

● ENGAGEMENT MODELS FOR NEW-GENERATION B-SCHOOL STUDENTS

From teacher to manager

The internet has led to democratisation of information, posing a challenge to the authority of an educator as the perennial source of knowledge

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THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE with millennial kids is a short attention span. A plethora of media and technology alternatives has substantially reduced the degree of attention that a management student should have for a professional course. However, the blame cannot be put entirely on students. The larger part of the failure can be attributed to the way management education has evolved over the years in India and elsewhere. Management education, as a discipline, demands a different pedagogical approach than both social and basic science subjects. This education has evolved from both shop floor and boardroom practices, and much of the theory has application orientation.

Management education warrants able competency in multiple and yet opposite dimensions like critical thinking and problem solving, data analysis and interpretation, and scientific planning and quantitative applications on one hand, and communication skills, leadership and team building skills, human relation competencies, and other softer aspects of the business on the other hand. While a management student is expected to manage business with profit by reducing costs, improving productivity and applying scientific principles, she also needs to take people along, work alongside individuals with divergent views and opinions, and perform under stressful organisational and competitive environments. While the former demands a scientific temper based on logic and reasoning, the latter expects students to explore the softer side of humanity. Effective curricular planning should bring a balance

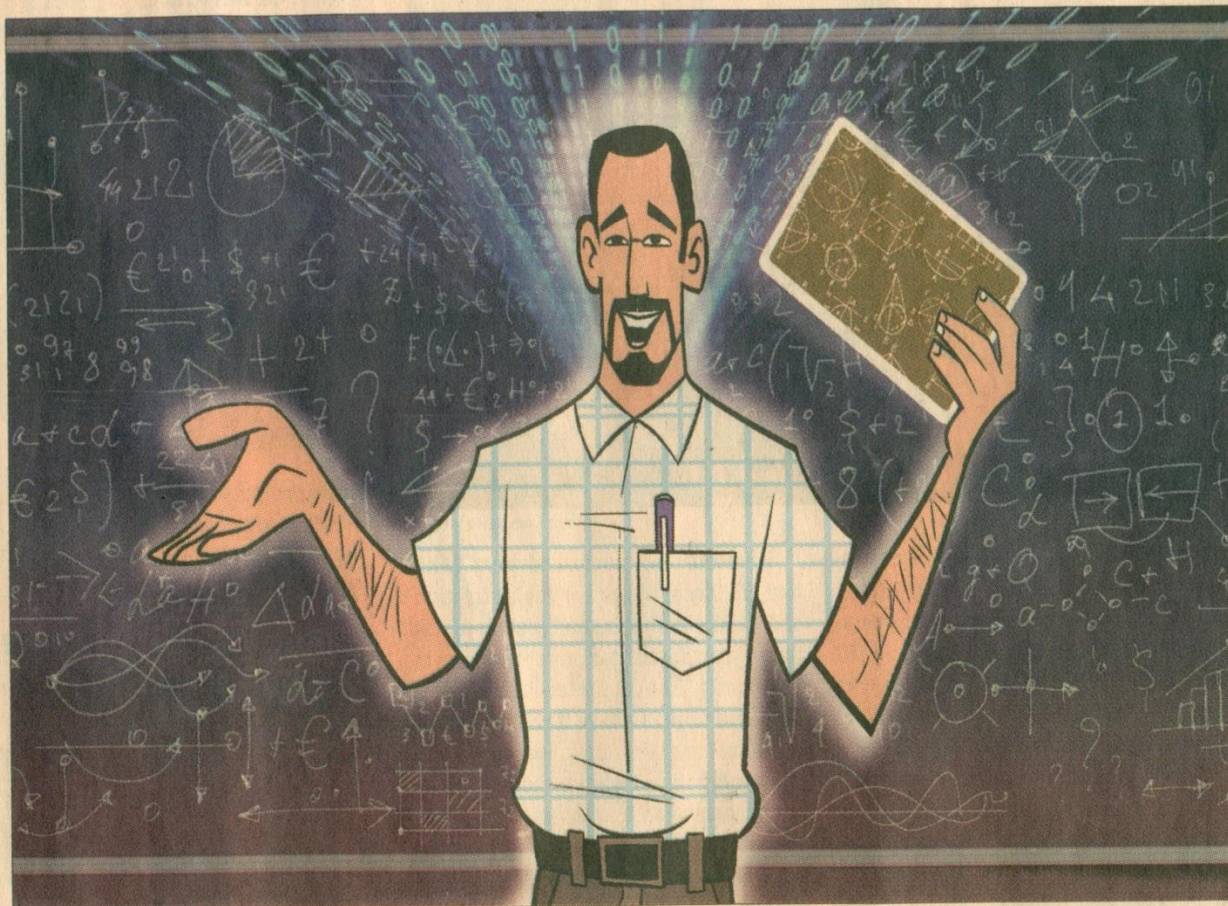


Illustration: SHYAM

between these two contrasting aspects of management education.

To add to this is an eternal conflict between pursuit of materialistic gains defined in terms of salary and perks, and ethical decision making. Most white collar crimes of today are the brainchild of management students. So, it's a late realisation that management education is caught in this conflict.

Volume and value problems

Indian management education has its own inherited problems of volume and value. Loosely defined regulatory framework and lack of governance by statutory authorities have led to mushrooming of business schools in the country. More often than not, these schools admit students even without mapping their managerial competency. The grossly undervalued outcome from Indian business schools has flooded the market with

substandard and unemployable manpower. Students are unemployable, parents have paid huge capitation fees to 'buy' these courses and industry has not benefited from this qualified but non-competent workforce, leading to overall decline in the brand image of 'MBA' as a product. Market forces have played antithesis to a successful and meaningful management education brand in India. The speed of death of business schools in many parts of the country is comparable to the penetration rate of their growth. So, we can fairly say that the market has squared up.

Problems for established schools

We have bigger issues to handle even for surviving and excelling business schools. Scarcity of faculty resources, unavailability of contemporary pedagogy, and inaccessible libraries and other online learning resources have crippled programme delivery. Though

promoters take care of the hard and visible resources, there is a serious lacking on the softer resources that otherwise would have enriched the learning experience of students. The scenario looks bleak, with lapses in governance and regulatory framework, structural problems in design of curriculum, and imbalances in hard and soft part of content. Do we foresee a change in this picture?

The answer is both 'yes' and 'no'. While many traditional business schools still continue with an obsolete pedagogy and try to only deliver 'do' (skill) part of the course, a handful of them have moved ahead of the curve, and tried to bring in desired changes in their curriculum and approach towards management education.

The focus is slowly moving from 'doing' to 'knowing' and finally towards 'being'. This framework is likely to guide management education into the future. While 'doing' takes

care of skill-based courses that help students understand and apply key functional learning at the workplace, 'knowing' brings in larger social perspective to management curriculum. The business manager is seen in a larger social context and is expected to understand the sociocultural context on which business decisions are made. She is expected to know about social change, climate change, be sensitive to sustainability of business decision making, bring in changes to reduce diversity at workplace, and be sensitive to the larger social and political context in which businesses survive and managers make decisions. Management education is moving from being narrowly focused on functional courses to multidisciplinary courses, to create a logical and creative problem solver on the foundation of a symbiotic social, environmental and geopolitical background.

The most difficult task is the 'being' part. While value system and ethical orientations are well-developed within family and social settings, and during school education, bringing a desired change and inculcating higher moral values along with leadership skills is an uphill task for management educators. How do we bring in those changes that transform an ordinary person to an exceptional human being and a business leader is the most interesting and intriguing challenge for management educators.

The internet versus tutor

The internet has led to democratisation of information, posing a challenge to the authority of a faculty as the 'perennial source of knowledge'. Students have quicker access to information than professors—the velocity, veracity and volume of information available to students is unique. This has posed another challenge for management educators: to help students not only access this information, but also help them synthesise it and assimilate key learnings. This is bringing interesting experiments in terms of massive open online courses, flip classrooms, experiential learning, self-paced learning, social outreach programmes and team-based learning. There is no doubt that management education is undergoing a facelift, but what matters more is the speed at which such changes should embrace this domain and the degree of impact that it should bring in to business in particular and society in general.

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