

Challenges Faced By Educators In Management Education

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ABSTRACT

The mushrooming of the management institutes and the spiraling number of MBA aspirants faced with dearth of good faculty at almost all B-schools has brought management education at the forefront of growing scrutiny wherein the management educators need to wrestle with questions of how to prepare students for their roles and careers in increasingly complex organizations. The Management educators with the responsibility of imparting world class managerial and leadership training to their aspiring students are not able to justify their role as they are facing some major challenges in their roles.

The objective was to allow the educators to reflect on their teaching experience that would generate sufficient insights as to how the MBA market place is changing in a big way and how the faculty is coping with the challenges. They are feeling an intensified pressure to deliver differential pedagogy techniques as the student expectations have increased.

The more daunting challenges faced by the educators pertain to predefining parameters and criteria for continuous evaluation. The students today have access to a myriad of internet based sources for completing their assignments and reports. The educators find it tough to develop the critical thinking and writing skills of their students. More challenges pertain to the development of the right mental attitude and the ethical code of conduct including the soft leadership aspects among the students. This paper discusses at key challenges faced by the community of management educators and ways to address the same.

Keywords: Management education, management educator challenges, student aspirations, pedagogical tools

Introduction

Business education today is at crossroads. The MBA marketplace is changing in a big way.

Management education in India is under the vibrant transition attributed by the increasing demands in the market place and industry, growing competition, globalization and socio cultural factors. The growing demand of management education leads to an increase in challenges faced by management educators to offer a value proposition keeping in tune to the paradigm shift in management culture.

With the increasing number of management institutes sprouting out over the years has been on the rise leading to a myriad of issues that educational entrepreneurs as promoters and management educators need to respond to. It becomes imperative for the management educators to understand the underlying challenges and unlock competitive strategies that are key to the secret of effective management institutions. Management educational institutes being a service organization need to ensure the best service delivery mechanism.

The mission of responsibly running a management institute keeping the main focus to inspire and champion management education, lies not only with the faculties but also with the educational entrepreneurs who act as promoters in case of private institutions. To respond to the growing global perspective of the students and to defend from the distinctive forces of the

industry, educational entrepreneurs and management educators need to turn to and adopt some distinctive measures. The onus of meeting the new pressures and needs lies with both the educational entrepreneurs as well as the faculties of the management institutes. Unless the management institutes emerge as a great differentiator;

are an addition to the concept of 'surplus society' propounded by of

Nordstrom and Ridderstrale (2001) with a surplus of similar institutes, employing similar faculty, with similar educational backgrounds, working in similar jobs of teaching and research, coming up with similar ideas, producing similar things, with similar remuneration and similar quality (Sharma, 2009).

For enhancing the quality of management education, business educators and promoters of the institution need to do a detailed review and investigate the challenges that the management institutes face in the area of academics, development of infrastructure and financial support. The educational entrepreneurs as promoters and business educators face the challenge to adopt those competitive strategies that would keep the institutes far away from ill functioning. The management institutes with the assistance of the faculty members need to overcome the challenge and continuously strive to produce world class quality of education thereby not compromising at the cost of quality.

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Promoters and faculty members constantly face the threat of the dynamic market forces and the vagaries of the demanding corporate world. There is a dire need to identify the emerging market dynamics and integrate it in the most effective manner by designing a robust course structure and applying it in the classroom pedagogy that helps to boost the student skills and develop them as versatile professional managers.

Management educators wrestle to respond to the profound transition of the management culture marked by demanding students, the need to provide world class facilities, meeting the faculty crunch, developing the best curriculum, deciding on the evaluation techniques and the onus of producing ethical professionals are on the rise. With the mushrooming of B-schools, it becomes difficult to find qualified and trained faculties who can be vested with the responsibility to mould and develop the budding managers to grapple with the present scenario.

Management educators need to understand the critical phase of management education and therefore take measures to mend the gaps as expected by the industry and the classroom delivery of knowledge. With the economic reforms and the shelling out of management institutes, management educators face the challenge to ensure that the institutes not only grow in terms of quantity but also flourish qualitatively.

2. Challenges faced by management educators

2.1 Campus requirement

A well-constructed business school campus can help to stimulate and inspire its occupants, helping them to work in teams, make brilliant presentations, and connect with the rest of the B-school community as well as the outside world. (Smith, 2012) The onus of setting up a good campus lies with the educational entrepreneur. The educational entrepreneurs as promoters need to ensure that the participants benefit from the school's unique campus set up.

Campus requirement in terms of buying or leasing it out calls for a decision. With the rising social expectations of the students, well furnished total infrastructure needs to be created which attracts a large pool of participants. Attracting is only a small of part of the whole process, but making them comfortable by providing world class facilities and putting them at ease with issues related to accommodation, residential facilities, recreation and refreshment needs to be addressed which continues to be a challenge for the educational entrepreneur in order to promote a good word of mouth.

Educational entrepreneurs as part of business educators grapple with questions related to the access of technology by the students. To cater to the growing anticipation of the students, and to gain a global presence, business educators strive to create a well furnished campus

facilities, air conditioned classrooms, good residential facilities so as to attract a quality crowd.

Providing a good campus is not sufficient to offer, the faculty members and promoters also find it crucial to develop, establish and nurture strong connections with business communities to flourish as a world class institution. To nurture and train the young minds , the educational entrepreneur need to ensure that the institutions are managed by competent professionals as part of the administrative decisions. Good HR practices needs to be introduced to manage the pool of teaching and non teaching staffs.

Likewise, educational entrepreneurs need to address the challenge of making decisions by striking a good balance using a set of financial criteria as well as the larger dimensions of qualitative issues of management education. Educational entrepreneurs as business educators need to assert the enormous commitment of time and money vested by the students as a major stakeholder. This involves adopting a holistic approach and taking a hard look at their value propositions in order to emerge as one of the leading management institutes.

2.2 Paradigm shift in management sector/curriculum

Faculty body fails to reassert the limitations of the theories that are being taught. Majority of the faculty members fail to deliver application related content that attempts to fill the disconnect between

academia-industry interface. As professional managers one need to understand the contemporary challenges. B school faculties mostly discuss cases that deal with western styles and issues, written by professors of international repute.

Management educators emphasize the strong focus on analytical models and the academic rigor which is not well suited to respond to the transformation of the marketplace. The too standardized management education does not suit the heterogeneity of the given business situations and fail to deal with the emerging industry trends.

An MBA student has to undergo many courses. To edify the students about the realities of the organizations, there is a growing plead of practical knowledge, urging management educators to adopt and master the approach of experiential learning. The dichotomy of ‘theory versus knowledge’ (Balasubramanian, 2010) needs a dire attention , where the management educators need to redesign the course structure in such a manner that aims to bring in accordance the organizational realities, the roles and purpose of the business, thereby making students learn to act more creatively and innovatively.

Professors have to be almost be abreast with the industry, so as to keep themselves in tune with the ongoing transitions in the marketplace. Management educators need to keep themselves updated with the recent job

market papers, Economic times, Business Standard and other financial dailies, journals magazines and all business papers in order to deliver a practical and a pragmatic overview. Attending seminars and sharing various inputs from the same and discussing the varied reading materials often adds value to the classroom pedagogy.

Every management student needs to take up courses which are similar to all b schools. The real challenge lies in how educators as facilitators design the course structure with more on focusing to enlighten the students about the business environment. Experiential learning is what needs to be the core area of concentration by the management educators. There would be no dearth of excellent sales and marketing managers who could be working with various organizations in FMCG, industrial and services marketing but there is a great dearth of qualified people who could teach professional selling and sales management at the b- schools. Likewise, there may be any number of economics teachers, but very few who can interface their knowledge of theory with business practices, which is required for teaching economics or any management subject. The Operations research or quantitative techniques faculty are from mathematical disciplines and may only solve a linear programming problem without actually being able to relate it with real business problems or situations. It's quite probable that those who teach business research methods would ever have carried out

systematic research on business issues themselves other than for acquiring a doctoral degree. The students remains clueless as to how it can be applied to solve a typical problem in personal and professional front.

According to Mintzberg, "Conventional MBA programs train the wrong people in the wrong ways with the wrong consequences," He believes MBA programs are schools of business that pretend to develop managers and thus offers a critique of MBA programs and an analysis of the practice of management itself. MBA programs have failed to develop better managers who should be improving their organizations and thereby creating a better society.

2.3 Faculty crunch and inadequate remuneration

With the craze to do MBA, management schools have mushroomed .The burgeoning population of MBA aspirants have led to the establishment of a number of management institutions. Moreover with the establishment of AICTE and the sanction of large number of management institutes; the faculty crunch have evolved as a major issue impacting all these schools. This can also be cited as a short-sightedness on part of the educational entrepreneurs who started the institutes without much of groundwork.

The paucity of trained human resource is common to any sunrise industry, and it would imply long drawn-out, and costly training in industry-specific skills to

potential employees. There is a dearth of trained and quality faculties to serve the needs of the management institutes. The spawning of management institutions have led to a situation where faculties need to deal with a number of courses thereby devoting very little time for research and neglecting the relevance of research work. In most of the leading B schools, the professors clock up long hours of teaching all the year round, leaving themselves with no time or very little time to get involved into various research activities. Its only, but natural that very few faculties engage themselves in Management development programs and consultancy and research related activities with companies.

At the content level almost all B schools have similar courses. Faculties with little of research and industry experience are unable to provide experiential learning. Invariably this leads to a lecture kind of approach and a theoretical and conceptual pattern of pedagogy where there is less of content, heavy reliance on power point presentations which is to be used as an aid rather than the sole mode of teaching and finally leading to fast drying up of contents to share. To run a number of courses and to meet the acute faculty crunch, management institutes resort to appointing faculties on a contract basis or as visiting faculties. Such a situation does not allow the faculties to have higher order of involvement with the students and the institute. Burdened with the classroom duties the management educators faces a

very daunting and a challenging environment which further exacerbates and results in a decline of intellectual growth and original research. Even taking up consulting assignments to make some extra money also becomes difficult. Faculty is a critical resource and yes, shortage of quality faculty in the country is a critical problem,” says Prof. Devanath Tirupati, Director-in-Charge and Dean (Academic) at IIM-B. (Bhattacharyya & Chaturvedi, 2013).

A long term problem is created when there is a paucity of PhD prospects. A considerable amount of time is vested in teaching. In such a situation management institutes need to focus and make arrangements to invest in improving the quality of teaching by imparting training. Management institutes as part of their administrative plans must embark on some systematic faculty induction followed by regular and continuous training for the faculty at periodic intervals. Highly reputed institutes need to take the lead and roll out programs that would help the faculties of mushrooming management institutes in this task. The management institutes often do not realize the importance of arranging sessions that would help the experienced faculties to equip themselves the skills of integrating technology like the use of internet and video satellite sessions in their pedagogy style.

Inadequate remuneration remains one of the issues of disquiet among the management educators. Pay scales are supposed to be designed as per the AICTE

norms, but however most of the B-schools do not abide by the norms. Most of the promoters of the private management schools, who have involved themselves in the business of education because of lucrative returns of the industry, pay the teachers pittance. An MBA graduate has all the incentive to join the industry than as an entry level faculty, as the later profession of an faculty often demands higher qualifications and do not provide attractive remuneration packages as against the earning potential of the MBA graduate joining industry. Although there are institutes which are identified to set faculty packages much higher than the market rate, still they fail to be at par with the corporate packages.

Management educators are often not incentivized to join the education industry as the academic pay packages fail to match to those in industry, professors only have more access to resources that only provide them intellectual satisfaction. Often professors are not aware of the AICTE norms related to compensation and workload which are often not revealed by the managements. The AICTE guidelines and copies related to the norms are not easier to find which leaves the educators in an ambiguous situation showing little signs of monetary incentive to the professors. In today's competitive world, when the only yardstick to measure an individual's status and efficiency is in monetary terms, it's quite obvious that the poor pay packages and remuneration fails to attract the highly competent and qualifies

resource persons but attracts only the less competent to opt for the career of professional education or management education.

2.4 Class diversity and Students' expectations

A typical batch at any management institute is found to have a diverse participants from various fields. Although diversity is the buzzword at all B-schools, it becomes difficult for the management educators to address them and bring them to a common platform. A typical batch ranges from engineers, doctors, commerce graduates to Art graduates. Not only in terms of qualification, a regular management batch also has participants from various socio cultural pockets and gender. Management educators face the challenge of confronting the varied diversity of participants, addressing their special needs and acknowledging broad set of learning, experiences and skill sets.

It is interesting to note along with the given class diversity, how student expectations have evolved over the years which are now of a greater complexity and order. Students' expectations are too high not only in terms of knowledge and skill building but also on account of the outcome i.e., enhanced placement prospects. Students do not find much value and rationale in what is being taught. The students want everything to be taught in class within the stipulated class timings. They are rather not much interested to devote the rest of the time at their disposal

for the enrichment and enhancement of their attitude, knowledge and skill.

The considerable hike in the tuition fees of the management institutes have lead to students acting more like customers. Value for money is what they look for. Management institutes are increasingly seen as part of the service sector. As a result of this, students being the major stakeholder are importantly treated as customers of this service. In contrast to the supplier-driven, take-it-or-leave-it model which most institutions have followed in the past has been superseded by a focus on the student as a customer of this service. With the increasing students' expectations and with the student customer model, the management educators faces many challenges; particularly when the students often shift the onus of learning and placement achievements from themselves to the faculties and the management institutes. This leads to the transfer of accountability from the students to the faculties who are considered to be the service providers of the entire system.

Management institutes over the years have evolved as placement agencies and this lures the students to join the institute. With more focus on enhanced placement expectations, management educators find it difficult to handle the drift in priorities and the changing notion of the students. Understanding and tackling student anxieties at the time of placement season, putting a pause to the high shirking activities remains a big challenge for the

educators. The rising trend of the students being caught in the Abilene paradox; leading to an ambiguous focus ; poses a serious threat to the management institutions and educators. Students fail to understand that there is no magic elixir.

Even with given job offers, students become extremely selective about the job offers and the companies which they wish to join. This selective keenness often drives out companies of the campus making it hard for the educational entrepreneurs and faculty members to retain such companies. It becomes imperative for the faculty members to enlighten the students and apprise them of the market situations and helping them to build more realistic expectations.

2.5 Free riders and performance evaluation of the students

Management educators are largely encountered with 'behavioural issue'. The big challenge the management educators encounter is that; given the cases and reading materials to the students; the class walks in without any preparation. Shirking activities have become a dominant behaviour. To keep them glued to the class remains a predominant challenge.

'Free- riding' behaviour of the students have become an overriding phenomenon leading to a lack of quality discussion and participation in the classroom and carry out the class session without much learning. In these cases, the educator teaches and the class does not learn.

Inevitably educators face a serious problem to manage the 'cold' sessions which fail to generate the desirable outcomes that a particular course is intended for.

Educators find it arduous to tackle the unprepared class and the silent response from the students. Often management educators lament that there has been an increasing trend about the disengagement of the students which has been traditionally termed as 'studying'. The less preparation leads to a monotonous tone, where the lecturer often resort to stereotype teaching technique like more reliance on PowerPoint presentations, conceptual frameworks and even taking a lot of time in discussing topics which were to be dealt by the students in advance.

The unprepared class does not contribute constructive ideas which leads to a drop in carving out innovative solutions, lack of creativity and restricts out of the box thinking. With the advent of a particular course, students who are new to the course, when comes unprepared and with little of advance studies are not able to catch up with the entire class and feels panicky. Management educators feel wary about finding ways to encourage creativity among the participants. Lack of preparation and walking into the class leads to lack of brainstorming. In such a situation, the management educators find it difficult to address the students' apprehension as with stipulated lecture hours not everything can be resolved

unless the students makes any attempt to go through the course materials beforehand and undertakes some preparatory steps.

On the whole the management educators confronts the challenge to decide on the parameters of evaluation. Any time a dissertation or a project is assigned, students have access to internet and hence they tend to do copy paste which becomes extremely difficult for the educators to evaluate. With the plethora of information available in the internet, the students tend to lose their individuality when doing any assignment or project.

Management educators face the daunting challenge of making the students aware about plagiarism. Management institutes and educators find it difficult to assert the relevance to complete assignments and projects by learning and developing skills instead of resorting to shortcuts to complete. The students often engage in 'patch writing' which involves the act of sharing and copying of ideas of others and making little changes to it by adding few words on their own. Students lack the proper planning and time management skills which leads them to complete assignments and projects in a hurry by resorting to a lot of expedient shortcuts. With too many choices available, students often are most tempted to copy materials failing to use their own judgments and finish the assigned task. It becomes very difficult for the management educators to set parameters and the components for

evaluating a students' performance. The rationale for evaluation, and whether one should follow a subjective or objective assessment technique needs to be decided. Some subjectivity definitely creeps in the process and at times the educators have to deal with fairness and justice in their student assessment approaches.

Usually projects and assignments are assigned by forming groups in order to inculcate the group dynamics among students as demanded by the marketplace. Often the educator finds it difficult to put up with the challenges of involving every member to participate and make a meaningful contribution for the completion of the assigned task. Few members burn the midnight oil and works, while others refrain from working exhibiting high shirking activities.

Management educators are often caught in the dilemma to design effective evaluation techniques. An associate professor from Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) points out that the group which functions most smoothly is the one which learns the least. This is because the group when assigned a project or a task, breaks down the entire work into parts and divides it among themselves in such a way that every part is handled by students who have already been a deft in a particular portion of the project assigned for completion. For example; when an assignment like preparing a business plan is assigned, only few students shoulder the

work, where the math whiz deals with all the statistical analysis and an English adept completes the analysis. In such a team work, it becomes very difficult for the professors to identify the learning status of the group and grade the group as a whole.

2.6 Inculcating values and leadership skills

Students carry the notion that Bschools are simply the placement agencies. Imparting knowledge is just not adequate, they need to shape their minds to make managers and leaders out of them by emerging as a place, where leadership is promoted and nurtured. A professional management student requires a set of right attitudes of a leader. Many a times the educator is able to impart the knowledge and the skills to analyse numbers, but are not able to inculcate the right mental attitude and the right ethical conduct in their students.

To make business sustainable and socially relevant, managers have to demonstrate competence, leadership character and develop empathy for the needy. Building character and inculcating empathy among the budding managers, which will make them real leaders of the society, remains a perennial challenge for management educators. The work by **Rattani, 2013** has cited what Prof. M.L. Srikant, Dean, S.P Jain Institute of Management and Research opined " Student managers must understand and manage themselves before they can

manage others”. He also mentions the significance of ‘spirituality quotient’ .

Quoting Dr Debashis Chatterjee, Director, IIM-K, “In a situation where one doesn’t know where the economy is headed, whether one has a job or not, or if there is a pay cut lurking, one needs internal cohesion, external resilience, ability to deal with stress and an ability to operate beyond the ego,”. All these can be key lessons from spirituality. The management educators need to take up the challenge of shifting the notion of the students solely from a placement perspective to an overall development of the student investigating and inculcating the leadership qualities which remains the need of the hour.

Although the pay packages remains dazzling; often the management educators face the challenge to impart and instil the ethical behavioural norms and the various useful leadership skills. With the high degree of exposure to the competitive environment, it is essential that the professional managers develop the attitude to build and preserve trusts of the various stakeholders that they deal with in their day to day activities. Only developing skills to analyse a problem is not sufficient to address the business environment, rather a more empathetic behaviour needs to be inculcated among the budding managers through various leadership program orientation.

Management educators train the students to become the best in analysing data and numbers. They develop all the

skills to broil down any number to get an meaningful insight out of it. However management educators are by and large encountered with the challenge of developing soft skills among the students. There is more emphasis on technical skills. Management educators must try to develop leaders that aspire to contribute significantly to the society.

Management educators find it onerous to make the students realize the importance of leadership skills and competencies and often they do not find much rationale in the broad range of education and training imparted. With such a leadership training, the students would be in a position to understand the impact of their doings and the effect of their behaviour on others. It helps them to identify their strengths and weaknesses, values and attitudes. It’s a challenge for the educators to convince them that they must look beyond the bottom line and top line and imbibe the right skill sets and competencies that would broaden their perspectives to handle a range of contemporary issues.

The challenge of turning the MBA students into an insightful leaders who would make a difference to the business and society with their managerial skills, is one of the challenging tasks at the management educators shoulder. MBA students are skilfully trained to focus on profit maximization rather than to face the ethical questions which are necessary to do business. Business educators integrate

the nuances of management but somehow fails to bring in the ethical business practices that brings the economy to the brink. Setting clear cut vision, being perseverant and developing the characteristics of risk tolerance is what business educators are expected to instill among the students, which often meets high resistance from the students as their myopic tendencies are more to achieve enhanced placements and bag high pay packages. Tony Mayo, the faculty of Harvard Business School stresses the importance of 'Contextual Intelligence'.

3. Strategic Approaches to deal with the challenges

To succeed in the dynamic environment, the management educators need to take a holistic approach to address the unmet needs of the participants. This can be made possible with the adoption of the 3 I Model. The 3 I-s postulate making the management education Inclusive, Innovative and Integrative. Inclusiveness will lead to attract a different mix of students, business educators need take a look at their value propositions by balancing the interests of the stakeholders. This approach would help in addressing the challenges of class diversity and students' expectations. The element of innovativeness comprises co-creating ideas and developing compelling mixes of strategies in the face of the existing challenges. This would help to address the challenges of providing well furnished campus, faculty problems and resolve the issue of paradigm shift in management

sector and curriculum. To make it Integrative implies changes that need to be induced in a collective form by the business educators. This aspect would deal with the cultural and social aspects by inspiring the young minds to resort to a more ethical behaviour and have a global mindset. Some more strategies are discussed here:

3.1 Introducing changes in curriculum

The applicability of the theories in practice, the degree and extent of challenges and complexities associated for thoughtful and effective application needs to be addressed effectively. Associated skills and the attitudes required for evaluating specific contexts and drawing correct conclusions needs to be built among the students whereby they develop the right skill sets that connects with the industry and is valued by the companies and the practicing managers.

3.2 Managing faculty crunch

Business educators as promoters and part of the administrative body need to develop competencies within their faculties. This can be promoted by developing the mass of faculty who are skilled at melding the worlds of theory and practice by subtly changing the incentive pattern and by including the policies of academic journals. Another way can be insisting experienced, successful industry professionals to switch careers by entering into academics. Institutes may ask them to undergo a program that would include training in pedagogy skills and familiarizing them with the basic scholarly standards.

3.3 Managing class diversity and students' expectations

Given the broad diversity, a professor who undertakes the responsibility of running a course not only has to start from scratch to bring them to a common platform, but also need to constantly create an engaged learning environment with the diverse audience that the educators encounter in a typical management classroom thereby promoting the culture of class diversity and inclusion.

Student expectations are mostly formed due to the word of mouth at the time of orientation and whom they meet in the college campus. By orienting them initially in the beginning of the program and showing them how the particular course enhance these challenges can be tackled to a great extent. This is especially important in light of evidence (James, 2002) that suggests that student expectations can be shaped significantly by a two way dialogue between 'provider and customer'. As rightly proposed by Schultz (1993) the educators need to adopt an 'outside in; approach instead of the 'inside out' approach.

3.2 Managing 'free riders' and choosing evaluation techniques

To avoid a situation of 'free riders', educators need to resort to strategies and adopt techniques that set a positive and an interactive tone that motivates the students and intrigue their interests. Management educators need to constantly

foster the concept and mechanism of dialectical discussion in the classroom.

3.3 Inculcating values and leadership skills

More attention to be paid to change the myopic outlook of the students. The ability to handle risks and social responsibility and ethics, are what most business educators fail to inculcate among their students. All management professionals must imbibe these prerequisites that blend the characteristics of both a manager and an executive entrepreneur who must be trained to challenge the status quo and continuously strive to develop and co create new ideas.

4. Conclusion

There is no doubt that the management education needs to be redefined and restructured in a way to cater to the changing complex scenario. There is a dire need to acknowledge the growing unmet needs to pacify the dissatisfaction and discomfort of the participants. Although the challenges that the management educators face are deep and pervasive, still there are opportunities to overcome the underlying issues; provided that the business educators react proactively in a fashion to collaborate, share and come forward to revamp the management education scenario.

At this juncture, it can be rightly said that the B-schools would continue to be in a state of peril unless attempts are made to properly define their roles, purpose and functioning. The leading edge of transition

needs to be infused in a way that helps the management educators and the participants to identify and understand the present status quo and respond with the necessary adaptations, resolve the 'fitment' problem, undertake innovations with creative courses and curriculum reforms and make concerted efforts towards faculty development programs.

In the face of these changes, it is recommended that educational entrepreneurs as promoters and faculty members rethink about their offerings and reframe viable models to counter the challenging scenario. It's high time to resort to a holistic approach that would make a meaningful contribution in the field of management education by fulfilling the expectations of all stakeholders.

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