QUALITY – A prime focus point for management education of the modern era

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Research Abstract
The world of management education plays a major role for transforming developing economies into global powers. If we look at the future, fancier concepts may be developed; those even more sophisticated than what they are today. However, the incremental value addition in this industry comprises of a hindrance in form of conventional practices followed in the knowledge imparting process. Dynamism stimulates a sense of continual excitement and with global environment becoming more complex; management students seek a far more sophisticated education imparting mechanism to achieve sustainable growth. India as an emerging nation holds immense potential for coming generations. However, we are driven by too much leverage and too little confidence as we lack the power of practical knowledge. Thus, this paper emphasizes on a QUALITY focus to address these concerns to set forth the path towards building a robust mechanism to build a healthier and confident management graduate fraternity.

Key Words: Quality, Sustainability, Management Education

Conventional Styles of Management Education
“Management” education typically refers to Masters’ in Business Administration i.e. popularly, MBA education. These are remarkably standardized in content — across institutes and around the world. The MBA is more of B than A; more about the functions of business than the practice of managing. In the name of developing general managers, therefore, it tends to train staff specialists. Management education at every level divides subject matter into sharp categories — defined by how the knowledge has been created, without laying emphasis on how it is innovated, revisited or applied. It is confined to specialists in each field promoting their own views of the world. The conventional approach to management education is to provide information detailing certain descriptions and procedures that are found in identified subjects. Each of those subjects contains a sequence of content topics to be covered in class, one after the other. Often the focus of learning in conventional approaches is giving students a lecture or an article to read and then set standardized questions based upon the information given. The expected solutions to the questions are usually limited to the information given to students. Typically then, solutions are pre-determined by the teacher and are linked to narrowly set context-specific learning objectives.

Challenges to the Conventional Approach
Management is a practice — it has to be appreciated through experience, in context. Management may use science, but it is an art that is combined with science through craft. In other words, managers have to face issues in the full complexity of living, not as compartmentalized packages. Knowledge may be important, but wisdom — the capacity to combine knowledge from different sources and use it judiciously is the key element. This is not to deny the role and significance of management education. Business schools have important things to teach about management. But by falling prey to the general and typical process, this education journey misses out on great opportunities for creative learning suited to practicing managers.
Points to Ponder

Management programs need a transformation that sets aside many of the most cherished beliefs and in their place establishes the basic principles upon which quality management education should be built. Few of the basic principles are as below:

a) Managers cannot simply be created in a classroom
   Management practice can be enhanced in the classroom, but not established. Efforts to teach management disassociated from context and experience undermine the education, most commonly by reducing it to analysis. Providing education in the context of deep-rooted practical experience, however, turns the classroom into a rich arena for learning.

b) Performance Scoring
   Certainly managers must be intelligent, and test scores do provide one basis for measuring that intelligence. But demonstrated performance provides a far more effective and appropriate dimension.

c) Leverage work and life experience.
   Theory is important and cases are useful. The former are like maps of the world, the latter like travelers’ tales. Learning becomes most powerful when managers can assess the theory in their own contexts and can apply the messages of cases to their own experiences. Ideally those experiences would provide living case material for the classroom. When that happens, education becomes practical, and practice becomes educational.

d) Learning Orientation
   There is too much teaching and not enough learning in much of today’s management education, too much control of the classroom agenda by instructors. Teachers certainly have to introduce formalized knowledge i.e. ideas, concepts, research findings and so on, but that knowledge must meet the needs of extensive practical and tacit knowledge. The best management education occurs when the educational push of the faculty meets the learning pull of the managers. It is best when teachers play the role of facilitators to enrich the learning experience of future managers.

e) Problem SOLVING
   Managers don’t need prescription. Prescription in general is the problem, not the solution, because situations vary so widely. Managers need description, illustration of alternate ways to understand their world: how customers buy, how organizations function, how cultures have impact. The approach should be a blend of posing a problem and leaving the students wondering, probing, analyzing, synthesizing and even struggling. People have to be engaged, curious and alert on a personal level and in a social process. In other words, students have to share their reflections, to learn from one another’s ideas and experiences. This kind of interaction happens outside the classroom of every management development program. If only it could happen so pervasively inside the classrooms as well! Undoubtedly, management students have at least as much to learn from each other as they do from the faculty.

f) Changing with the times
   Education that creates an impact requires a radical departure on the part of business schools. Institutes must open up and become more responsive, truly customizing their programs. Companies have to raise their expectations about management education and development.

In a nutshell, concepts about management have evolved since decades known. A function that was seen as essentially directive is now widely viewed as facilitative. Compare Henri Fayol’s 1916 definition of managerial work as planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling with the current emphasis on organizations as adaptive networks of knowledge workers. Without question, management education should mirror this evolution, so much about it is still designed to control the teaching rather than facilitate the learning.

Quality Focus: The way ahead

Unless we change the process, we can’t expect the results to change
In order to solve the challenges and bring forth the solution paths to reality, there is a focused approach expected from facilitators and providers of management education. Being a part of an ever changing, progressing, dynamic Indian economy, it is high time to reconsider the very idea of management education, specifically in terms of the QUALITY it delivers to the participants. Right from the design of programs for practicing managers to the actual entry into workplace, management education has not been seriously re-evaluated since around four to five decades.

In an attempt to develop a new perspective on management education combined with management development, it would be a great idea to focus on building a Quality mechanism. There is a certain quality of conversation that takes place in a well-managed classroom that is almost unique, where the fruits of experience, theory and reflection are brought together into new understanding and commitment. This may sound utopian, but it is not. The place to begin is with the reform of management education, and the organization’s responsibility for the development of its managers is central to this reform. When companies and their managers make a commitment to the continual acquisition and diffusion of learning throughout their organizations, much of what has been described previously can be worked into company practice, not only through formal development but informally as well. The potential for the concurrent development of managers and organizations is enormous.

Experiments with this kind of approach are taking place in a number of management-education programs around the world. Globalization and liberalization have had their impact on almost everything that is related to the people and management education is no exception. There were the days when ‘management education’ was perceived as something which was meant for those who wanted to enter the ‘corporate sector’ or those who wanted to be ‘managers’ in private companies. And management education was also not within the ‘reach’ of everyone with only few institutes offering courses in management studies. Being a country which is not outside the purview of the globalization and liberalization, India introduced the economic reform packages in the beginning of 1991, which subsequently led to changes in the field of education including that of management education. The Indian government and Indian corporate sector recognized the importance of management education in the changing global scenario and accordingly over a period of time the concept of management which was earlier restricted only to the corporate sector trickled down to the micro level. And with the government's assistance to higher education gradually coming down over a period of time, more private players came into the field as the demand for such institutes providing management education went up.

There was a time when management professionals were meant only for big corporate houses. But now the concept of management has crept into every field and the management professionals are in great demand. The NGO movement in the country, which is still in a very nascent stage has already felt the need for management professionals. There is huge scope for the management professional in times to come. With the changing needs even the management education has seen a paradigm shift with more focus being given on skills and knowledge. The internship and practical exposure programs have also undergone a drastic change and the gap between the industry and the institutions has narrowed down. Teaching from the books written years ago is a cliché technique. The focus is now on inducing a practical approach and realistic behavior among students, making them aware of current business scenarios with direct exposure to industrial affairs. Although there have been some welcome developments, there is still lot to be done with regard to improving management education. With people exposed to the industry entering teaching, the classroom teaching has certainly improved.

**Quality to attain Sustainability**

There’s lot being done to SUSTAIN Environmental and Ecological balances but it is imperative to look at SUSTAINING the Human Intellect, especially of the management students and facilitators to be able to achieve these sustainable goals with regards to management education. Alfred Marshall says that, “The most valuable of all capital is that invested in human beings”. It is for sure that innovation and intellectual power are going to be the key to the future. If adequate steps are
being taken towards sustaining the quality of management education, the future managers are bound to overcome any kind of challenges.

With increased access to more companies and job roles, students confront options they don’t always understand. When their existing knowledge and competencies are not applicable to an ever changing corporate landscape, they are limited in their ability to act. Management education concept lacks revolving around knowledge, skills and attitudes in a comprehensive manner.

The Indian economy has shown consistent growth and is on the way to become a financial super power. India is set to witness a strong growth in the coming years with the boost from policy measures and budgetary allocations. Despite the global meltdown effect of past few years, India is expected to be the second fastest growing economy in the Asia Pacific region. The productivity growth rate of Indian economy in the Asia Pacific Region is estimated to be around 8% and is expected to sustain until 2020. The increasing globalization of our economy has brought in its wake a high demand for talented global managers. Corporations across the world have demonstrated a need for quality knowledge, education and training for facing the vibrant industries around the world. The contributors in this aspect could be Donors, Commercial Organizations and Government authorities (as shown in Fig. 1 below).

![Fig.1: Role of Contributors (Original)](image)

Unemployment, underemployment and disguised unemployment of management graduates is prevalent in India and needs to be addressed on a war footing. Setting up of innovative and feasible education techniques can contribute in a major way to address this issue. Apart from creating wealth and boosting the economy, the relook at the management education styles will also create significantly larger number of jobs than established ones.

**Total Quality Management (TQM) in Education**

If the need of the hour is widening the scope of quality in management education, it is best to consider a management concept itself to attain the same. Total Quality Management (TQM) is recognized as an important management philosophy and is widely used in every industry. It has been used very successfully in the development and acquisition of systems such as satellites and aircraft to preparing officer performance reports. Over the last few years, TQM has been applied in the education industry. Most of the applications have been in the administrative side of the institutions, but some schools have applied TQM to curriculum development.

Total quality management (TQM) is defined as ‘a management approach of an organization, centered on quality, based on the participation of all its members and aiming at long run success through customer satisfaction and benefits to all members of the organization and to society.’

(Brookes & Becket)

If the student is identified as one of your customers, you must try to satisfy that customer, but you must be very sure you know what that customer really wants. No two applications of TQM will be the...
same. The form that a particular implementation takes is dependent on many factors such as the size of the institution, whether the institution is private or public, and the strengths of the people involved, but the most important variables are the maturity of the students and the involvement of the employer. Careful consideration of all aspects of the educational system will help determine just how the TQM implementation will ultimately look.

(WINN & GREEN, 1998)

The TQM practices are divided into various approaches that make it conceptualized:

- **Deming Wheel approach** – It is a four step (Plan, Do, Check & Act) approach.
- **Juran’s Quality Trilogy** – It is based upon his famous Universal Breakthrough Sequence Philosophy (Quality Planning, Quality Control, and Quality Improvement). In this sequence the elements are arranged in the following hierarchical order:
  - Proof of need
  - Project Identification
  - Organization with top management’s commitment
  - Diagnostic Journey- Identifying systematic or random causes
  - Remedial Action
  - Holding on to the gains
- **Crosby’s absolutes of Quality** is based upon the following principles
  - Quality is conformance to requirements
  - Prevention, not appraisal, is the path to quality
  - Quality is measured as the price paid for non-conformance and as indexes
  - Quality originates in all factions. There are no quality problems and it is people, design or process that creates problems.

(Ahmed & Ali, 2012)

Besides the general approaches to quality, researchers have developed different frameworks to ensure quality in specific sectors according to their requirements. For higher education institutions, the need is to focus on identifying dimensions that are critical to determine the extent of TQM implementation in an educational set up. The most common dimensions are Leadership, Strategic Planning, Evaluation, Stakeholder focus and Process Management & Improvisation.

Few management institutes are reviewing their education imparting process by registering for ISO certifications (9001 series) as well, however, a lot more can be done in this area of expanding quality in management institutes. The organized process of attaining certification adds to a disciplined process in brainstorming and improvising the way management lessons are imparted. Basically, careful adoption of the ‘Student-as-customer’ concept could retain positive aspects - promoting the legitimate interests of students in the higher education system - while avoiding such potentially negative aspects as the problematic idea that "the customer is always right". (Eagle & Brennan, 2005)

**Roadblocks to Overcome**

Once the facilitators of management institutes are convinced about making quality a life blood of the education business, there are again possible hurdles which need to be eliminated to achieve success:

- Insufficient or insufficiently structured data - difficulty for comparability among institutions
- Myths regarding Sustainability – Negligible involvement of Sustainable Development motive in Quality Paradigm
- Constraints imposed by quality culture
- Autocratic style of leadership
- Lack of employee commitment
- Improper Channel of communication
- Quality certifications-viewed as bureaucratic exercise
- Problems in identifying student needs
Research Methodology

This study is conducted with a motive to cultivate awareness of the importance of knowledge dissemination in attaining sustainability in a much wider manner. The methodology involves Primary Data collected from 150 people belonging to various age groups and Secondary data from varied sources of information.

Sampling Technique:
Convenience Sampling (Authors have surveyed the respondents whom they know through friends, acquaintance and professional colleagues)

Questionnaire:
Name:
Age:
Occupation:
1. What do you think refers to Quality?
2. Do you think management education is up to the mark in terms of Quality? (Yes / No)
3. If your answer to Question 2 is No, What do you think can be the ideal way to bring about a change?
   A. Awareness
   B. Practical Delivery
   C. Skill building activities
4. What is the most interesting way to inject Quality to management education?
5. Do you have complete clarity on your career path? Yes / no
7. Do you honestly analyze options before choosing a course? Yes / no
8. If answer 8 is Yes, what is the basis for analyzing?
   A. Herd Effect
   B. Course Quality
   C. Placement Opportunities
   D. Others (Specify) _____________
10. What do you think is the responsibility of business organizations towards improving quality of management education?

The answers from respondents have led to some interesting facts that form a part of this paper:

- 96.67% of the respondents feel quality is something that sets apart a product or a service from its competitors, it is a phenomenon for which the customer is ready to pay a premium.
- 90% of the respondents feel management education is NOT up to the mark in terms of Quality
- 98.67% respondents give importance to Skill Building Activities & Practical Delivery for bringing a change in the way management education is structured and remaining to Awareness.
- For ways to inject quality in management education, respondents came up with suggestions like enlightenment on corporate expectations for management students, quality industrial visits, internships with companies, innovative teaching methodology.
- 80% of the respondents do not possess clarity of their career path. Interestingly, 90% of these are in the 18-23 years age group.
- 90% of the respondents chose Placement Opportunities as the factor for choosing options related to management education
- Respondents came up with suggestions for corporates to share their working styles, pressures, opportunities, professional etiquettes with young students and management aspirants in the form of family discussions, lectures at management institutes as well as encouraging quality internships for students in their companies.
Recommendations

Presently, management illiteracy in the real sense of the term permeates across all levels of society. The nature of illiteracy and its manifestations may vary, but it gets reflected in the everyday decisions that many of us make. The lack of basic knowledge about management principles and their implementation in the dynamic scenario is one common instance of management illiteracy that is widely observed. The greed for success eventually culminates into a crisis involving larger number of unhappy and dissatisfied organizational setups.

Imagine a program woven together by values and attitudes, and by truly engaging methods of learning. There would be no students, only participants. Managers would participate alongside the faculty in the designing and the learning process. They would move seamlessly back and forth between concept-based and experience-based learning, reflecting collectively across sessions and modules, the learning blended into one continuous flow, sometimes smooth, sometimes gusty. This is integration not designed and imposed by blueprint. It is the kind of integration that is infused, lived and evolved — in truth, the only real kind of integration.

This paper quotes few recommendations to plan steps towards challenging the status quo in the interest of student fraternity:

- Family Education can act as a ‘Charity begins at Home’ step to give a head start to management lessons. Habit of effective management can escalate management education to a new level.
- Management education needs to imbibe lessons and learnings from all over including cell phone data, radio shows, TV, and other forms of social media.
- A collaboration of the knowledge provider with another would be highly beneficial to aspirants as both entities have an interactive pedagogy, an intensive but well-balanced business education, high quality of faculty members drawn from around the world facilitating a close interaction with the business community and a diverse mix of nationalities.
- Global certifications will allow professionals to work on international projects and also increase job mobility prospects.
- Corporates need to be involved in the design of management education setup.
- In view of the sheer magnitude of the task at hand, it is beneficial to have a strong institutional architecture guiding and coordinating the efforts of various stakeholders towards spreading quality focused management education.
- Education is not limited to the classroom. The use of pre-existing platforms to reach groups of young people provides an opportunity to go to scale. Employable professionals can be built when a clear transition from ‘Campus to Corporate’ is inculcated. For this, few corporates are handling a project named ‘Campus to Corporate Connect’ under the ‘Landmark Forum’ by visiting educational institutions with industry experts and sharing experiences to industry aspirants. This niche initiative is seen to prove a vital ingredient in the education industry.
- A good investment in the quality of education is to offer it to trainers themselves. Realizing its relevance to their own lives, trainers become motivated to share it with others and accept the role of being FACILITATORS.
- Quality education also requires attention to the mundane – logistics, location, schedule.
- Internships by organizations should also possess quality tasks in spite of the fact that students work only for short and definite periods.
- Use systematic methods to identify variations, determine root causes, and make corrections. Tools taught to students i.e. benchmarking and reengineering can be applied to imparting management education as well. Over a period of time, an attempt can be made to attain quality certifications (e.g. ISO 9001) to get a ready review of the quality proficiency ideas implemented by the institute.
- Ultimately long-term sustainability, and the ability to demonstrate value, will depend on the effectiveness of a program. Effective programs are relevant, practical and of high quality; achieving such programs begins at the inception phase, with information gathered from market research, workshops, stakeholders’ forums and informal discussions. Further, programs should be constantly reviewed and revised to ensure that the materials and curricula meet the changing requirements of the students.
One of the most important functions of the total quality leader is the ability to empower people. Management institutes must focus upon empowering participants and internal employees to make on-the-spot decisions that have holistic interest attached.

Conclusion
Management Education is expected to drive nations towards Sustainability with the steps to impart the capability to transform ordinary individuals into informed and questioning managers of the future. It not only caters to professional efficiency but inculcates discipline in terms of self-management i.e. saving, budgeting, financial planning, selling yourself, public relations and most importantly, about being “Smart Managers”. Thus, building capable education setup having the combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes with the opportunities to apply them requires input from multiple sources including those who have ‘Been there and Done that’.

Quality programs are those designed around strong funding models, serving not only the needs of the participants, but ultimately adding value to all stakeholders. Achieving this means continuous commitment to learning, building capacity of staff and organizations, and nurturing partnerships.

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