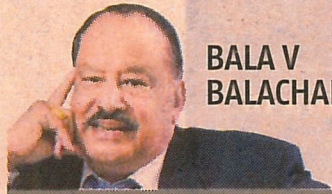


Challenges before management education

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The curriculum should blend academic elegance with business relevance



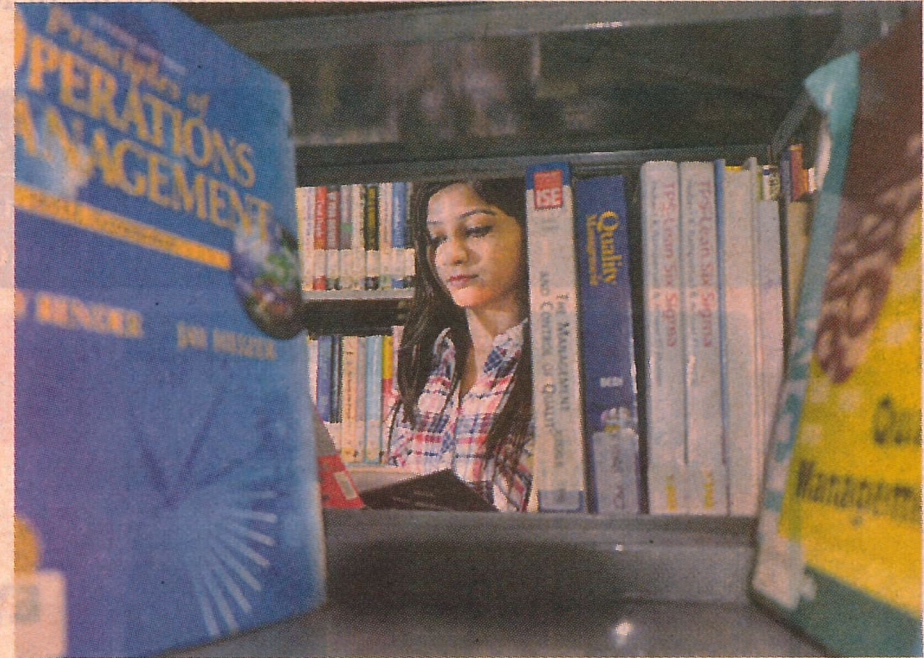
**BALA V
BALACHANDRAN**

By virtue of its character, management is an Art and a Science. While the scientific aspects of Management stand the test of time, the art aspect continually morphs and adapts to suit the changing, challenging business landscapes. In the recent years, with the emergence of IT as a strategic driver of commerce and industry (as opposed to that of IT as an enabler just a couple of decades ago), we now find ourselves in exciting and uncharted waters in which Management is also a learn as you go exercise. What follows therefore, is a disconnect between what is happening real-time in the trenches and what is being taught at B-schools to prepare the professionals for the trenches.

For starters, there is an acute shortage of good quality faculty members in the field of Management in India. Generally, the top B-

schools like the IIMs are able to have their pick of excellent professors because of their legacy and brand value. Other private schools like XLRI, the ISB, Great Lakes etc. too are able to manage comfortably for now but going forward, to be able to hire and retain excellent professors who are qualified in the new and emerging areas will become a challenge. Gone are the days when teachers were revered as *gurus* and experts and their word was considered the mantra for the students. To be a professor par excellence, one needs to be constantly learning, reading and updating oneself on the latest and best practices. Unfortunately, I have personally seen some teachers who themselves are guilty of sheer laziness, shoddy work, lack of preparedness and even descend to new lows like being nice to students to get better feedback ratings for their courses!

Research and Development has always been a neglected area in Indian educational institutions. Very few colleges and universities actually encourage it and accord it the importance it deserves. Faculty members are not motivated to engage in Research and are in fact demotivated since it doesn't also pay well. The dearth in this department is largely the reason for the absence of expert faculty members in most



disciplines. When compared with the Western Universities, our research output is measly and that is the reason why we have so far looked to the west to set the direction and progress in most disciplines.

This therefore cascades into the curricular aspect as well. The syllabus and range of coverage of the various modules

offered at most B-schools in India are not reflective of the demands of the new wave of the fourth Industrial Revolution or digital technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning & Analytics or any kind of modern thinking. The curriculum should

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Challenges for...

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ideally blend academic elegance with business relevance but the latter unfortunately suffers due to ignorance about new frontiers and by extension, the inability to incorporate these into the learning modules.

One look at the world business environment is enough to know that traditional models of business and enterprise just don't cut it anymore. Every single aspect of managing a business has undergone a sea change and a one-size-fits-all or a plain vanilla management programme will not deliver the goods anymore. The nature and type of enterprise, the psyche of the leadership team, the characteristics of the market, culture and demography of the consumer, geo-political and social variables all work together to affect the growth, progress and sustainability of a business. Therefore, the need of the hour is to develop well-rounded, niche-management programs in areas like family business, energy management, technopreneurship, BABI etc.

Another peculiar aspect of the

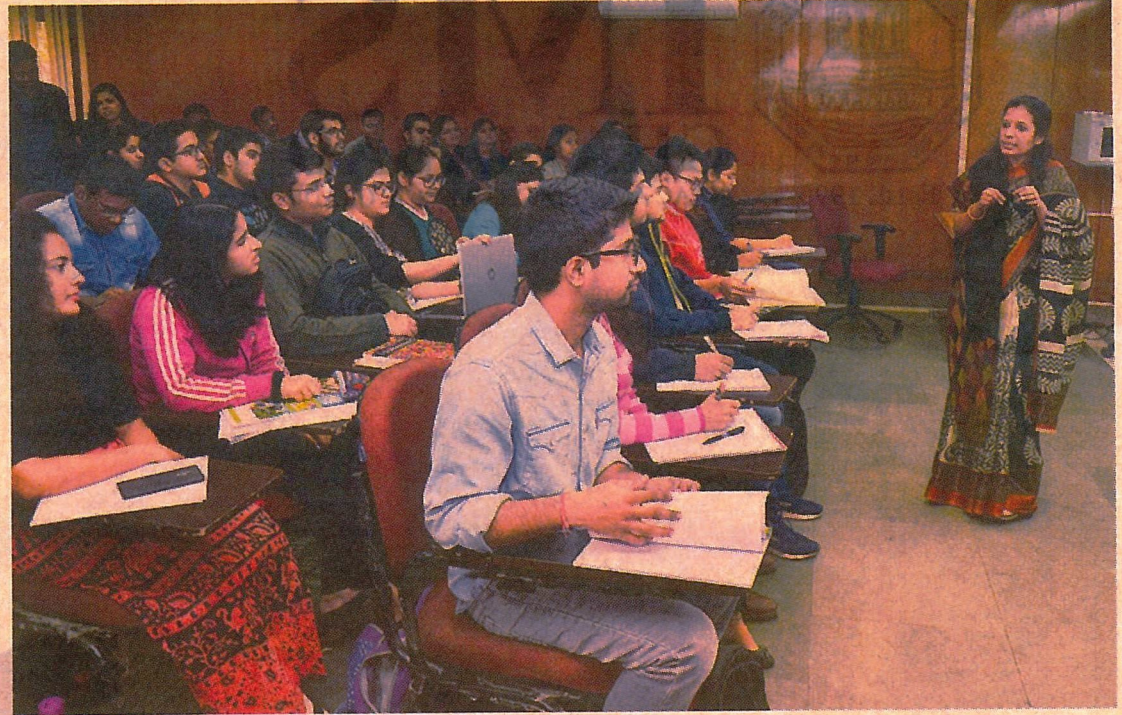
management education stream in India is the attitude of the students. Most people pursue higher education only in their areas of interest. However, b-school education is viewed as a career-changing/career-advancement tool by most working professionals. They attend B-school for the perceived takeaways of networking, career change, assured placement in marquee Corporates etc. Therefore, with

students considering b-school as a means to an end, their intent is not to master the subjects but to do the bare minimum to ensure decent grades leading to a job with a fat pay cheque at the end of their course. This is clearly evident from the

rampant cheating during exams, plagiarising of assignments, lack of contribution to team initiatives and committee work etc. Their work ethic, attitude and value systems therefore need to also come under keen scrutiny.

In the early days, the B-school's responsibility of procuring jobs for some of its students was second only to its responsibility of ensuring a good learning outcome.

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Today, it is a basic expectation that the school should place all of its students. There is a very thin line that separates a worth-its-salt B-school (that upskills its students and transforms them into efficient managers and responsible corporate citizens) from a mere finishing school (that specialises in grooming its students for employability).

With the advent of MOOC and

blended learning programmes, applications like Coursera are gaining popularity and a vast repository of cutting-edge, authentic learning materials will be made available to the world at large along with Ivy league certifications. This could again shift the dynamic since the bricks and mortar institutions will have to adapt and change their structure and the learning experience they

offer since, as we all know only too well, IT can be a very fierce competitor and the millennial a very demanding customer.

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