

Does Management Education Make Students Better Actors? A Longitudinal Study of Change in Values and Self Monitoring

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Abstract: The study used a sample of 138 full time MBA students over 3 years to show that management education enhances self monitoring and importance of self-oriented values and reduces the importance of others-oriented values. The effect on both sets of values remains significant even after controlling for self monitoring.

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Management education is traditionally seen as a means to facilitate learning of job-related behaviours in order to improve performance. The focus has been on teaching facts, modifying attitudes and behaviours, and developing skills. Attention has been devoted to analysing whether knowledge that is imparted in business schools should focus more on theory or on applications (Huff, 2000). Human values as a component of management education continue to be an ignored domain of investigation. The emphasis of education has generally been more on knowledge production than on value inculcation. Values have been fairly ignored by management education programs, most probably because values in general are relatively more difficult to influence or modify. Values, however, form the core of our personality, and influence the choices we make, the people we trust, the appeals we respond to, and the way we invest our time and energy (Posner and Schmidt, 1992). It is necessary that values be given their due importance within the function of management education.

The changing environment that business schools face has made it necessary to have a look at the impact of education on students (Rynes and Trank, 1999). There has however been a shortage of empirical studies in this area, though there is widespread recognition of the importance of strengthening the collegiate business education environment (Pearce II, 1999). Frost and Fukami (1997) in their introduction to the special research forum on teaching effectiveness in the organizational sciences called for more empirical research on the educational process. The study reported in this paper looked at the change in values and self monitoring of full time MBA students over the entire period of two years of the program. It is only by studying how management education currently affects the values and self monitoring of students that we can deliberate upon the objectives of management education in the future.

VALUES

Rokeach (1973: 5) defined a value as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence.” A belief concerning a desirable mode of conduct is an instrumental value and a belief concerning a desirable end-state of existence is a terminal value. If a person values freedom as an end-state of existence, it means he or she believes that freedom is preferable to slavery. Rokeach considered terminal values to be of two kinds - those that are self-focused called personal values, and those that are others-focused called social values. Instrumental values are also of two kinds - those which when violated arouse pangs of conscience or feelings of guilt for wrongdoing called moral values, and those which when violated lead to feelings of shame about personal inadequacy called competence or self actualisation values. Building further on Rokeach's definition, Schwartz (1992) defined values as desirable trans-situational goals, which vary in importance and serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity.

Values can be looked upon as being hierarchical in nature, leading to the idea of a value system. Rokeach (1973: 5) defined a value system as “an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance.” A set of rank ordered values is called a value system. Values are heavily intertwined and therefore looking at a person's values separately and independently of one another cannot meaningfully explain attitudes and behaviours. That a person values happiness does not say much that is unique about that person, for most human beings value happiness. What matters is how much a person values happiness in comparison with the other things that he or she values. If one knows that a person values happiness more than self respect, one is able to have a more accurate idea of that person. Only the rank ordering of values or the value system can capture the unique value configuration of an individual. It is not the values by themselves that matter, but it is the hierarchical value system that matters (Rokeach and Ball-Rokeach, 1989). Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) summarised various perspectives and concluded that most of the definitions have some similar themes. According to them, values are (a) concepts or beliefs, (b) about desirable end-states or behaviors, (c) that transcend specific situations, (d) guide selection or evaluation of behaviour and events, and (e) are ordered by relative importance.

Schwartz (1992) developed a comprehensive theory about the content and structure of value domains. He identified ten different value types, each characterised by its own motivational goal: universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, security, power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation and self direction. He also found that some value types were complementary to each

other, while others were in conflict. Values are the most abstract of the social cognitions, and hence they serve as prototypes from which attitudes and behaviours are manufactured. Cognitions, and therefore values, also guide individuals about which situations to enter and about what they should do in those situations. Within a given situation, the influence flows from abstract values to midrange attitudes to specific behaviours. This sequence is called value-attitude-behaviour hierarchy (Homer and Kahle, 1988). Bardi and Schwartz (2003) investigated the relations of values to behaviours. They found that some values such as stimulation and tradition related strongly to the behaviours that express them; some like hedonism, power, universalism, and self direction values related moderately; and some others like security, conformity, achievement, and benevolence values related only marginally. They suggested that these differences in value-behaviour relations could be because of normative pressures to perform certain behaviours. The findings also imply that values motivate behaviour, but the relation between values and behaviours is partly obscured by norms set by the society. Moreover, in specific situations, only a subset of values is made active, those that are seen as relevant to the salient alternative actions. For example, valuing equality might favour donating to charity and oppose purchasing a luxury item, whereas valuing a comfortable life might have the reverse influence. Not all activated values have equally strong impacts on behaviour. The strength of impact depends on importance of the value in the person's hierarchy. The choice of a behaviour alternative is guided by the interplay of the influences of the activated values. It is the relative importance for a person of the values favourable to and opposed to a behaviour that guides action (Schwartz and Inbar-Saban, 1988).

Schwartz and Bilsky (1990) did a survey based on Rokeach's 36-value English version, which lent evidence for the universality of elements of a theory of the content and structure of human values. Value systems have been found to predict several outcomes including shopping selections (Homer and Kahle, 1988) and weight loss (Schwartz and Inbar-Saban, 1988). Values influence job choice decisions, job satisfaction, and commitment (Judge and Bretz, 1992). Blickle (2000) found that work values predicted the frequency of use of influence strategies measured one year later. The values of achievement, associates (defined as "work in which you are one of the gang"), creativity, intellectual stimulation, and variety were positively related to rational persuasion. In addition, career and management (defined as "have authority over others") were positively related to pressure strategy; prestige was positively related to ingratiation; and career and prestige were positively related to upward appeal. Since management is essentially an influencing activity, values would predict managerial choices.

Several studies have demonstrated empirically how values affect personal and organizational effectiveness (Meglino and Ravlin, 1998; O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991). Perceptual organization plays a role in linking values to choice behaviour (Ravlin and Meglino, 1987). Values influence the selection and interpretation of external stimuli, and thus affect one's perceptual process. The future attitudes and behaviours of MBA graduates would therefore depend on their value systems when they leave business schools. It is thus worthwhile looking at how management education changes the value systems of MBA students.

Changing Value Systems

Value systems tend to form early in life and are very stable. Major longitudinal studies of values have in general showed their remarkable stability (Rokeach and Ball-Rokeach, 1989). Lubinski, Schmidt and Benbow (1996) observed that in a sample of gifted adolescents, values were remarkably stable over a 20-year period. Dominant value orientation either remained unchanged, or moved to an adjacent value. Oliver (1999) found that the overall personal value structure of the American manager did not change in three decades.

Values are enduring beliefs, and therefore they are very difficult to change. One who values obedience is unlikely to start believing that it is preferable to be disobedient than be obedient. Value systems, however, can be changed with relatively greater ease. Change in value system requires rearrangement of the relative importance given to various values. For example, one who values pleasure more than self respect could be convinced over time that self respect is more important than pleasure. Studies have demonstrated that the relative importance of different values to a person can be changed (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz and Inbar-Saban, 1988). Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach and Grube (1984) made an effort to change the rankings of the equality, freedom, and aesthetics values, by utilising a broadcast television program. Rankings of the targeted values changed for those who watched, thus suggesting that adult socialisation, such as that which occurs through the media, or through organizational processes, can in fact change values in a meaningful way.

The method of value self confrontation can be used to change peoples' value systems and thereby their behaviour. This method has been applied successfully to influence such behaviours as contributing money to social welfare programs and supporting anti-pollution measures. Schwartz and Inbar-Saban (1988) demonstrated that people's behaviour could be changed by changing the value priorities underlying that behaviour. Using experimental manipulation, they found that an increase in the relative importance of wisdom over happiness (both terminal values) resulted in a significant amount of weight loss. The first step in value self confrontation is to get people to become aware of their value systems.

Learning that there is a contradiction between one's value priorities and one's ideal self conception as a moral or competent person gives rise to self dissatisfaction with one's value rankings. The ideal self conception is based on the value system of a positive reference group. In order to reduce self dissatisfaction, people change their value systems and consequently their value related attitudes and behaviours. They try to make these elements more consistent with the self conceptions as moral and competent persons that they have learned to prefer.

It is thus possible to change value systems over time using an appropriate intervention. The MBA program is one such intervention. Management education revolves around social issues and interpersonal relationships in a way that could conflict with business students' pre-existing values (Rynes and Trank, 1999). The MBA program, besides exposing students to a wide range of perspectives, also adopts an application oriented approach that could result in students questioning some of their existing beliefs. The two years of education as an MBA student would therefore result in a change in value system. Lamsa, Turjanmaa, and Sakkinen (2002) found that the values of students change during business education in a masculine direction. Krishnan (2003) found that self-oriented values like a comfortable life and pleasure become more important and others-oriented values like being helpful and polite become less important because of completing a two year residential full time MBA program. Hence, I hypothesised:

Hypothesis 1: Management education would enhance the importance given to self-oriented values - social power, an exciting life, daringness, capability, and preserving my public image.

Hypothesis 2: Management education would reduce the importance given to others-oriented values - sense of belonging, politeness, family security, loyalty, honouring of parents and elders.

SELF MONITORING

Self monitoring entails control of one's expressive behaviour and regulation of one's identity primarily for others guided by situational cues to social appropriateness (Gangestad and Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1974). Self monitoring is the ability to manage one's internal states, impulses and emotions so that they do not interfere with one's goals. Self control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability and innovation are emotional competencies that are based on self monitoring, which is also referred to as self regulation or emotional management. Emotional management involves regulation of expressed behaviour so that it is socially appropriate (Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Snyder, 1974; Sosik and Megerian, 1999: 369). Self monitoring and public self consciousness are the bases of the internal drive for a manager to exhibit extra-role behaviours that are valued by organizations. Concern for one's public image is likely to enhance the frequency of a manager exhibiting organizational citizenship behaviour.

Allen, Weeks and Moffitt (2005) found that self monitoring moderated the relationship between turnover intentions and turnover behaviour such that the relationship between turnover intentions and turnover behaviour was stronger for low self monitors. Noel, Michaels and Levas (2003) found that self monitoring was related to the choice of major of undergraduate business students. Accounting students were low on self monitoring, while marketing students were high on self monitoring, with the MIS students in between.

Mehra, Kilduff and Brass (2001) used data from a high-technology firm to show that chameleon-like high self monitors were more likely than true-to-themselves low self monitors to occupy central positions in social networks. Also, for high self monitors, longer service in the organization related to the occupancy of strategically advantageous network positions, and self monitoring and centrality in social networks independently predicted individuals' workplace performance. Kilduff and Day (1994) tracked 139 MBA graduates for five years and demonstrated significant main effects of self monitoring on career mobility. The chameleon-like high self monitors were more likely than the true-to-themselves low self monitors to change employers, move locations and achieve cross-company promotions. Of the 72 individuals who did not change employers, those high on self monitoring obtained more internal promotions than those low on the variable. A management education that wishes to produce successful managers is likely to enhance self monitoring in MBA students.

Hypothesis 3: Management education would enhance self monitoring.

Hypothesis 4: The impact of management education on values will become non significant after controlling for change in self monitoring.

METHOD

Data for this study was collected from two consecutive batches of students of a two year residential MBA program at a prominent business school in India. The students were requested to answer a survey to measure their values and self monitoring twice while entering the program, and again while graduating from the program after two years. The total number of entering students in a year was 130, and initial data was collected from 258 students from the two batches together. Only 138 students from the two batches together answered the survey at the time of graduation. The final usable matched sample size was 138. Of the 138 students, 75 students specialised in human resources (HR) and 63 students specialised in functions other than HR.

Measures

I used Schwartz's (1992) Value Survey for measuring values. This is a widely used instrument for measuring values. It has a list of 56 values. Each value is presented along with a brief definition in parenthesis and respondents are asked to rate the

values as guiding principles in their life using a nine-point scale: -1 - opposed to my values; 0 - not important; ...3 - important; ...6 - very important; 7 - of supreme importance. The Value Survey has been found to be both reliable and valid. All the values are socially desirable ones, but no significant relationship has been found between value rankings and the tendency to respond in a socially desirable manner.

I used the 13-item revised self monitoring scale of Lennox and Wolfe (1984). This scale measures only sensitivity to the expressive behaviour of others and ability to modify self presentation. This avoids the drawbacks of Snyder's (1974) scale by focusing on a narrower definition of the construct. Responses were recorded on a six-point scale: 0 - certainly always false; 1 - generally false; 2 - somewhat false, but with exceptions; 3 - somewhat true, but with exceptions; 4 - generally true; 5 - certainly always true.

Data Analysis

The differences in value ratings between the time of entering and the time of leaving the MBA program were analysed. I computed each individual's total score on all value items and divided by the total number of items (56). This is called the MRAT. I centered the score of each of the values for an individual around that individual's MRAT by subtracting MRAT from the value rating. These centered value scores were used in all the analyses. I calculated the change in rating for each value over two years and tested if the change was significantly different from zero. Similarly, I calculated the change in self monitoring scores over two years and tested if the change was significantly different from zero.

RESULTS

For each value, I calculated the difference score for each respondent by taking the simple difference between the ratings given by the respondent for that value while entering and while leaving the program. I calculated the difference score for self monitoring also similarly. I did a paired sample t-test for each value and for self-monitoring separately to see if the difference score was significantly different from zero. The t-test results are given in Table 1. Ratings given by students increased significantly over the two years in the case of all the five self-oriented values - social power, an exciting life, daringness, capability, preserving my public image. Students also gave significantly less importance to all the five others-oriented values - sense of belonging, politeness, family security, loyalty, honouring of parents and elders than what they gave two years earlier. Self monitoring also increased over the period of two years. Thus, Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 were supported.

TABLE 1
Matched Sample T-Tests

	Pre		Post		
	M	SD	M	SD	t
Self monitoring	3.23	0.50	3.42	0.52	***3.69
Others-Oriented Values					
Sense of belonging	0.55	1.29	0.16	1.31	** -2.89
Politeness	0.58	1.11	0.21	1.07	** -3.33
Family security	1.28	1.06	0.85	0.99	*** -3.95
Loyalty	0.82	1.18	0.48	0.98	** -3.22
Honouring of parents and elders	0.89	1.07	0.67	0.90	* -2.06
Self-Oriented Values					
Social power	-1.73	1.93	-1.12	1.83	***3.59
An exciting life	-0.33	1.40	0.07	1.14	**2.77
Daringness	-0.86	1.46	-0.48	1.33	**2.72
Capability	0.86	1.17	1.08	0.87	+1.73
Preserving one's public image	-1.07	1.82	-0.63	1.50	**3.08

† = p < .10. * = p < .05. ** = p < .01. *** = p < .001.

Role of SelfMonitoring

I did an analysis of variance of the value scores across the pre and post data. I then did an analysis of covariance of the value scores across the pre and post data after adjusting for the common variance between the value scores and self monitoring. Table 2 presents the results of the two sets of analyses. Adjusting for the common variance between the value scores and self monitoring did not have any significant effect on the difference in the value scores between the pre and post data. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

TABLE 2

Analysis of Covariance Controlling for Self Monitoring

	ANOVA	ANCOVA
	F	F
Others-Oriented Values		
Sense of belonging	*4.26	†2.48
Politeness	**7.75	*3.86
Family security	*6.16	*3.07
Loyalty	*6.33	*3.55
Honouring of parents and elders	*6.14	*3.64
Self-Oriented Values		
Social power	**8.23	**4.83
An exciting life	**7.01	*3.53
Daringness	*4.46	**5.68
Capability	1.97	0.73
Preserving one's public image	†3.23	1.66

ANOVA = Analysis of variance of value scores across pre and post data.

ANCOVA = Analysis of covariance of value scores across pre and post data after adjusting for the common variance between value scores and self monitoring.

† = $p < .10$. * = $p < .05$. ** = $p < .01$. *** = $p < .001$.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study enhance our knowledge of the impact of management education. Knowing the values that are being inculcated in business schools is the first step toward bringing about change in business education along desired lines.

Results indicate that the relative importance given to social power, an exciting life, daringness, capability and preserving one's public image increase during the two year period of management education. At the same time, the relative importance given to sense of belonging, politeness, family security, loyalty, and honouring of parents and elders decrease. There is thus a clear change in value system of MBA students with self-oriented values becoming more important, and others-oriented values becoming less important. This is probably a cause for concern since the corporate world is likely to be interested in managers whose relative ordering of values is just the reverse. An MBA program that reduces the relative importance given to values like being loyal and polite might find it extremely difficult to market its program and its graduates to business organizations.

Is the Change Desirable?

The objective of management education should be to take students to a higher plane and lift them to their better selves (Burns, 1978). The change has to be such that it unites people in the pursuit of some higher purposes. Leadership is authentic only if it takes followers to a better place and not to a worse place. Burns argued that leadership involves focusing on near-universal values. Getting into a state of greater selfish isolation from others would be the exact opposite.

The findings of this study show that self-oriented values like social power become more important, and others-oriented values like being loyal become less important because of completing two years of management education. The change in value systems of MBA students is not in the direction of taking them towards greater identification with other human beings. On the contrary, management education appears to make people more selfish and less concerned about others. Therefore, the change in value systems does not seem to be along the lines that most organizations would prefer.

Conclusion

Demands of the corporate world on business schools have been constantly changing and have of late become more exacting. The findings of this study provide some preliminary evidence on the changes in value systems that are caused by management education. Self-oriented values become more important and others-oriented values become less important because of completing two years of management education. The changes do not appear to be in a direction that business organizations would want. Business schools need to look at these trends and take steps to address students' value systems in a more effective way. The objective of management education should be to take students to a higher plane by transforming their value systems and lifting them to their better selves (Burns, 1978). Students need to be taken upward by enhancing their perception of oneness with others. Business schools seem to be doing the exact opposite.

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