



CERTAIN ISSUES & CONCERNS IN DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS OF MANAGEMENT IN INDIA: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY PRE PANDEMIC

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Abstract: The Government of India has liberalized the Management Education in 1990s, which has resulted in a rapid growth of Business Schools offering the programmes both at Postgraduate & Undergraduate levels. Indian B-Schools are almost an imitation of US Business education particularly in the area of pedagogy, curricula, industry interface & academic research models & in the domain of communication skills, networking skills & teamwork skills; but it is observed that Indian B-Schools are struggling hard to introduce several adaptations because of differences in the work culture system.

Indian Government had appointed various committees to take a critical review & the overall growth of Business Education in the country. Owing to the intense competition at the global level lot of changes are taking place in the industries. In turn there is a need to develop “communication skills” among students of “Management” in India to meet the changes in the Business education system & industries all over the world; but the pace is very slow. Time has come to take a detailed review and to investigate the various challenges & issues which are being faced by these Business schools students for enhancing the quality of Management education in the country.

The main objective of the present paper is to know the past development of Management education in India & to investigate its major issues & concerns pertaining to the development of communication skills among the students of Management for the enhancement of their ‘employability’ skills.

Index Terms - Communication skills, Challenges, Culture, Concerns, Issues, Pedagogy

I. INTRODUCTION

The Government of India has liberalized the business education in 1990s, which has resulted in a rapid growth of Business Schools offering the programmes both at graduate & undergraduate levels. Indian B-Schools are almost a replica of US Business education particularly in the area of pedagogy, curricula, industry interface & academic research models, but it is observed that Indian B-Schools are struggling hard to introduce several adaptations because of differences in the work culture system. That made Indian Business education to face several issues in the area of academics, development of infrastructure & financial support. The Govt. of India had also appointed various committees to take a critical review & the overall growth of Business Education in the country. Owing to the intense competition at the global level lot of changes are taking place in the industries. In turn there is a need to make the changes in the Business education system all over the world. India is no exception to it; but the pace is very slow. Now time has come to take a detailed review and to investigate the various challenges & issues which are being faced by these Business schools for enhancing the quality of management education in the country.

The present study mainly concentrates on

1. Evolution of Management education in India
2. Present structure of Management education &
3. Major issues & concerns pertaining to the development of communication skills among the students of Management for the enhancement of their 'employability' skills.

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II. EVOLUTION OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

Business education perhaps dates back to the 19th century. Early Business-Schools emphasized more on the commercial side of business, seeking to fulfill the needs of the then British government.

- o India's first B-school i.e. Commercial School of Pacchiappa Charties was set up in 1886 in the southern city of Chennai (Madras).
- o In 1903, the British government began Commerce classes at Secondary school level in Presidency College at Calcutta with a kind of specialization on Secretarial Practice, Business Communication, Correspondence & Accounting.
 - o The first college level Business School was founded in 1913 in Mumbai i.e. Sydenham College.
 - o Soon followed by another college in Delhi in 1920 as Commerce College, later on it was renamed as ShriRama College of Commerce.
 - o The Indian Institute of Social Science founded in the year 1948 as India's first management program with an intention to train manpower to create & spread the knowledge required for managing industrial enterprises in India.
 - o Catholic community founded Xavier Labour Relations Institute (XLRI) at Jamshedpur in 1949.
 - o Indian Institute of Social Welfare & Business Management (IISWBM) was set up in 1953 at Calcutta. That was regarded as India's first official Management Institute.
 - o Encouraged by the results, Government of India applied for and obtained grant from the Ford foundation in 1961 to launch two (2) Indian Institutes of Management, one at Calcutta (West Bengal) and other at Ahmadabad (Gujarat). This grant was focused on helping American Business education knowledge & models to other nations and having intensive collaboration with an American B-School for facilitating the transfer of learning.
 - o The IIM Calcutta established in collaboration with the Sloan School of Management (MIT) for faculty & pedagogy development in the year 1961, with an intention to focus on Quantitative & Operational aspects of management.
 - o IIM Ahmadabad was founded in 1962, pioneered the case method of teaching in India with an emphasis on Qualitative strategic-integration.
 - o The mission of IIMs was to professionalize Indian Management education through teaching, research, training, institution-building & consulting with the support of expertise developed by the pioneering IIMs.
 - o Two more IIMs were founded in Bangalore (Karnataka) & other in Lucknow (U.P.) in 1973.
 - o The Indian Institute of Forest Management was setup in 1982 in Bhopal (M.P.) as a leader in specialized management education for the entire forestry system in India with the help of IIM, Ahmadabad.
 - o In late 1990's, two more IIMs were setup, one at Kozhikode (Kerala) & the other at Indore (M.P.).

Growth both in numbers & status occurred during the 1990's. A large number of multinational companies entered in India. Domestic companies also followed to compete with multinational corporations. Companies found that the graduates from commerce stream fell considerably short of the demands of the executive positions in a competitive world. They had good accounting skills but lacked requisite marketing, behavioural, finance & operations skills. They were found weak in oral & written communication, critical thinking & critical reading skills and in Information technology as well. Consequently, rather incurring on training cost for commerce graduates companies started offering huge premiums for MBA graduates. Recognizing the success of MBA programs & demands from students & employer, universities started looking at management education as an academic discipline & started offering MBA & BBA programs.

III. OVERVIEW OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN INDIA:

There are 4000+ B-Schools in the country. With the beginning of the new millennium, not only the universities & colleges from US & UK took initiative but also a large number of universities & colleges from Australia, Ireland, Canada, Russia, France, Germany & Singapore have played an active role in India.

Table – 1

Growth of B- Schools in India during 1950 – 2019

Sr.No.	Period	No. of B-Schools added	Avg Annual Addition
1	1950-1980-30 years	118	04
2	1980-1995-15 years	304	20
3	1995-2000-05 years	322	64
4	2000-2006-06 years	1017	169
5	2006-2012-06 years	1800	300
6	2012-2019- 07years	1427	327

Source: Dayal Ishwar, 'Developing Management Education in India', 'Journal of Management Research' 2 August 2006 P.101.2002. (The figures attributed for 2000-2006 & 2012-2019 as per AICTE data)

It can be said that in India, Management education is in the phase of change. Liberalization & globalization have had a considerable effect on Management education. There are presently 4000+ B- Schools in the country, spread over in different states of India. All these B-Schools are approved by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) in various categories, including IIMs University Departments & Autonomous Institutes.

IV.PRESENT STRUCTURE OF INDIAN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

The present is as follows, it is divided into eleven categories:

1. Indian Institute of Management (IIMs) setup by Government of India.
2. Departments of Management studies in various State Universities
3. Distance, Correspondence & part time courses run by various State Universities as well.
4. Colleges & Institutes affiliated to Universities.
5. Private or Govt. Institutes approved by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE).
6. Private Institutes or colleges not affiliated to any universities are not approved by (AICTE.)
7. Private colleges or Institutes offering MBA courses in India in collaboration with foreign universities where degree & diploma certificates are awarded by the foreign universities.
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Learning now- a- days has become students centric. Branding has accelerated the management education. Premier B-Schools are incessantly changing the contents & teaching methodologies. It is similarly necessary to Indian B-Schools to endeavor constantly to make management education context & framework specific. But the present increase of B-Schools has lifted up a significant question on the quality of Management education. Where will this explosion of B-Schools leave the country? What will be the standard of managers which will be produced by these B-Schools? What will be the basic communication strategy

Though Management education is one of the sought after courses in India, yet it is not the best in India or internationally. No Indian B – School has international accreditation from the Association of Advanced Collegiate School of Business (AACSB, U.S.A.) or the European quality improvement system. Very recently Management Development Institute (MDI), Gurgaon (Delhi) has been accredited by the association of Britain (AMBA) making it the first B – School to receive an international accreditation.

Keeping the past & present scenario of Management education in mind it can be said that the students still lack the “industry-ready” skills; one of the most important employability skill for Management students is being able to ‘communicate’ perfectly. Verbal communication is about communicating precisely and succinctly with others, be it a customer or a colleague.

In the organizational context one will be called for to present information to a variety of audiences both within and outside the business. Being able to communicate clearly to even people who do not have an understanding of one's work, expressing one's ideas in a rational, structured and effective way is important.

This is a precise set of skills that don't fit in to a particular position, industry or role; they are universal skills that can be transferred between roles, positions, departments and organizations. Employers often give importance to these skills because they can be utilized in many ways in the workplace.

V. METHODOLOGY

The methodology or the technique that has been adopted while preparing this paper is the descriptive survey method. It has been used to gather “communication” problems and difficulties students encountered during classroom learning of the course Management. Descriptive research describes and interprets what is. It is concerned with conditions of relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, processes that are going on; effects that are being felt, or trends that are developing (Calderon, 2013). The study focused on conditions of students studying Management at postgraduate level with various communication deficiencies that in the long run restrict them in developing proper and successful “class-to-corporate” strategies.

VI. RESPONDENTS

The participants composed of 200 MBA and 60 PGDM students (from various private colleges in West Bengal under MAKAUT) who have undergone classroom learning during the college year 2017-2019. The students are majors in Communication, Marketing, HR & Finance. Stratified total of 260 composed the participants of the study. In the choice of participants, no sampling technique was used because all the students were included as participants of the study.

VII. INSTRUMENT

The instrument used to gather data was the instrument developed and used by Dr. Pacita L.Samson (2007) on the problems and difficulties encountered by students during classroom learning and teaching. The instrument is in the form of an “interview questionnaire” and has undergone reliability test and validation by faculty members with student teaching load. The instrument consists of two parts. Part I deals on “personal profile” or “background” of the students. Part II relates to problems and difficulties met by student such as personal problems, class participation problems, class management problems, instructional problems, emotional problems, problems in adjusting to pupils/students, problems with course adjustment, problems arising from culture, and problems in guidance. In the confinement of this study, the problem areas included are: personal problems, class management problems, instructional problems, emotional problems and problems in adjusting to pupils/students, cultural problems.

VIII. DATA COLLECTION

The participants were informed of the purpose of the research in writing. They were convened in one venue during their vacant or free period for response to the instrument and to further retrieval. The directions were read and explained to avoid any problems or questions that may arise during the answering of the interview questionnaire.

IX. DISCUSSION

In the modern globalised world, “technocrats” & “global managers” are realizing the harsh reality that technical skills without soft skills would make them knowledge workers and not managers or leaders. Hard skills are perhaps perishable and machine or computer replaceable. Those who lack in soft skills, that is, communication skills face various lacunae and hence various challenges. They will perhaps, in the long run, get much less credit for their achievements than they deserve. The sources of inadequacy or lacunae that initially affect management students’ “communication” skills are:

- Students’ attitudes towards communication.
- Insufficient course content.
- Deficient or inappropriate teaching methods.
- Lack of opportunity for practicing communication skills.
- Inability to grasp the subject matter.

To build up a positive image in public, these lacunae are kept generally under control; these help people to win in every situation. People are “impulsive” but they project themselves to be “measured”; people are “nervous” at times but the reflection is of “confidence”; people sometimes have a “happy-go-lucky” attitude towards life but they represent themselves to be “calculative”; the list of lacunae perhaps go on.

From the below mentioned table of different communication inadequacies that people face in general, it has been observed that these deficits also prevail in developing class-to corporate strategies in particular; they can, in this paper, concisely be classified into three major heads:

- Lack of “interpersonal communication”.
- Lack of expertise transfer: “skilled manpower” to “corporate”.
- Lack of expertise transfer: “classroom”-to-corporate”.

Physical	Psychological	Linguistic	Cultural
Noise	Emotional Disturbance	Improper decoding of message	Cultural difference
Discomfort	Dilemma	Improper encoding	Values'' difference
Distraction	Anxiety	Ambiguity	Social norms' difference
Distance	Over arousal of emotions	Syntax & Jargon	Ethics difference

This scenario prevails among technical students in general in India and among students of Management in particular. If we have a look, through certain private colleges offering MBA in West Bengal then we shall be able to understand how these lacunae become major and prominent.

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The noted colleges offering MBA in West Bengal (under MAKAUT) are:

- Army Institute of Management
- Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan Institute of Management
- Calcutta Institute of Engineering & Management
- Dinabandhu Andrews Institute of Technology and Management
- Dr. B.C. Roy Engineering College
- DSMS Business School
- Future Institute of Engineering and Management
- George College of Management and Science
- Gurunanak Institute of Technology
- Heritage Institute of Technology
- Haldia Institute of Technology, Haldia
- Institute of Engineering & Management (IEM)
- Meghnad Saha Institute of Technology
- Narula Institute of Technology
- Pailan College of Management & Technology

Along with private Universities like

- Amity University, Kolkata
- Techno India University, Kolkata
- University of Engineering & Management (UEM), Kolkata

Personal responses through one-to-one interview of the students in the form of questionnaire were recorded to reach to the objective of the paper. These interviews can broadly be classified as case studies under three categories indicating specifically to the inadequacies of communication in setting proper technology transfer.

The categories are:

Linguistic	Psychological	Societal
“Mother Tongue Influence” (MTI)	Inconfidence	Adjustability problem
Lack of proper arrangement of thought	Hesitation	Socialization problem
Lack of vocabulary in English	Anxiety.	Introvert Attitude
Lack of fluency in English for effective Communication	Dilemma	Impractical Attitude

There are approximately 50% students out of 260 students interviewed from 5 private colleges offering MBA in West Bengal whose medium of instruction in school remained “vernacular” and not English. The lacunae which the subjects faced in their initial semesters were (1st & 2nd):

Total incomprehensibility in [Listening (L), Speaking (S), Reading (R), Writing (W)] the language English.

- Inability to communicate in any language other than mother tongue, Hindi.
- Inability to speak due to inconfidence, hesitation and anxiety.

The lacunae that still prevail in the final year of the subjects:

- Inconfidence, hesitation and anxiety still persist along with lack of thought and lack of vocabulary in English.
- Inability to adjust and socialize due to introvert and impractical nature of the subject.

On the other hand students studying Masters or M.Tech are although comparatively better than their juniors yet they also experienced initial communication inadequacies during 1st semester- 2nd Semester:

- Basic understanding of the language English
- Inability to write in English well
- Inability to speak in English fluently.

The above mentioned interview case studies of well renowned private Management colleges in West Bengal justified the inadequacy, of “interpersonal communication”, as per our observation. Management institutions in India are today estimated to be graduating approximately 1 Lac (+) students annually. However, what proportion of the total requirement will be for the increasing more expensive graduates in management and what proportion would be for the less expensive lower levels of managers is not yet clear. Again there is a need to raise the number from the current level of 1 lac (+) managers to about 3 lacs (+) managers a year over the next 10 – 15 years.

X. ISSUES & CONCERNS

The number of committees on Management education although have suggested improvements, yet there have been no significant changes in Management education except in the top ranking B-schools. Now the time has come to examine the major issues that need to be addressed if at all Management education has to improve in India; the present managers can therefore respond to the challenges of global competition particularly by honing and enhancing their “communication skills”.

XI.CONCLUSION

The need for an integrated Management education with concurrent attention to academia, social communication, organization and regulation is considered to be an essential pre-requisite for an orderly progress of the corporate sector. Internationalization, cross cultures, strategic alliances, partnership & mergers are the new trends in management education. But Compared to US & Japan where do we stand? One of the important reasons of Japan’s climbing to the top ladder of Industrial world is that they believe in “developing people before developing products.” Indian Management pedagogy has to think in this direction.

Synergy between business and effective pedagogy is essential for us to achieve a necessary mobilization of the managers of new generation for adding both years to life and life to years.

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