In 2010, Srikant Datar, David Garvin, and Patrick Cullen presented their assessment of the state of management education in a seminal work titled *Rethinking the MBA: Business Education at a Crossroads* (Datar, Garvin, & Cullen, 2010). They identified three trends that were shaping management education. One was questioning by employers of the value of an MBA degree—the others were the shift away from traditional educational offerings towards diverse programmes and changing enrollment patterns. For institutions, these trends, especially the criticism from employers of MBAs, imply both taking into account stakeholder feedback and revisiting institutional assumptions about preparing leaders for the world of management. True, Datar and his colleagues were studying only top-ranked programmes in the Western context, but their claim is that their results are generalizable to other contexts as well. Accepting this, we offer a perspective on the first trend identified above—employer feedback and its implications for assumptions about preparing MBAs for business leadership in the Indian context.

In order to situate employer feedback within the framework of institutional responses—both curricular and pedagogical, we adopt the framework developed by Datar et al. (2010). In their view, business schools are in the business of developing leaders and entrepreneurs, and in order to be effective in this mission, need to do two things: “reassess the facts, frameworks, and theories that they teach (the “knowing” component), while at the same time rebalancing their curricula so that more attention is paid to developing the skills, capabilities, and techniques that lie at the heart of the practice of management (the “doing” component) and the values, attitudes, and beliefs that form managers’ worldviews and professional identities (the “being” component)” (Datar et al., 2010, p.7). This Knowing-Doing-Being framework, which they adopt from a military leadership curriculum in the United States, is a useful framework to adopt when reflecting on the kind of knowledge that institutions seek to provide and, more importantly, seeking to “rebalance” the curriculum. The latter is a crucial insight which addresses the oft-heard criticism of MBAs being good on knowledge and poor in action and implementation, or of MBAs not being sensitive enough to the ethical standards that are expected of them.

If rebalancing the curriculum implies an identification of the lacunae in its three components, what would these gaps be? Datar et al. (2010) list eight areas that business schools seem to be weak in. These are:

1. **Responding to Industry Needs:**
   - Reorienting Management Education

**KEY WORDS**

- Management Education
- Employers
- MBA Graduates
- Skill Sets
- MBA Curriculum

*PERSPECTIVES*

presents emerging issues and ideas that call for action or rethinking by managers, administrators, and policy makers in organizations

**Responding to Industry Needs:**

**Reorienting Management Education**

T V Rao, Siddhartha Saxena, Vijaya Sherry Chand, Rajeshwari Narendran, Kandaswamy Bharathan, and B H Jajoo
• Gaining a global perspective: managing institutional, economic, and cultural diversity
• Developing leadership skills: learning to build with others
• Honing integration skills: framing problems holistically and incorporating judgment and intuition into analytical decision-making
• Recognizing organizational realities and implementing effectively: understanding the politics of organizational behaviour
• Acting creatively and innovatively
• Thinking critically and communicating effectively
• Understanding the roles, responsibilities, and purpose of business: balancing the financial and non-financial objectives of business and multiple stakeholder demands
• Understanding the limits of models and markets

We use this framework to offer a perspective on the following question: In the Indian context, what insights can employers offer on the ‘knowing’, ‘doing’, and ‘being’ aspects of the formation of an MBA graduate, that management education institutes can use to “rebalance” their curricula?

Management education in the top-ranked schools in India is no different from the education offered in the Western contexts insofar as it is subjected to the same pressures to reinvent, redefine, redesign and re-establish its value addition. These pressures have intensified over the last two decades, ever since liberalization took hold. We have seen globalization of businesses and changing organizational structures and processes, frequent mergers and acquisitions, the emergence of social media as an important tool in shaping business, technological innovations directed at the bottom of the pyramid, increasing access to online education, multiple generations — Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z — working under the same roof, changing human resource management practices, and an increasing focus on talent management. Bhandarker (2008), while commenting on these changes, notes that the Indian businesses of tomorrow will need managers and leaders who can thrive amidst the challenges of living and working in a global world, and who can prepare organizations to cope with ambiguities, uncertainties, and complexities. She finds that the Indian business education paradigm, by and large, has remained the same for many decades, focusing more on developing intellectual power rather than building leaders. Her prescription for developing MBAs as leaders is a focus on four clusters: the intra-personal, which includes self-awareness, emotional self-awareness, intentionality, resilience, optimism and empathy; the “influencing others” cluster, which includes emotional expression, interpersonal connections, constructive discontent, and trust; the “managing complexity cluster” which consists of intuition and creativity; and “managing diversity”, a tolerance for ambiguity and flexibility. These four clusters overlap to a large extent with the eight focus areas outlined by Datar et al. (2010) and listed earlier. In brief, the new roles and the new skills that the Indian environment is now demanding imply a curriculum that is different from the traditional offerings made by management schools—Indian schools, like their Western counterparts, need to rebalance their curriculum if they are to re-establish the value addition they offer to the industry.

THE MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF AN MBA PROFILE

What do the employers look for when they recruit an MBA? To answer this question, in-depth interviews and questionnaire surveys were conducted with three kinds of recruiters: those who recruited from a Tier-I institution (a top-ranked institute) for internships and final placements, HR managers who participated in a Senior Management Programme at the Tier-I institution, and HR Managers known to the authors. In addition, 42 companies recruiting MBAs were surveyed.

Dimensions with High Diversity among MBA Recruits

Going by the responses of the private sector alone, knowledge and analytical ability seem to discriminate between the good and the not-so-good institutes. But on the creativity and the being components of ethics, commitment to organization and learning attitude, MBAs are fairly homogeneous. This reinforces the point made by Datar et al. (2010) that the better institutions may be doing a good job on the ‘knowing’ dimension, but need to focus more on the ‘doing’ and ‘being’ dimensions.

Those organizations that perceive significant differences among graduates of various B-Schools indicate what these differences are. (In the responses quoted below, Tier-1 refers to the top-ranked schools, Tier-2 to the mid-
dle-ranked schools, and Tier-3 to the low-ranked schools.)

- “The main difference is in the integrity level. Students from Tier 1 B-Schools take fewer shortcuts.
- Tier-3 students have more entrepreneurial abilities. They are more aware of the ground realities and are thus able to solve real life problems.
- In comparison with the Western B-school graduates, our emotional quotient, and aesthetics are weaker. In terms of leadership, there is not much difference. We can have good or bad leaders from anywhere. (This is from a multinational corporation executive.)
- Recruits from IIMs become Heads of their functions/ SBUs within five to seven years. However, the graduates from other B-Schools are not able to reach that height, even after 10 years. The reason is quite obvious: the IIM graduates possess very high level of analytical skills, great confidence levels, and are prepared to look at everything from a different perspective.
- The key differences are in the areas of exposure and the confidence the employees bring to the job. The ones from the Tier-2 schools do not seem to be that confident and have very poor exposure to the business world before they join us. It must be, however, added that the individual’s personality does make a difference. For example, an evening MBA graduate has been an outstanding employee, because his willingness to work and learn sets him apart.
- Differences across schools are more important at the aggregate level because of the rigorous admissions procedures followed by a few schools. Thus, in general, graduates from these schools would be better than those from the local institutes or colleges. Graduates of the more established schools have also benefitted significantly from the peer culture. We consider this to be the most important reason for recruiting from schools with stringent selection procedures. The peer culture in these institutes certainly helps the graduates.
- The level of commitment and the zeal among the students in one institute was so high that they even sacrificed their winter breaks for doing a project. The teachers/faculty kept no stone unturned to make sure that the students started after proper preparation; they were keenly involved in taking time to time feedback for improvements of both their own system as well as that of the students.
- The IIM students tend to be rigid in their choice of roles. They have around two to three years of experience but look for roles which involve strategic decision-making and adopt a hands-off approach. MBAs from other institutes are relatively open and flexible in terms of taking up roles and are willing to sweat it out.
- One difference which can be easily identified is the rate of attrition; normally the IIM graduates have a higher rate of leaving their first jobs early to move to more attractive or sometimes challenging job offers.”

Critical Roles and Activities: Expectations from MBAs in the Initial Working Years

The private sector recruiters have certain initial expectations from the MBA graduates regarding their functional roles. For instance, business development, sales and product management, client and customer handling, finance, and brand management, are considered important roles. These roles require a hands-on approach towards work. The public sector expectations, though a little different, indicate a functional focus; in areas such as marketing, quality control, territory management, and so on. The implication is that business school curricula should not lose sight of developing a mix of knowing and doing, the knowledge and the skill sets necessary for their graduates to perform functional roles effectively.

The context in which these roles are performed is best indicated by what the companies have to say. The views of 13 of the responding companies which also took part in a conference held at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, Management: The Road Ahead, in 2012 are summarized below.

Voices of Employers

- “Sometimes, being recruited as an Executive Assistant to a top level director/ CEO is the beginning of a long career.
- The candidates are rotated between various functions and locations in the first year. The recruits are first allowed to get their ‘hands dirty’ in data gathering, analysis, etc., in order to understand the A to Z of the company’s goals and operation models. The focus is more on improving business and customer experience than just on personal growth.
• Those recruited from IIMs are assigned more strategic, thought-oriented roles. They are placed as Executive Assistants to senior business leaders and are expected to help in strategy formulation and work as a resource team for them. The senior management team is told that they should be able to get everything from these MBAs. MBAs from other institutions are assigned analytical roles where they may be required to work as rating analysts, doing research work on projects, writing sector reports, writing reports on global entities, etc.

• Managers are assessed through competency mapping to identify the competencies required for various positions and to see the extent to which they have the required competencies. MBAs, especially those recruited into HR, should be able to assist the company in carrying out such exercises.

• They can play audit and diagnostic roles by working as Executive Assistants with the top management like the Directors and GMs and constantly help them to diagnose the way their departments are functioning and suggest systems and processes to improve the same.

• MBAs are expected to play generally supportive roles to the middle management. The middle level management are team leaders and section leaders. They formulate policies and set directions. MBAs are expected to help them and work under their direction. Their main role is execution and implementation.

• Generally, it takes a few years to get fully involved in all corporate actions but initially the MBAs should be doing high level of projects under the mentorship of an expert — basically, it should involve the execution of planning, analytical research, extensive data mining and exploring data, nurturing people and adopting appropriate approaches to plan, lead, and execute.

• A large number of MBAs are taken primarily as management trainees. A fair number of them being without experience, their job profile is confined to evaluation of proposals (for loans) and recommending clear decisions. They also have to make calls and interview applicants, and then make considered assessments. After a year, they can move into more supervisory roles.

• Many of the graduates are engineers, who do not have much idea of business. Apart from those with a thirst for learning, the others find it hard to adjust to the demands of the job. Some of them even tell us, “We were not prepared to do this after an MBA.” The key problem is that an artificial aura has been created around the title ‘MBA’ and graduates assume they are somewhat special. Their expectations are unreal, and many of them are not really prepared for the world of practice.

• As far as putting the MBAs into initial assignments is concerned, it depends on what function they have been recruited for. Like, for Marketing function, it is advisable to put them into marketing basics to develop an overall perspective, to understand the complete marketing scenario — competitors, customers, the key drivers, and the critical factors for success. For HR functions, we have different roles for MBAs and MSWs. In the initial year, the HR recruits are put into HR verticals based on their acumen like recruitments, performance management systems, talent management, etc. under the supervision of a functional head. For roles in Operations, MBAs are directly put into procurement, because that is the basic learning one has to master in the initial years. As far as Finance is concerned, normally Chartered Accountants are preferred for the core financial functions. The MBAs with specialization in finance find a place in corporate finance roles, fund raising, etc.

• In the initial years, MBAs are made to work as representatives, starting with a cross-functional training for their first year and follow it up with two to three years of working as representative in sales and marketing function.

• In three to four years, they are expected to get a thorough understanding of the industry, organization, and the related processes and become capable of taking informed and mature managerial decisions in various functions. At this stage, they should be able to take ownership of a process and assume accountability for the process deployment and results through managing a team of professionals.”

**Skill Sets for Initial Roles and Activities**

Table 1 presents the skill-sets noted by the employers. They have been inductively derived from the responses through a process of coding of their answers to open-ended questions. The results have been presented using the framework presented by Datar et al. (2010). The re-
responses that are directly within the scope of the traditional knowledge-skill objectives of an MBA programme are presented first. As can be seen, analytical skills constitute an important competence that employers look for. Traditional MBA programmes are well aware of this fact and we do not labour the point. From the Table, we may arrive at tentative definitions of four of the eight gaps Datar et al. have identified—leadership, creativity and innovation, critical thinking and communication, and understanding the purpose of business. What we are unable to identify are specific skills/qualities that can fit under the other four gaps they note: global perspective, integration skills (though this dimension may show a strong overlap with leadership), recognizing organizational realities, and understanding the limits of models and markets. This does not mean that employers do not consider these important; for instance, a global perspective may be an important quality in a slightly later stage of one’s career. Likewise, understanding organizational realities, which is just developing a political view of an organization, may be assumed by employers as something one learns through the practice of management. One respondent, however, was categorical that this is something that the management schools do not address adequately: “I emphasize, understanding the informal organization is more important because it is not taught in any curriculum, it is unwritten…. the sophisticated term would be to be [understand] culture-oriented [processes].”

**Table 1: Skills Sets Required in MBAs for Initial Roles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Sets required</th>
<th>Traditional knowledge/skill domain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional/Foundational skills</strong></td>
<td>Analytical skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exposure to practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting skills</td>
<td>Implementation skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to understand, assimilate, general awareness</td>
<td>Developing leadership skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People management</td>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal &amp; team building skills</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process-sensitivity</td>
<td>Humility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receptivity to learning</td>
<td>Showing conviction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of vision</td>
<td>Acting creatively and innovatively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and adaptability</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thinking critically and communicating effectively</strong></td>
<td>Presentation and communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic thinking skills</td>
<td>Understanding the roles, responsibilities, and purpose of business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result orientation</td>
<td>Need for a hands-on approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to organizations</td>
<td>Business instinct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations from career</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Leadership and the ‘Being’ Dimension**

Leadership is one dimension that is repeatedly stressed by the employers. ‘Leadership skills’ in Table 1 includes nine sub-dimensions including a residual nebulous category called ‘leadership’. This category is best illustrated with a quotation. “A leader shows curiosity and willingness to learn, the willingness to challenge the status quo, and is able to learn from practice. This is something the curriculum ought to develop. As far as competencies are concerned, what is of foremost importance is the curiosity which takes a beginner much higher in the corporate ladder than those who start with a ‘what to do’ and ‘how to do’ approach. Secondly, it is the ability to challenge the status quo, to question ‘why so’ and ‘why not the other way’… the younger generation today is more capable of questioning than their predecessors. Thirdly, it is the practical and experiential learning and how well one can explore new avenues to learn different skill sets in their own field as well as from various other business operations. The objective is basically to develop business acumen in totality and the zeal to take that extra step and effort forward.”

“Being a leader means taking responsibility for implementing change, developing a certain depth as a person, willing to shed any stereotypes that one may have carried into the job, understanding the balance between a career and commitment to an organization, a commitment to practice, understanding one’s own limitations, and working out their expectations in a reasonable manner.” In addition, developing an integrated perspective is an important aspect of developing the ‘Being’ dimension.
An important aspect of the Being dimension is the sensitivity to the ethical and value dimensions of one’s work and one’s organization. “The graduate should also be ready to understand the values which govern an organization.” This is perhaps an example of understanding the organization as a political entity, but from the broader point of view of appreciating what drives the organization—and that too quickly.

**The Employers’ Views**

- “We would like to see MBAs showing willingness to influence organizations and to make changes rather than escape by moving on quickly.
- MBAs have high expectations from others, but they themselves often lack depth. They may be able to name the recent mergers and acquisitions but cannot go beyond naming as they do not try to understand and assimilate.
- They are more committed to their career than to the organization or the profession. They often appear to be under some kind of anxiety to cash in on their investments.
- The willingness for field roles has been going down. Many feel it is a necessary evil.
- Graduates from top schools tend to be individualistic. Very often they seek assignments in roles where their competencies are not aligned to the aspired role.
- Graduates need to be more independent and more grounded. The media hype about MBAs and their institutions and placement salaries make them develop unrealistic aspirations. These aspirations need to be moderated. There should be an aspiration check.
- They overrate the value of their degree; they expect very high salaries and think they are entitled to these because of the degree they have got. The word “package” has come to dominate their thinking. All over the country, this word has become the yardstick graduates use. It does not bear any relation to what the graduates can contribute. They have high expectations about what they should be getting, and complain when these are not met.
- They need to have the humility to understand that they need to earn their equity over time rather than merely by virtue of their degree and institution.
- Managers should understand the social aspect of business as well. If management students are to be change-makers anywhere, they will need to do so in a responsible manner. The present-day graduates are more focused on achieving business-related targets.
- Relevance of business to community is going to become a major issue. MBAs should be prepared for the same.
- Value education is often missing. Business ethics is taught. However, certain values like accountability, loyalty, growing with the company, and related values, are equally important. Perhaps case studies of people who have built organizations over 25 or 30 years need to be developed and used. Role models from the Indian business are not discussed. Relevant cases should be picked and taught to make the students realize what commitment to an organization means.
- Everyone should learn the art of judging the industry trends with sharper accuracy. A hold on the industry nuances, to read and think beyond the market or think differently as well as holistically are a few things MBAs ‘must’ have.
- To face the challenges of future, emotional quotient should be increased. Focus should be on social interaction and analysing abilities.”

**The ‘Doing’ Dimension**

Not surprisingly, ‘Practice Orientation’ emerges as important. This matches the observation made by Datar et al. (2010) regarding the value of learning from ‘doing’. After all, it is ‘practice’ that can help graduates hone their implementation skills; hence, their recommendations for a greater emphasis on field work. Our sample of Indian employers seems to echo this view. At the same time, they express a preference for retaining and strengthening the emphasis on academic rigour.

**Practice Orientation: Employers’ Views**

“MBAs are increasingly getting detached from the world of practice. So, the institutes should focus more on practice, by sending students to organizations, and organizing stronger internship programmes, more live projects, short stays in industry, making them work on shop floors and at the real place where transactions take place. Many institutes have lost focus on their product. They are more bothered about getting some ranking or presenting a good image of their infrastructure. Most of the MBA programmes revolve around preparing managers only for...
marketing and finance functions."

The methods that may be used to introduce a practice orientation are summarized below.

- Introduce faster changes in curriculum to suit market needs.
- Increase the number of projects for the students. This would help them develop entrepreneurial thinking and leadership qualities, manage diversity at the workplace, and deal with different perspectives. This would also give them a chance to learn from their mistakes.
- Include more current/contemporary case studies on Indian firms.
- Focus more on hands-on problems by increasing the internship period and even introducing grades for internship; and encouraging faculty to obtain industry experience and develop relevant cases.
- Introduce semester long internship in industry.
- Tie up with industry for live projects as part of the curricula. In-house live projects such as dealing and trading in stock, forex, etc. through dedicated terminals can help.
- Take up research based on industry demand.
- Try for process-based training and exposure.
- Enhance interface with industry.
- Develop competency mapping and recommendations for growth in a career lattice.

Enhancing Team Work: Employers’ Views

A crucial aspect of the practice orientation is team work. According to the employers, MBAs should be able to:

- "Work with diverse teams. Both individual and team projects can be promoted; for this, one should be ready to sacrifice the summer breaks or any other break time. It is also important to get the projects rated by B-School professors and industry experts jointly, based on their practicality and utility.
- Develop and manage teams, and conceive and manage change.
- Transform from “I” to “We”. What is expected of the graduates are leadership and the ability to solve problems. The new entrant is the brand ambassador of the Institute and needs to remember that he is a part of a new family."

We pull together the key critical dimensions offered by the employers in order to derive a few guidelines for a curricular change. From the analysis of the synthetic views of these employers, six dimensions have been identified.

Introduction of Practice-oriented Learning in the Curriculum

Some employers are of the firm opinion that a revamped curriculum needs to be based on a shift from classroom-based instruction to an industrial-experiential learning system. This approach would involve sending the students for a few weeks of industry exposure right at the beginning of their programme, followed by periodic industry visits. This would apply to all students, experienced or not, since the institutes will have specific learning objectives. The projects taken up by the students should avoid areas like motivation levels of employees or job satisfaction or profitability; rather, they should focus on how industry can benefit from the students’ presence in a broad sense. Institutes need to partner with industries so that the latter can teach, coach, and train the students.

Critical Thinking and Diagnosis

"MBAs tend to rush to conclusions and are eager to recommend solutions without sufficient in-depth diagnosis and understanding of the issue at hand. The teaching/learning methodology must inculcate the need for a structured diagnosis as a standard approach to problem solving.” This is an important but neglected aspect especially in the first year of a two-year programme.

Integrative Thinking

"In real life business environments, problems rarely impact only one discipline to the exclusion of others. HR problems need finance support; operations issues have an HR angle; marketing solutions depend on production capabilities and so on. But a fresh MBA thinks in silos. The programme must have lots of cases jointly taught by professors from two or three disciplines. This will inculcate the need for integrated thinking across organizational boundaries.” Disciplinary boundaries in MBA curricula are becoming more and more rigid in recent years. This point calls for a more inter-discipli-
nary approach to teaching, if integrative thinking is to develop in the graduates.

**Capability for Learning**

“The MBA is a multi-disciplinary, generalist programme. The world of business is dynamic and constantly expands to include new areas of thinking, like sustainability, regulation, risk, etc. It is impractical for the MBA programme to attempt to teach everything to the student. Therefore, what the programme must aim to inculcate is the “conscious ability to learn”. Students must be made aware of the process of learning, the process of applying what they learn, and must have the ability to reflect on and articulate what they have learnt.”

“Often, we find MBAs, (like any other employee in a company), going through big learning experiences but treating them transactionally without recognizing the learning opportunity.” An MBA with a “capability for learning” can then take on new topics. The MBA programme need not attempt to squeeze in more and more into an already thinly stretched curriculum.”

**Leader, Team Player, Innovator, Corporate Citizen**

“It is now acknowledged that these qualities are critical for the success of any manager, including an MBA, in any business environment.” However, these qualities are difficult to teach in a classroom and so are emphasized less. This is the key paradox. “The recruiter wants a well-rounded personality for his company. And everyone recognizes this. Yet, the institute insists on having just a single indicator of the quality of its output – the GPA. Often, the institute itself will subtly discourage the recruiter from using the GPA as a strict filter. But the student knows the requirement of the companies. Therefore, the student’s CV often reflects feeble attempts to demonstrate possession of these qualities – organizing cultural events, editing the college magazine, cleaning the neighbourhood slum for a day and other co- and extra-curricular activities. If the MBA is to transform itself, it is in this area that it has the biggest opportunity to do so. Gurus from global business schools of every hue encourage companies to “collaborate with their customers” to “co-create” products. Are business schools ready to listen to their own advice?”

**Apprenticeship before Award of Degree**

“MBA students must spend 6 to 12 months in corporate environments as apprentices before they are awarded MBAs. The one-year management trainee programme that many good companies have may be a part of the course. There is a huge difference in the mind-set of an MBA who has just landed a job and a student who has undergone apprenticeship during the course of MBA. The Management Institute could take the following steps:

- Certify some companies as “Teaching Partners” based on some pre-decided criteria
- Certify some senior managers as “Certified MBA Mentors,” something they can carry with them even if they switch jobs
- Develop a reasonably common programme for the experiences that the students must be put through at the partner organization
- Randomly assign students to these partner organizations for apprenticeship
- During the apprenticeship, the partner/mentor will be responsible for maintaining a log of the students’ performance especially on the traits and competencies not measured at the Institute, like teamwork, leadership, etc.
- Have travelling/local facilitators who are trained and certified individuals work with the partners/mentors in the companies and with the students to ensure that the programme objectives are met. These facilitators need not be hard core academics; they could be more like good quality trainers.
- Most importantly, get the mentors grade the apprentices on demonstration of certain essential traits during the apprenticeship. This could be used as an overall quality measure, and instead of being clubbed with GPA, could be presented as a separate indicator.”

This model cannot expect students to have the same experience in all companies; each company will have its own culture and business goals. But, the basic traits of the individuals would be relatively common across cultures.

**CONCLUSION**

The question that this paper has tried to answer is the following: “In the Indian context, what insights can employers offer on the ‘knowing’, ‘doing’, and the ‘being’ aspects of the formation of an MBA graduate, that management education institutes can use to “rebalance” their curricula?” The theoretical framework underpinning this
question was the Knowing-Doing-Being Model presented by Datar et al. (2010). We chose employers because they constituted one of the three forces shaping management education curriculum identified by Datar and his colleagues.

The data used in this analysis came from organizations that recruit mainly from the higher-ranked institutes. But even within this set, there is a lot of variation in the perceived quality of the MBA graduates. Most of this variation seems to be along the ‘knowing’ dimension, and to a lesser extent, along the ‘doing’ dimension. Knowledge and analytical ability seem to discriminate between the good and the not-so-good institutes. The better institutions may be doing a good job on the knowing dimension. However, on the creativity and the ‘being’ dimensions (ethics, commitment to organization, and learning attitude), MBAs may be more homogeneous. Perhaps this indicates an opportunity for the top-ranked institutes to focus more on the ‘being’ elements.

Indian employers clearly expect certain functional roles to be filled by fresh MBA graduates. These include Business Development, Sales and Product Management, Client and Customer Handling, Finance, and Brand Management. What is expected by the employers, in addition, is a hands-on approach to work. This indicates that while rebalancing their curricula, business schools must retain a focus on their current strength in the ‘knowing’ dimension, while augmenting their stress on the ‘doing’ dimension.

Regarding the skill-sets noted by the employers, there is a set, like analytical skills, that is directly within the scope of the traditional knowledge-skill objectives of an MBA programme. Traditional MBA programmes in the top-ranked institutes are strong on preparing students for this set of skills. However, when we examine the eight curricular gaps identified by Datar et al. (2010), four—leadership, creativity and innovation, critical thinking and communication, and understanding the purpose of business—seem to be very clearly on the radars of the employers. Specific skills and qualities that can fit under global perspective, integration skills (though this dimension may show a strong overlap with leadership), recognizing organizational realities, and understanding the limits of models and markets, seem to be under-emphasized. Perhaps B-Schools, at least the top ones, can build on these, thus creating a greater awareness about emerging areas of curricular focus. Recognizing organizational realities is one area that employers may assume is something one learns through engaging in practice; however, B-Schools would do well to build this into their curriculum since it counters an oft-made criticism of MBAs: “They are naïve.”

It is the ‘being’ dimension that seems to call for attention while making any attempt to rebalance the curriculum. Leadership means taking responsibility for implementing change, developing a certain depth as a person, willing to shed any stereotypes that one may have carried into the job, understanding the balance between a career and commitment to an organization, developing a commitment to practice, understanding one’s own limitations, and working out one’s expectations in a reasonable manner. In addition, developing an integrated perspective is an important aspect of developing the ‘being’ dimension. This is where the challenge for B-Schools lies. These qualities are not easy to develop in a classroom set-up, and call for more experiential methods of learning. B-Schools, by and large, are not as competent in these methodologies as they are in methods that develop analytical, instruction-based knowledge, and skills.

The qualities that the employers would like to be stressed fall mainly under three labels which can be directions for curricular change: Practice Orientation, Team Work, and Perspective Building. Finally, we present a set of six guidelines that seem to be important from the employers’ perspective as a model for future curricular practice: Introduction of the curriculum through practice; Critical thinking and diagnosis; Integrative thinking; Capability for learning; Focus on a complex made up of leaders, team player, innovator, and corporate citizen; and Apprenticeship before the award of the MBA degree.

REFERENCES


T V Rao is currently the Chairman of T V Rao Learning System (TVRLS). He was a Professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad between 1973 and 1994 and has been a Visiting/Adjunct Professor since then until recently. He is currently a member of the IIMA Society and the Board of Governors. While at IIMA, he chaired the PGP and FPM Programmes and Public Systems Group. He is the Founder and the First President of the National HRD Network, the First Honorary Director of the Academy of HRD, India, and also President of the Indian Society for Applied Behavioral Science (ISABS). He has authored/coauthored/edited over 50 books dealing with HRD, Education Management, Health and Population Management, and Entrepreneurship Development.

e-mail: tvrao@tvrao.com

Siddhartha Saxena is an Academic Associate in the Organizational Behaviour Area at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. An MBA in Human Resource Management, he has worked in the areas of talent management, intellectual capital management, 360 degree feedback, and HRM best practices. He has presented papers on Management Education, Social Entrepreneurship, and CSR at international conferences.

e-mail- siddharthas@iimahd.ernet.in

Vijaya Sherry Chand is Professor, Ravi J Matthai Centre for Educational Innovation, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad. His current research focuses on improvement in the public education system through augmenting its innovation potential. Specific areas of interest include the antecedents of individual workplace innovation, innovative performance of teachers and children’s motivation, teacher development and decentralized management of elementary education.

e-mail: vijaya@iimahd.ernet.in

Rajeshwari Narendran is currently the Director of the Academy of HRD, National President, ISTD and Professor of Business Administration in the M L Sukhadia University, Udaipur. A Ph.d in Management and an alumna of Harvard Business School, she is a World Board member of International Federation of Training and Development Organizations (IFTDO). A recipient of International Case Research Fellowship 2011, she is a known HRD Consultant and a social leader. Her book, Innovations in HRD and Training, has recently been published by Excel Books.

e-mail: rajeshwari18@yahoo.com

Kandaswamy Bharathan, a graduate of IIM Ahmedabad, worked for 12 years in the Automotive & Textile industry in India before moving on to the entertainment sector in 1990. He is currently the Executive Director of Kavithalayaa Productions, a well-known film and television production house. He has worked as Executive Producer of many Award winning Tamil films such as Roja, Mathu, Saamy, Kuselan etc. He has represented the Indian film industry in several international film festivals and conferences such as Cannes, Toronto, Los Angeles, Berlin and Tokyo International Film Festivals. After serving the industry for 25 years, Bharathan is pursuing his passion of teaching, training and mentoring young entrepreneurs who are interested in the Creative sector. He is currently a Visiting Faculty at IIM Ahmedabad and ISB Hyderabad teaching a unique course titled “Contemporary Film Industry: A Business Perspective”.

e-mail: bharathan56@yahoo.com

B H Jajoo, a Ph.D from IIT, Kanpur, is a retired Professor and Former Dean of IIM, Ahmedabad. He was a visiting professor in the Department of Computer Science at University of Delaware, USA, from 1987 to 1989. He specializes in computer networks, Internet and E-commerce technologies, IT infrastructure strategy, and technology evaluation and selection studies. He has published more than 25 papers in national and international journals and conferences, co-authored three books, and participated in more than 30 consulting projects for national and international, private and public sector organizations. He has delivered keynote addresses in many IT events organized by industry and academia and many popular lectures and seminars on a set of wide range of topics including Internet/Intranet, E-commerce, mobile commerce, multimedia technology, and PC technology. Currently, he is a member of board of directors of three IT companies.

e-mail: jajoo@iimahd.ernet.in

RESPONDING TO INDUSTRY NEEDS: REORIENTING MANAGEMENT EDUCATION