, management practices ancient and contemporary that is unique to India, and contemporary research in India using the western or Indian way of research. Ancient Indian content repurposed and contextualised for management in current times is one interesting and truly valuable knowledge resources for contemporary management anywhere in the world. Indian content suitable for management education has been produced in a large quantity with many Indian, US and far eastern professors conducting research in the last one hundred years. This is part of most management journals and is available as many books, however, it has not been segregated as 'Indian Management' a distinct component of management body of knowledge.

The much revered 'Academy of Management' held

a symposium in 2016. Amar et al. (2016) stated that the symposium was inspired by the theme of the Academy of Management 2016 conference that focused on how to manage organizations, specifically knowledge organizations, meaningfully following the beliefs and time-tested writings of the ancient Indians in their ancient text named The Bhagavad Gita, which although by some accounts as old as from the year 3137 BCE, is still admired globally and guides the personal and work lives of more than a billion people in the world. The symposium aimed at how to perform important management functions of planning, organizing, leading and controlling, and their other ancillary aspects from other disciplines related to business, such as the economics and commerce as they pertain to the management of organizations. The number of books, journal articles on Indian Management and uniquely Indian case studies is humongous already. Most of these are based on ancient wisdom. Contemporary knowledge has been created in reasonable quantity even if not by academicians. Contemporary content is available in books aimed at managers and with faculty used to 'ready to serve' text books with exercises, case-lets and presentations, this appears to many people, like it is not available.

### **Books and Journal Articles**

The number of books with India specific content that can be used to teach management is huge. Sudhakar (2021) has suggested some literature given below that has not made into mainstream MBA curriculum but could prove highly useful.

Indian Business History – A book set by Sri Gurucharan Das (and there are innumerable journal articles by historians, economists, and Sanskrit scholars on this subject)

History of Economics - Shankar Jaganathan

Indian Economics - Bimal Jalan, YV Reddy,

Rachna Singh, Vivek. D and Rupa Subramania, Arvind Subramanian

Indian Psyche for Managers - Sudhir Kakkar, Pavan Verma

Indian Consumers – Where to Find Them and What They Want - Rama Bijapurkar, Santhosh Desai

Advertising and Branding – Ambi Parmeshwaram, Piyush Pande

From discovering the India opportunity to offering the Dharma prerequisite to the world of business - Gurucharan Das

Indian Demography - Indian Market Demographics: The Consumer Classes - S.L. Rao

Indian Society - M.N.Srinivas, C.N.Shankar, Ahuja Ram, Vivek Vaidya, Krishan Khanna, Atanu Dey

Being a Professional Manager - R. Gopalakrishnan, Subroto Bagchi, Prakash Iyer

This is at best a small indicative list and does not cover books on ancient Indian wisdom for Managers, books based on contemporary cases or even important areas like entrepreneurship where number of books abound. A large number of cases for class use have originated in India and have published as independent cases or as part of text books. As the setting is Indian, all such cases address the context to a great extent, albeit restricted to large corporates.

Using such books to create courses will take effort. This will probably call for a collaboration between the authors and professors. Sri R. Gopalakrishnan runs the popular Learning what is not taught (LWNT) course at IIMA and a few other institutes based on his book 'when the penny drops' This course offers anecdotes and helpful real-life experiences most of them from India which are

valuable to management students. The title of the course is a sad reflection of the great divide between theoretical academics and pragmatic practitioners. It is possible to create many courses based on seminal Indian books useful for Indian management students. Many of the authors listed above do offer courses in elite business schools, however, such courses have not been mainstreamed into management education in India. The reasons could range from the authors finding a lack of adequacy among students (*adaequatio rei et intellectus*), professors not approaching to collaborate with them, or authors simply not having the time or interested to give it away for free! More likely reasons are the professors not having enough industry experience to deliver these courses, orthodox university or institute regulations, lack of freedom for the faculty, and not being confident about regulators norms.

Research articles based on Indian ethos or contemporary practices have been published in all management journals over the last 70 years. For example a simple search like 'management + ancient Indian wisdom' on google scholar yielded 1, 72,000 results, assuming that 20-30% may be connected with American Indians, it is still a large number of research papers. Recently efforts to

aggregate all 'Indian Management' content, for example in an online repository like [www.management.cessedu.org](http://www.management.cessedu.org) have been undertaken.

### **Courses**

The MBA program has only one course recently recommended by the regulator AICTE called 'Indian ethos and Business ethics' which has found acceptance and is offered in many universities. This has happened after 2018. While it is true that most content for MBA programs lean heavily on the West for content, there are MBA and other programs offered in Indian universities which have courses based on local content. These courses have the syllabus, text books, and other resources ready, and therefore, it will not be difficult to bring any of these courses into the curriculum of the MBA. This is only a sample of courses as courses with similar titles or many courses from one university have been avoided in the list. The mapping of these to 'graduate attributes' and MBA program outcomes has not been done as the title of the courses and brief contents are reasonably indicative. This is also a good subject for a separate review.

Institution	Course/Program	Contents	Comments
IIMB	Management Paradigms from Bhagavad Gita (MPBG)	Spirituality in Business and Workplace, Perspectives on Leadership and Work, Perspectives on Self-Management, Perspectives on Life and Society	
National Sanskrit University Tirupati	Master in Ancient Indian Management Techniques Program	Courses include Ancient Indian Management Skills, Vedic thoughts on Environmental Awareness and Natural Resource Management, Personnel Management in Indian Philosophic Systems and Upanishads	
ITM University	Mahabharata (lessons in conflict resolution and leadership) _		
Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU)	Indian Ethos and Business Ethics ( AICTE)	Differs significantly between institutions – many versions are available with slight change in title	This course was recommended by AICTE – The regulator for MBA programs in India and most universities have such a course.
S-Vysa University	Holistic Systems of Management	Gunas and spiritual growth, Indian Ethos, HOLSYM	This is a course prepared exclusively by S-Vysa and offered to its MBA students based on home grown content
Azim Premji University	Ramayana and Mahabharata in our times – open elective for PG students	Primarily through film medium	
Delhi University	Indian Strategic Thought	From Vedic times to contemporary India – thoughts on subjects of strategic importance	Part of MA pol Science program
Delhi University and many other universities	Self-Management in the Gita	Cognitive and emotive apparatus, Self-management through devotion	Usually offered in BA Sanskrit and BBA in a few universities across India. Syllabus has minor variations especially in emphasis of topics
Delhi University	Art of Balanced living	Śravaṇa, manana & meditation. Concept of Yoga, jñāna-yoga, dhyāna-yoga, karma-yoga and bhakti-yoga	

University of Calicut	Prachinavaniya for B.Com program	ancient system of trade, commerce and animal husbandry	Other courses include management and Indian heritage, Subhashitas and basic grammar,
University of Calicut	Bhagavatgita and Arthasastra ( state craft and crisis management focus) – Undergraduate course		
XLRI	Indian philosophy and leadership excellence– PGDM program	Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Six systems of thought, Saints and thinkers	
Gujarat Technology University	Indian ethos & human quality development	Indian theory of relationship management - Sama-Dam-Danda-Bhed and New Theories, Indian Guna Theory, Ethical Dimension in Theory K, OSHA Model	
PG Patshala	Indian Perspectives on HQD/HRM		Comprehensive course with video and text content in learning friendly format
PG Pashala	Human Values and Indian ethos/HRM		
PG Patshala	Indian economic history/Culture		
Mumbai University	Indian Management Thought and Practices / BMS 6th Sem	Indian ethos, Personality, spirituality	
University of Mumbai	MA – Leadership Science	Arthashastra of Kautilya, Leadership : Ancient Indian Texts, Philosophers on Leadership (Indian)/	
University of Rajasthan -	Indian management thought and business leaders /BBA		
Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute, Howrah/Ranchi	Spiritual and cultural heritage of India		
NIT Rourkela	Application of Kautilya's Arthasastra in Modern India		
School of Management Sciences – Varanasi	Universal Human Values & Professional Ethics, Management by Indian Ethos		

NPTEL online / IIT Guwahati There are other Universities like Goa University who offer this course in the MA – History programs	Business History of India	Videos and content available online for free	Sadly misses out on ancient business history which is critical and must start from Guilds in India, the silk route till post-independence license raj to be comprehensive
Jiwaji University, Gwalior	Human Values- Elements of Indian Culture /MBA program	History of the civilization, 16 rituals, dharma, artha, kama and moksha, Governance and values	
Indus University/Centre for Indic Studies – Ahmedabad	Indian Models of Economy, Business and Management	Indian economic models, uniquely Indian case studies, Ancient Indian thinking and values about economics and trade	This is an online course. The centre offers many such courses like essentials of Hinduism, Natyashastra etc. Good option for MOOC included in curriculum
L. N. Mishra Institute of Economic Development and Social Change, Patna	Indian ethos and leadership		
Utkal University	Indian culture and heritage- MA history		
Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad	Learning what is not taught ( LWNT	Anecdotes and helpful real-life experiences from a senior corporate executive to stimulate reflection. Covers areas such as, obligation, duty, self-interest, self-awareness and intuitive decision-making in practice	Offered by Sri R.Gopalakrishnan based on his book ‘When the penny drops’ in a few top institutes. It should be possible for others to offer this course with training from the author.

A lot of the content available as journal articles, books, popular articles, syndicated research is not well structured for offering many courses in management schools, however, there is plenty of raw material available which can be structured into course materials. The immediate way to bring courses is to borrow ideas and content from those that are already offering courses based on 'Indian Management'. In the medium term, working with authors to develop courses based on key ideas from different books written for India may be a way. The real need is however, creating more cases and other materials based on management practices in India. Even as the IIM's are creating some cases based on Indian firms, these are aimed at an international

audience and not within the reach of a MBA student from a college affiliated to a government university. The cases also relate to the large corporates and cases about MSME organizations are extremely few. Cases 'unique to India' have never been curated as such and are part of the large body of management literature. There is work to be done with regard to content, however more basic is the need to understand the context for the Indian MBA, understand the available and gaps in content and most importantly have the confidence to launch courses based on Indian context, concepts, and wisdom, that is relevant for management students in India.

## Confidence

The MBA program is offered by different types of institutions; the public universities- Central/State, Private Universities, autonomous colleges, and independent B Schools. Each of these have different reasons for not having the motivation and confidence to add Indian Management courses to the MBA program let alone design an entire program based on Indian content.

Many faculty members today do not have the confidence to design and teach a course based on Indian content because of their own lack of exposure and the big effort needed by the pioneers. Management of Institutions lack the confidence as they are concerned if regulators will be approve, faculty can teach the courses, students and potential students will accept such courses in place of western concepts and not being sure if being different will help or not. The confusion created by politicians in mixing up culture with religion, ethos with religion, religion with community and many such muddles, have restricted the confidence to launch new courses which might be seen as propagating a religion even if it is nowhere near that.

An observation about the Indian education system in general by Altbach (1993) “India is not alone in encountering difficulties in implementing university reform. Many Indians have criticized their academic system for its foreign roots and its inability to become more 'indigenous' (Kaul 1988, p. 21). The fact is, however, that no Third World academic system has discarded the Western model. In many other parts of the Third World, academic institutions have changed less and are more tied to Western models and traditions than is the case in India” This should give management departments and B schools the confidence that even if today we are leaning heavily on the west, it is possible to make it more indigenous. Issues identified by Prof Altbach as those hindering change in higher

education in India include the politics of higher education, structural inertia, domination of expansion, the academic profession, lack of resources, examination system and society/university interface. Many of these are set to be reduced with the flexibility offered by the new education policy and institutions can move towards greater indigenisation of curriculum and content.

Confidence is likely to be lacking because of the strong influence of western education for the last 6-8 generations that has removed any understanding of indigenous knowledge systems or pre-colonial history of trade and commerce of over 2000 years. Bureaucratic regulations, Job oriented system rather than man making due to different pressures, lack of motivation among faculty, short term profit orientation of institution managements, could be some other reasons for being stuck and resistant to change or understanding the need to involve local content in MBA programs. Confidence might be lacking also because sufficient interaction with industry or sufficient literature was not available that pushed institutions to consider Indian content.

Today, in a globalised and extremely competitive world, with the launch of the new education policy in India after nearly four decades, that provides greater flexibility to institutions and the rewriting of history that will bring a sense of pride in everything Indian, confidence is needed to launch and offer Indian Management courses in the MBA programs when curriculum get revised next. The context is demanding, content can be created, curated or repurposed for management education, and confidence is ebbing, going by visible signs of new Indian Management courses becoming available. Mainstreaming Indian Management calls for confidence and cooperation among faculty, managements, regulators and Industry. This is in the interest of the new Indian Management student.

There is a crying context for Indian courses in management, a large amount of content is available

and can be created, the confidence and pride in Indian content is needed to move towards an Indian MBA which based on the new education policy will be welcomed by all regulators.

## Conclusion

The MBA program is evolving everywhere and India is no exception. Literature clearly indicates the opportunities and need for combining the global with the local in the MBA curriculum, both from the point of view of the philosophy and content aspects of the program. From ancient wisdom culled out for management students to contemporary Indian research, case studies and thesis, plenty of content is available even if it is not curated as 'Indian' and converted to traditional 'text books' or academic friendly content. Faculty members need to build the confidence to offer courses based on indigenous content by engaging more with ancient wisdom, culture and contemporary local cases. The National Education Policy 2020 appeals for changes in curriculum which makes programs more culturally relevant, India centric and research based. It is possible to take advantage of the various flexibilities offered in the national education policy 2020, the available content, experience with courses already on offer and work towards an MBA program which is specifically designed for India by creating a band of faculty committed to localise the program.

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