Interest in academic research in India has risen in the last decade with the focus of the universities shifting to research output of their faculty. According to the SJR SCImago Journal and Country Rank database¹, India ranks 10th globally in terms of number of published research for the period 1996-2012 with about 750,777 papers published during this duration across all fields. If we look at the category of Business Management and Accounting, which has most of the management sub-fields, India ranks 7th with about 10,819 articles published during this period. Although it is an encouraging statistic, looking at the same dataset with reference to citations per paper (which is an indicator of quality of research), India holds 42nd position² with a citation index of 2.61 per paper as compared to 17.75 for Netherlands which is at the top position. This is further corroborated by UT Dallas ranking which is a similar database but includes only the top 24 journals in management (The UTD Top 100 Business School Research Rankings, 2014). The UT Dallas ranking suggests that Indian authors have produced only 54 papers in the top management journals in the last five years (2009-2014) with the majority of published papers having Indians not as the lead author. This raises a serious concern about the quality of management research in India. There might be several reasons behind this lacklustre performance.

One of the most important reasons often provided for the underperformance of academics in India is the lack of adequate research training. Most faculty members, barring a few in top-rated management institutes, are not adequately trained in the latest research tools and techniques, resulting in overall substandard training for PhD students. For instance, most PhD students are not trained to work independently on a dataset, complete the analysis, and submit it in the form of a paper as part of the research method courses. They have little exposure to different softwares for testing their hypotheses and also lack support for the use of sophisticated statistical software. Therefore, the quality of research training required to be a management faculty remains variable and when these PhD students graduate to become faculty of management schools, they often provide less than par guidance to the next set of research students, thus creating a vicious cycle.

Another relevant reason for poor research output that is often cited for the developing and third world countries is lack of research infrastructure. Research infrastructure includes access to journal databases and data analysis software. In the last few years,

¹ www.scimagojr.com
² With a filter of at least 500 papers published by any country during 1996-2012
journal publishers have been criticized for making access to their databases “fiscally unsustainable and academically restrictive” (Harvard Faculty Advisory Council, personal communication, 2012) as they have monopolized the journal market and pushed the prices upwards, making it unaffordable for these countries. Despite being supported by the Ministry of HRD, complete access to all reputed journals is not available in most institutes. Cheaper database plans come with embargoes that limit access to current research papers. Open access is a recent trend in publication and it will take a while before some of the open access journals attract the best research. At current prices, best institutions in India have to allocate close to ₹30-35 million for online subscriptions (personal communication, May 5, 2014). Apart from research databases, MBA colleges also have to subscribe to print journals and other databases which are of greater use for their curriculum. Justifying such high cost becomes difficult if an institute does not have a sizeable number of faculty and students using these databases for research. The government support for research funding in India is still very low at about 0.9 percent of GDP as compared to 2.8 percent in the US, 3.4 percent in Sweden, and 1.98 percent in China (Battelle, 2013) and therefore little subsidy is available for the management institutes for accessing these databases. Also, some self-funded institutes do not want to invest (even if they can) because they still focus more on teaching/consulting rather than research, something that we discuss in the next paragraph.

The faculty-student ratio in most management schools is skewed resulting in more teaching requirement per faculty. There is acute shortage of trained faculty in higher education in general and management education in particular (Bhattacharyya & Chaturvedi, 2013). Work allocation of faculty in most management schools is generally based on the premise that if a faculty is not teaching, he/she is not doing anything productive and therefore must be allocated work in the form of training/consulting/administration. The demographic dividend (Chandrashekhar, Ghosh, & Roychowdhary, 2006) that is often considered a boon due to a bulge in the working age group population in India turns out to be a problem in this context. The number of youth that need to be trained is much larger as compared to the number of people that are available to train. The incentive systems for research are often such that the time of most faculty members gets automatically devoted to teaching. In addition, given that the industry has grown at an average of about 8 percent for the last ten years, the need for trained managers has multiplied. Most companies turn to management schools for training managers. This is a very good arrangement in many ways both for management schools and the companies. While the faculty get exposed to the industry dynamics, getting at the same time an opportunity to supplement their income, the companies get qualified faculty to train their managers in skills required for the industry. However, this further constricts the time available to the faculty for doing quality research. Research takes skill, discipline, and extended periods of time spent by the researcher with very little assured output. It is only natural that many faculty members who actually have intentions to do research over time get sucked into the teaching/training machine. Fresh PhDs who join as faculty and have the potential to publish their thesis often get involved in teaching and administration early in their career leading to a delay in converting their research into publication. Involvement in teaching also compels the young graduates to lose touch with research and the probability of them doing good research decreases year after year.
Another issue is that the inflow of quality students for research has been much lower than one would expect. India is home to some of the renowned institutions of the world, e.g. Indian Institutes of Managements (IIMs) and Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), producing some of the brightest graduates. But these graduates are not attracted to research careers for many reasons including large differences in immediate salary after graduating along with a less foreseeable future source of income on entering academics as a profession. Most management colleges struggle to find bright candidates for their PhD positions.

The Indian management institutes often offer a poor research environment which is a culmination of the effects of poor training, lack of adequate research infrastructure, and demands on time for teaching. Another prominent factor in the Indian context is the absence of a thriving ecosystem to nurture researchers. Lack of an active research community limits researchers’ scope for discussing their research, building connections, and accessing support networks in India. Presence of mentors has been found to help researchers progress in their research journey reasonably well (Bird, 2001). This ecosystem of research helps researchers to receive comments on their work and derive insights while contributing to other’s work. In the absence of a research active community and culture, faculty are often not aware of what is expected from a journal and how to modify one’s work to at least get a ‘revise and resubmit’ suggestion from good journals.

Another pillar of thriving research ecosystem is the presence of a number of good quality journals, which are very few in India. The absence of these journals means that the researchers in India are unable to publish contextual, indigenous, applicable, and meaningful work done in the Indian context. Running a good journal, in addition to financial resources, requires a large pool of active researchers who are willing to give their time pro bono to read and review papers of colleagues. The absence of appropriate journals and a healthy feedback system in India has led the faculty to produce research and use methods that sometimes do not serve the Indian context. Prababilities of collaboration are more likely with colleagues outside of India rather than within the country. Holtbrugge (2012) mentioned that, “scholars who conduct indigenous management research may find it easier to publish their work in specialized journals edited by researchers from and focusing on emerging markets, such as International Journal of Emerging Markets, International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management, Journal of African Business, Journal of Indian Business Research, Management and Organization Review, or Rossiiskij Zhurnal Menedzhmenta (Russian Management Journal)” (p.5).

The repercussion of research that cannot be consumed by local industries or organizations is the missing patronage for research from industry. Also many capable students are not attracted to doing research because they find the questions and work of the current researchers esoteric and unconnected.

Another aspect of the research ecosystem is academic conferences. There are hardly any good quality management conferences being held on a regular basis in India. Academic conferences are known to provide meeting grounds for discussion of research, making relevant contacts for research partnerships, exchanging recent trends, and learning from experienced speakers about research methodology and publication techniques. A care-
fully planned conference provides feedback on each paper submitted irrespective of whether the work is accepted for presentation or not.

It is this last aspect of the ecosystem that the Indian Academy of Management seeks to augment through its prestigious biennial conference that brings together senior and junior researchers onto one platform. The India chapter of the Academy, the Indian Academy of Management was formed with the charter of advancement of management research in India and it is with this motive that a biennial conference of the Indian Academy of Management was introduced in 2009. It was first held at XLRI - Xavier School of Management, followed by the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore in 2011. The conference is becoming increasingly popular and the last conference which was held at IIM Ahmedabad was attended by about 350 participants from various institutes of India and abroad. The conference believed that apart from quality presentations, the process of review and feedback to authors is also important. Special steps were taken to provide detailed review from peer reviewers, which helped the participants to get feedback on their work as well as introduce the process of reviewing to the participants. In all, 410 papers were submitted out of which 180 were accepted for oral presentation and 163 were presented over three days apart from 82 others which were invited for poster presentation.

We bring to you in this special issue of Vikalpa - The Journal for Decision Makers some carefully selected research papers presented at the Conference. The third biennial Conference had the theme “Rethinking Management Theory & Practice in the Present Indian Economic Context”. The theme of this conference is one such step to help management thinkers and researchers in India to engage in work that is relevant and purposeful.

The call for papers for the conference outlined how “rapid GDP growth of the Indian economy over the last decade has created unprecedented opportunities and challenges for the organizations operating out of India. While rapid growth, translated in terms of better returns, profitability, margins and growth, the concomitant pains associated with a lack of percolation of this growth to large sections of the society has created a disquiet. The financial crisis and its aftermath, the slow-down in the growth of the Indian economy over the last two years, raise several questions on the sustainability of the “Shining India story”. Year 2012 had witnessed several cases of poor industrial relations in large organizations and also worker strikes in certain sectors like the automobile factories and textile mills. Economic and political scandals are brought to notice and the political leadership seems uninspiring. Internal security of civilians is threatened by frequent terrorist attacks. Challenges related to issues of sustainable development such as education, health, sanitation, and environmental well-being also loom large. Several regulatory changes are simultaneously occurring; new institutions are created and the purpose of existing institutions is getting redefined. The role of the actors, namely government, business, and civil society, is changing quite rapidly. Inter-organizational relationships across these actors are resulting in new modes of collaboration and new emerging forms of organization. Given this changing socio-economic, cultural, political and regulatory landscape, it is an exciting time for management researchers”.

A call was made to the researchers to think “Is it sufficient for us to imitate the Western models of doing research? Can Indian management researchers be more inclusive and
address issues created by the pluralism and diversity and the resulting complexity of the Indian context? Can management researchers move away from studying the easily accessible manager who speaks the dominant language and is influenced by the Western ways of thinking (thus making them very easy to study) and include the district civil surgeon in a remote area of India who is charged with ensuring lower infant mortality, the supervisor of the railway system that has 400 drivers reporting to him/her, the field officer in the village who is charged with increasing the productivity of the farmer? Can management researchers look at what are the social dynamics of the much practised outsourcing? Is it not relevant to study the family business owners and their successors?”

Not many papers submitted or selected addressed issues of rethinking management in the Indian context. However, several of the papers did report research on issues that are meaningful and focused on Indians and Indian industry. One of the keynote speakers Rohit Varman, spoke about the silent hegemony of the Western paradigm on the thought and practice of research in the marketing area. His talk is a Perspective paper in this issue. His arguments, though specific for the marketing domain in management, are equally relevant for other domains of management research in India. It is hoped that his perspective will encourage researchers in other domains of management to recognize the importance of encouraging a relevant discourse in their fields of research and enquiry.

Ten papers, which studied Indian organizations, managers, student populations, and focused on dynamics within India were selected for this Special issue. An attempt was also made to include research which used a variety of methods and did not rely solely on the use of standardized questionnaires and surveys.

Anuradha, Srinivas, Singhal, and Ramnarayan in their paper “To work or not to work: construction of meaning of work and making work choices” argue that people have multiple meanings for work that co-exist at the same time. They explore employee’s perceptions towards the meaning of work among employees of public sector banks using structured interviews and find interesting insights about social and personal meaning of work. The discussion of several factors that contribute to ascribing different meanings of work provides an insightful perspective about meaning and work in India.

Work and family may put conflicting demands that impact an employee. Padhi and Pattnaik in their paper “The role of cognitive appraisal in work-family experiences of Indian IT employees” apply the person-environment fit theory. Subjective appraisal of one’s environment against internal expectations based on personal desires, values or goals could help explain why some people facing the same situation at work and at home find the situation as contributing to work-family enhancement or work-family conflict. In their study of men and women working in IT organizations, they found a significant difference between incongruent and congruent employees with congruent employees feeling less work-family conflict and higher work-family enrichment.

Ravindran and Baral in their paper titled “Factors affecting the work attitudes of Indian re-entry women in the IT sector” explore factors affecting re-entry of women in their career. They found diversity of an organization and policy usage as important predictors of career commitment among women employees. This paper suggests that making a friendly policy environment for women employees leads to career commitment.
Rawat in her paper titled, “Patriarchal beliefs, women’s empowerment, and general wellbeing” distinguishes between eve empowerment and psychological empowerment. Eve empowerment is conceptualized as the woman’s ability to overcome the belief and practice of patriarchy. Working women from diverse contexts were studied and it was found that when women were able to counter patriarchy, they experienced both types of empowerment and also reported higher well-being.

Passion at work is considered to be an important variable and has gained considerable attention recently. Gaan and Mohanty in their paper titled, “Three factor model of employee passion: An empirical study in the Indian context”, study employee work passion by combining scales from two earlier studies and found it consisting of three factors: work cognition, work affect, and work rumination. This differed from the popular four-factor model which also has job well-being as another factor. This study provides useful insights for research on employee passion in the Indian context.

Ciby and Raya, in a qualitative study of people working in the information technology companies, present their findings in a study titled, “Exploring victims’ experiences of workplace bullying: A grounded theory approach”. They found that people at entry levels experienced workplace bullying more often than those who had been at the organization for longer periods of time. Heavy workload, unrealistic deadlines, and role ambiguity were found to lead to bullying by the supervisor. The autocratic style of leadership and perceived high power of the boss also contributed to the feeling of being bullied. The study presents findings from an under-researched area in the literature in India.

A number of researchers have established the relationship between organizational justice and job satisfaction/organizational commitment. Totawar and Nambudiri, in their paper titled, “How does organizational justice influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment?” propose psychological capital (PsyCap) as a mediator between organizational justice and job satisfaction/organizational commitment. PsyCap, a concept from positive organizational behaviour, successfully mediated the relationship between organizational justice and job satisfaction/organisational commitment among Indian employees.

In her paper titled, “Examining PCB-outcomes relationship: Moderating role of individualism” Agrawal examines the effect of psychological contract breach (PCB) on trust and work engagement. In her study with Indian managerial employees, she finds that a higher level of trust reduces the extent of negative relationship between PCB and work engagement.

Bathini and Vohra in their paper, “Volunteering: The role of individual-level psychological variables” differentiate between help volunteering and involvement volunteering and examines what type of people volunteer. Not only were different traits correlated with help and involvement volunteering, even the mediating role of self-efficacy beliefs and values on the relationship between traits and type of volunteering was different for help and involvement volunteering. The study, using student samples from a professional college, has relevance for both theory and practice.

Ojha and Rao in their paper, “The emergence of an organizational field: The case of open source software” use narrative analysis of the open source software movement to examine the emergence of organization fields of open source software as an alternative to proprietary
software using an institutional theory perspective. Interesting propositions that capture dynamics among individuals and organizations in the field of open source software are offered.

The Indian management scholarship has a long way to go. With an increased emphasis on quality research in several management school rankings, there is an increased urgency to provide better support system for quality management research. Institutes need to attract better talent and invest in their continuous growth and development to enable them to produce quality research. Support needs to be provided to faculty members interested in research by creating time for research and funding research projects. The government also needs to increase its funding specially for non-UGC institutions given that most management institutes come under that umbrella. Conferences like the one organized by the Indian Academy of Management would continue its efforts to create a better environment of management research in India but the onus lies much more on the individual management institutes and faculty members to increase the momentum.

REFERENCES


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