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Dynamic Teaching Pedagogy and New Age Initiatives at an Emerging B-School in India

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Abstract

A huge number of emerging B-Schools in India have been plagued by the lack of quality placements caused by obsolete and theoretical teaching pedagogy, which has resulted in disappointment for both the students and corporate recruiters. This case study focuses on the dynamic teaching methodology of an upcoming business school in India, which has been continuously developing to give students the necessary industry skillsets through various mechanisms. This is a qualitative study of 9 MBA (Post-graduation) colleges in the Pune district by physically visiting and observing change management in business schools by adopting unique initiatives. With the help of this case study, we bring to the forefront various new-age initiatives which other B-Schools can adapt to survive and grow in the rapidly evolving management education. The Business schools must ensure adequate internal control mechanisms and have a faster decision-making ability to make necessary changes in teaching pedagogy and other requirements to enhance the student's skill sets. In order for students to be aware of the most recent market developments, ongoing involvement and training with industry veterans must be offered. Strict teaching pedagogy and evaluation must instill in the students the habit of discipline and hard work. The results can be helpful for other management schools to manage the rapidly evolving education scenario. The findings of this research promote awareness of recent measures adopted to overcome the stiff challenges faced by management institutes. The B-schools that keep evolving and fulfil needs and demands of both industry and the students, leading to good growth in India and across the globe, creating a strong brand for itself. Research can be carried forward by using data from B-schools for more insight and detailed results.

Keywords: *Education; e-learning; Sustainable; Smart technology.*

Introduction

Analysts, data engineers, accountants, and macroeconomists have a keen interest in pursuing higher education in Management. This has led management programs to gain popularity in India for students to kickstart their careers in the corporate sector. But this had also led to a

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mushrooming of management colleges without adequate infrastructure, industry linkages and qualified faculty members to transform the student for a good role in the corporate arena. Dozens of independent and autonomous B-schools fail miserably in their promises due to the inability to transform students from classroom to board room. Top B-schools enhance student learning by incorporating a blend of industry-oriented pedagogy, industry interaction and engagement with corporates from diverse domains and at various levels during the course is implied (Brandon et al., 2002; Harden et al., 2018).

The total number of MBA graduates churned out in India in a year is more than 5,00,000, but only around 19% have adequate skillsets to be employable (Das, 2020). There are several reasons because of why the teaching provided at medium and lower-tier B-schools is not enough to prepare students for the cut-throat competition in the industry. First, in a large number of management institutes, a major portion of teaching is theoretical and bookish, while the concepts are not being taught using practical applications and the latest tools like R Language and MS - Excel is also absent. Second, there are inadequate linkages, and only a few industry experts are invited to share their experiences and the latest industry trends with the students. Third, most of the institutes, except the top quartile, are only able to attract students who have been less focused and disciplined in their earlier academic journey. But, instead of cultivating the habit of discipline and hard work, many institutes only try to please the student with a lower level of strictness, resulting in a lack of seriousness and maturity. Fourth, the faculty recruitment and selection process overemphasises the need for PhD and research work and instead on industry experience, which can rather be more useful for students grooming them to be industry ready.

In this detailed research, we will highlight the dynamic changes and innovations at a management school that has emerged as a preferred choice for students and, from a modest beginning, has reached a yearly intake of ~ 800 students in the PGDM/MBA courses. The various reasons for the success are discussed and can become a benchmark for other B schools to adopt and grow.

Change Management at a B-School in India

A premier B-School in Pune City has emerged as one of the fastest-growing management institutes in India because of consistent innovation, adaption and changes in teaching and learning pedagogy for the students. The innovative teaching has helped the institute to reach a student intake of more than 800 per year in PGDM/MBA programs. Since its inception, the college has been committed to improving students' learning experience with extensive corporate collaborations and their involvement in curriculum development as per industry expectations. B-School has provided a robust platform and seeded the culture of research and development for faculty and students. Faculty members are encouraged to engage in research and professional development to stay updated with the latest trends and practices. The key core values of the robust establishment of the B-School aim at empowering students and overall development. Promotion of cross-disciplinary collaborations by offering courses or projects that involve

students from various disciplines. Students are encouraged to work with engineering, design, or social science students to solve real-world problems.

Persistent refinement is ensured by repeatedly identifying loopholes and weaknesses in the processes and strengthening them to shape more robust mechanisms leading to persistent scaling up standards of performance and achieving higher benchmarks. Thus persistence in the learning process leads to refined skills, providing students with added opportunities for success in their corporate careers. **All-round student improvement** through robust domain knowledge, confidence, and effective dissemination within students is vital for seeding strong employment capability. Holistic and balanced progress in major domains with emphasis on ethics, social skills, and leadership results in a competent workforce geared up to face all corporate challenges. These efforts also lead to successfully shaping entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs of the future. Students are encouraged and supported in starting their own ventures with the help of an industry-linked **incubation centre** in the institute. The entrepreneurship centre or incubation centre established in the institute thus provides mentorship from the industry, funding, and other resources, which gives the students a head start in their start-up venture. Startup competitions and networking events are also organised to connect students with industry experts and investors. The institute makes efforts to strengthen ties with industry partners to bridge the gap between academia and the corporate world. Industry experts from diverse domains are invited as guest lecturers, and they also offer internships and job placements and collaborate on research projects. Various advisory boards consisting of industry leaders providing guidance and industry insights are also established.

S**ustainable development** is targeted by establishing robust process adaption, digitising procedures and internal systems for sustainable development. Thus MBA is transformed to equip students with the analytical, strategic and critical thinking abilities necessary for a leadership role and for managing people and projects. Adaption of technologies like ERP, smart boards, and monitoring academic progress digitally. At the same time, the automation of various redundant processes in academics and other departments has also led to time-saving for all stakeholders, including students. The incorporation of emerging technologies and digital skills into the curriculum has further enhanced students' skills and their footing in the industry. Courses on data analytics, artificial intelligence, blockchain, and digital marketing are also offered to give students an edge. Also, opportunities are provided to gain practical experience with industry-essential software and tools.

Empowered employees and a **transparent system** build a more robust structure with enhanced prospects. Integrating business sustainability and environmental consciousness into the curriculum has led to better future managers. Sustainability is also ensured by offering courses on sustainable business practices, corporate social responsibility, and green entrepreneurship.

Students are encouraged to develop innovative solutions for environmental challenges faced by different businesses.

Exceptional Initiatives Adopted

Corporate individuals working in various business domains/industries and different job profiles are a part of the **robust corporate panel** of the B-School. The corporate panel of the institute always includes around 80-100 expert professionals having 10-30 years of experience in their respective fields. The corporate panel members are involved in training and knowledge sharing with the students for at least 2-4 full days every month. They are also engaged in teaching elective and specialised subjects, which are crucial from a placement point of view. Students are abreast with recent developments in the industry, the job profile and the skills required to be developed and acquired in their training. Updated and latest skills are imparted to the students with enriched experience sharing by the corporate panellists. These corporate panellists also carry the institute brand in the industry, further increasing the brand value of the institute.

MBA and PGDM students start their journey with the B-School even before their first year of the program has begun. **Unique & fruitful business orientation programme** (BOP) training is conducted for two months before the MBA/PGDM program starts. Basic business concepts are rigorously imbibed to create a strong base for students to pursue the postgraduate program. Students are trained in domains related to accountancy, finance, marketing, human resources, business tools, communication training, aptitude training, etc. As these students are from different domains, viz. engineering, commerce, science, etc., building an equal base level of understanding is essential to absorb the rigorous knowledge imparted during the postgraduate program. Students strengthen their understanding of different businesses, product profiles and manufacturing processes through 8-10 industry visits per student. By recognising the importance of soft skills such as communication, leadership, teamwork, and emotional intelligence, the college is taking an extra step to sharpen the saw.

Further, various top company professionals are invited to interact and share their experiences during these two months. These interactions give more clarity to the students about their liking for a particular specialisation and can finalise their goals and required skills to be acquired during their postgraduate program. BOP is a unique concept that helps students from different locations groom themselves for the corporate world. The institute's faculty members are from all domains and are industry veterans turned into full-time academicians with around 10 to 30+ years of industry experience. This dynamic framework of vigorous academicians plays a vital role in shaping the student to be industry-ready. Thus full-time faculty members with industry exposure can mould the students in various core domains. The faculty also remains up-to-date with all the recent changes in the job profiles the industry is adapting. Thus, **industry-experienced faculty** will lead to improved teaching quality, higher college ranking/grading, better placements and the institute's achieving higher goals (Bakhru, 2019; Mehta, 2019).

The **industry-oriented course curriculum** of the program is developed, anticipating industry expectations from the students (Napieralska et al., 2015; Ojala, 2019). The course curriculum of each subject is designed considering the program and the course objectives with empirical concept case studies and includes recent industry examples. It is thoroughly revised and vetted by corporate panellists and industry professionals, adding novelty to the content. Further, an experienced academic advisory council approves the course curriculum and the content to be suitable for implementation.

All faculty members play a part in actively **mentoring** the students, understanding each mentee precisely, tracking their academic progress and guiding them to their end goal. Mentoring involves everything, including guiding, training, challenging, and influencing them to come up with solutions without delay. So, as a mentor, each faculty addresses plenty and plenty of doubts and questions like why, where, who, what, how, which, whom, and when. A mentor is the first point of contact for all queries or problems the mentees face related to academics, college facilities, domain understanding, placement profiles, etc. The students feel at ease at times of placement pressure and can crack the interviews.

The institute offers two internships for all the students during their postgraduate program. After completing their first semester of 5-6 months, the students work with the company during their winter internship programme for 30-45 days. This is the first exposure to the corporate world for most of the students, where they learn the corporate culture and work following the deadlines of their seniors. After completing the second semester, they are again exposed to the industry for the summer internship program (SIP). During SIP, the students work with the companies into the profiles in which they are interested in making a career. Thus during SIP, the students undergo rigorous profile-specific training and hands-on experience in core profiles. These **instrumental internships** are also one of the key aspects of their successful placements. The institute also facilitates international as well as domestic exchange programs and collaborations with partner universities.

Considering the latest trends in the industry, the B-School quickly adapted training students on **data science and analytics**, viz. finance analytics, marketing analytics and human resource analytics. Thus these students have an edge in the company by effectively analysing the data for taking crucial business decisions. Students are also involved in group activities analysing various corporate projects (Elazab & Alazab, 2015).

Students from all three domains, viz. finance, marketing and human resource, are sent to various companies to gain experience on live projects offered by the company for around 1-5 weeks. These **experiential live projects** give opportunities to the students to gain experience in different profiles, adding to their internships. Through the incubation centre, the students get opportunities to work on various live projects in finance, marketing, human resource, operations and analytics domain while the industry-experienced faculty support the group of bright students

(Kumar, 2019). Further, the use of information systems for continuous evaluations and assessments has evolved in the recent past, guiding students in problem-solving and decision-making (Gill & Ritzhaupt, 2013). Thus it also encourages autonomous learning, empowering students to learn in their way with increased confidence and high motivation (Alkhoudary, 2015; Mattila & Mattila, 2015; Kumar, et. al., 2022; Kumar, et. al., 2023).

Every Saturday at the institute, there is a corporate weekend where top professionals from different profiles are invited to the college for a panel discussion participated by the students. These corporates also interact with the students discussing the recent developments in the industry and various work profiles. Apart from continuous corporates visiting the campus, there are around separate 12-15 corporate events organised for the students to be more abreast with the industry. **Corporate events** also helped in building a strong brand of the institute in the corporate world (Khanna et al., 2019). The institute also provides workshops, seminars, and experiential learning activities to enhance the skills of all its students. Mentorship programs with industry professionals to develop leadership capabilities are often offered to bright students.

The **integrated in-house developed ERP** is the nerve through which all information flows between the students and faculty. Attendance of students, easy access to the timetable, class participation, pre-reading, course content, assignment allotting and submission, different evaluations, faculty load sheet, student wise progress reports are some of the key features of ERP (Mattila, 2015; Rahman, & Al Hatali, 2015). Each faculty can track their mentees and guide them in improving their weak areas. The students also quickly adapt to new technologies and processes (Gupta et al., 2020).

The education system's responsibility is to make each student a socially responsible citizen. Students are voluntarily involved in various corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities with companies that must spend as a part of their profit mandatorily. The students can connect more with business ethics; thus, social entrepreneurship can lead to socially responsible managers. **These grounded and submissive CSR activities** lead to improve soft skills, confidence and business management skills, also developing a sense of empathy. Understanding their responsibility towards society makes students more submissive and also sincere in their learning. Students are thus encouraged to engage in social impact projects that address societal challenges. Also, the institute partners with non-profit organisations, NGOs, and social enterprises to provide opportunities for students to apply their management skills for the greater good.

The institute subscribes to various **efficacious databases** that the faculty and students can use for their research and learning, acting as a source of authentic data. Bloomberg and Ace Equity databases are the two most popular of those which are substantially used. Top students also get a chance to participate in the Bloomberg championship programme every year with all other top B-schools in India. The Bloomberg database helps students access quick and reliable data and be

prepared to work in the industry. Companies prefer candidates with knowledge of Bloomberg as it helps in saving training costs.

In addition to the databases, certified professionals and trainers train the students on **additional corporate softwares**, including various business tools. This additional training gives students the edge in the corporate world to do their allotted tasks effectively. The major software trainings covered are Excel, PowerPoint, SAP, Oracle, six-sigma, R, Python, and SPSS, to name a few (Ruhi & Ghatrenabi, 2015; Sethi, 2019).

During the final placement period, the faculty members are involved in thoroughly revising the domain knowledge of the students as per the job offers given by the corporates. The companies also share these job offers in advance so that the students are trained well in any specific skill required for the job profile. **Effective placement training** increases the students' success rate in the companies offering final placements. The faculty members possessing industry experience in their domain are made to train the students for specific job profiles, which increases the chances of success. A culture of lifelong learning by offering executive education programs, workshops, and webinars for alumni and industry professionals is promoted.

Figure 1. Initiatives adopted by new-age B-Schools

Conclusion

It is critical for the medium and lower-rung B-schools to stop having inertia and keep on adjusting continuously to the industry's evolving demands due to the dynamically changing business environment with the advent of technology. The management institutes must ensure adequate internal control mechanisms but also have a faster decision-making ability to make necessary changes in teaching pedagogy and other requirements to enhance the skillsets of the students.

Instead of emphasising just a PhD degree, the main goal must be to develop a faculty pool with a mix of practitioners and researchers. Additionally, sufficient infrastructure and research labs with databases must be offered to encourage students to think creatively while completing tough assignments that are demanded by corporations. In order for students to be aware of the most recent market developments, regular engagement and training with industry veterans must be offered. Strict teaching pedagogy and evaluation must instill in the students the habit of discipline and hard work. Last but not least, the curriculum needs to cover the most recent technology and their effects on business (Sethi, 2019).

Most business schools are failing to impart requisite skillsets among the students and need major revamp (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005). Most business schools provide poorly skilled individuals who are not able to survive in the corporate world (Bhatia & Panneer, 2019). The management colleges which evolve with time will fulfil the demands of both, the students and the corporate, can further lead to better growth in India and globally, building a credible brand for itself. With the help of this case study, we bring to the forefront various new-age initiatives that other B-Schools can adapt to survive and grow in the rapidly evolving management education.

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