
Three Models of Management Education

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In this paper, Sampat P Singh describes three models of management education: the pragmatist, the professional, and the humanist and emphasizes that for continuous education in future, we ought to use all three models simultaneously.

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The Pragmatist's Model

There are three distinctly different models of education that are most frequently discussed in the context of the managerial world. The first one can be called the **pragmatist's model**. It provides for practical education for a practical businessman. The emphasis is on pure utilitarianism or usefulness. In human history, its roots go back to the concept of literacy both in terms of alphabets and numbers, abilities to use language, and make calculations. Its developed form now includes interpersonal communication and negotiation skills, working on computers and playing smart in business deals. Recently, the model has been branching into developing aggression, gamesmanship, and kill instinct in young managers. It has become part of formal education and some business schools have been using texts like Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* in their classrooms. The road lies from English medium schools to prestigious colleges and then to management institutes. But, largely, it is a process of acculturation, learning without teaching, picking up on and off campuses from others certain beliefs and attitudes currently in fashion. It is not entirely a new process without history and roots. We can trace it back to Friedman, to Freud, to Darwin, to Smith, and even to Chanakya and Charvak. It has always been popular and hence *Lokayat*. We can only criticize it, but we cannot reject it because it is based on realities of life of the growingly materialistic world. Apparently, it treats education as merely a means to serve an end, not an end in itself.

The problem with this model is that it excludes higher emotions of love and compassion, human values of life, and social responsibility. This point can be grasped more clearly but, of course, reluctantly with the help of two analogical quotes from ancient Indian literature.

Dandin in *Dasa Kumara Charitam* (Penguin India, 1995, pp60ff) describes in detail the education of a courtesan in ancient India and in the end, writes: "The courtesan should only attract the client; she should not fall in love with him." Or as Somdeva in *Tales from the Kathasaritsagara* in this context writes (Penguin India, 1994, pp134f): "A well-trained courtesan displays affection like an actress. First she gains a man's affections and then his wealth." In other words, she can only have interests in life; she cannot have values. Pursuing

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some values in life demands some sacrifice. That means satisficing, not maximizing or even optimizing of self interest.

The other great exclusivist lacuna of practicalist's pragmatist model is its negative stance towards higher learning: arts, literature, and sciences. The most common fashion in the managerial world is to disparagingly use the word **academic** in its pejorative sense. Perhaps the only big exception is the famous community of Jews. They are known for their high sense of pragmatism and outstanding success in business. But, they are also known as big achievers in the fields of art, literature, and science. If some of the wealthiest families of the world in the 20th century have been Jews, they have also produced great artists, literati and scientists, and claimed a bagful of Nobel prizes.

The Professional's Model

Twentieth century launched an alternative to the **pragmatist's model** which can be called the **professional's model**, viewing manager as a professional and not as a businessman or a bureaucrat. The process started with the setting up of Harvard Business School in 1906. In the beginning and for long, teaching courses were descriptive and fitted well with the **pragmatist's model**. Then came the big revolution in the late fifties with the publication of Ford and Carnegie Foundations' reports in the United States. Their implementation led to making all management courses contain only scientific inputs: a new type of exclusivism. However, the fact remains that the subsequent years witnessed massive build up of scientific research and proliferation of management education all over the world. But now, in the nineties, almost everywhere, there is in progress reassessment of current research focuses and curricula of business schools. The relevance and quality of the performance thus far is being seriously questioned.

Professional's model is also vulnerable to criticism. The sociologist would not grant the professional status to the organization man. The systematic body of knowledge supporting managerial practice is not yet sufficiently large. Mandatory certification of qualification to practice management is still a distant dream. And, evolving a code of ethics for the practising manager has yet to be conceived.

What is more important for progress of management education in this respect at present is the shedding off of arrogance by the practitioner and smugness by the academician. The practitioner has to concede that experience and common sense might have proved adequate in the past but they cannot be fully relied upon to solve complex organizational problems of

today and tomorrow. The academician too has to admit that science has serious limitations. Science excludes. Models are often built on the basis of sweeping assumptions thereby abstracting from major part of the realities of life. In order to be objective in his analysis, the scientist keeps all subjective elements of human life, emotions, and values out. He takes a Newtonian mechanical world-view of life and uses Cartesian method of breaking problems into parts to solve them. Economics dominates decision models: Benthamite *consequentialism* and Marshallian *ceteris paribus* assumptions and Robinsonian *marginalism*. Isn't it interesting that following Schumpeter, the Japanese have been taking a more realistic view in solving their managerial problems, breaking away from 'other things remaining the same' assumptions, and, treating management of 'change in the other things' as innovations? The future research in management will, therefore, have to be less esoteric and more pragmatic.

The Humanist's Model

In order to meet criticism of exclusion against the other two models and to promote relevant inclusion, the third, **humanist's model**, has in recent years come back into vogue. Its basic premise is that all organizations function as human systems, and therefore, elements such as emotions, values, and intuition need inclusion.

The great event of 1995 has been the launching of its revamped MBA programme by the Harvard Business School and to label it more meaningfully as MBA: Leadership and Learning, to achieve "a partial shift in emphasis toward developing business leaders which in a sense is a broadening of our traditional focus on the work of the general manager." This revamped programme is focused on three areas for learning: Values and Qualities, Skills, and Knowledge, in that order. The inclusion element is reflected in the following detailed items of coverage under Values and Qualities:

Ethical Commitment: The commitment not only to fundamental moral principles but also to moral actions on behalf of oneself, others, and society as a whole, an informed sensitivity to the ethical dimensions of business situations and decisions, a sense of personal corporate and social responsibility that cannot be absolved by the market, and the willingness to subject oneself to the same scrutiny as one subjects others.

A Commitment to Continuous Personal Improvement: A constant striving for improvement, a deep respect for knowledge and the process of learning, an explicit recognition of areas of weakness or ignorance, the ability to be reflective about oneself, others, and the wider social and natural environment, the ability

to learn creatively from practice and experience, an abiding sense of curiosity, and a restless and persistent pursuit of answers.

Self-esteem: The sense of pride in one's own strengths, coupled with a realistic acknowledgement of one's own weaknesses, the abilities to withstand criticism and adversity, to learn from mistakes and failures, to take responsibility but share authority, to acknowledge other people's strengths without feeling diminished, and to exercise and trust one's own independent judgement without arrogance or dependence on external recognition.

An Orientation to Action: The commitment to make and implement business decisions in the face of uncertainty, complexity, and conflict, a tolerance for ambiguity, a determination to achieve results, and an understanding of when and when not to act.

Under Skills, among others, three areas of coverage mentioned are:

Synthesis: The abilities to identify and integrate apparently disparate elements of a task or problem to one another, to recognize interdependencies and systematic effects, and to think holistically.

Entrepreneurship: The abilities to imagine and anticipate future possibilities, to recognize and create opportunities, to pursue these opportunities without being limited to resources already under control, and to take responsibility for bringing about change.

Leadership: The abilities to develop and communicate purpose and vision, to inspire commitment and action by others, and create conditions that motivate people to overcome barriers that stand in the way of achievement. In this HBS formulation, notable points are:

- * partial shift from manager's role towards leader's role;
- * emphasis on skills of thinking holistically, to create and pursue opportunities, to develop and communicate purpose and vision, and to inspire commitment and action by others; and,
- * focus on commitment to continuous personal improvement, orientation to action, ethical dimensions of business situations and decisions, and above all self-esteem.

All these changes will mean a major reinvention in the field of management education. The key concept underlying all these humanistic inputs is self-esteem which in western philosophy is traced back to Plato who conceived three parts of the soul: a desiring part, a reasoning part, and the thymotic or self-esteem part.

The coming back of 'self-esteem' with a bang in recent years is going to influence significantly the shape of things to come in the 21st century. This has been argued very comprehensively by Francis Fukuyama in his famous book *The End of History and the Last Man* (Penguin Books, 1992).

At Stanford Business School, James March, in his remarks prepared for a faculty seminar at his retirement in 1996, took the **humanist's model** to a much greater height. He contrasts two traditions based respectively on reason and emotion.

- * The consequentialist and calculative tradition is based on reason: "action is seen as choice: and choice is seen as driven by anticipations, incentives, and desires. Man is never recognized as being capable of desiring for its own sake, the conformity of his own character to his standard of excellence, without hope of good or evil from other source than his own inward consciousness."
- * The other tradition sees "action based on attempts to fulfil the obligations of personal and social identities and senses of self, particularly as those obligations and senses are informed by the ethos and practices of great human institutions." It is a tradition that speaks of "self conceptions and proper behaviour, rather than expectations, incentives, and desires. It has become somewhat obscured in contemporary life."

This emotive tradition is "captured classically in many major works of literature and philosophy but, particularly, in that great testament to the human spirit, *Don Quixote*..... Quixote seeks consistency with imperatives of the self more than with imperatives of the environment. He exhibits a sanity of identity more than a sanity of reality. He follows a logic of appropriateness more than a logic of consequences. He pursues self-respect more than self-interest." Quixote reminds us that "if we trust only when trust is warranted, love only when love is returned, learn only when learning is valuable, we abandon an essential feature of our humanness — our willingness to act in the name of conception of ourselves regardless of its consequences." Asked to justify his actions he says: "I know who I am."

James March laments the fact that metaphors of business schools have become indistinguishable from metaphors of markets, and argues that an educational institution is only incidentally a market, it is essentially a temple dedicated to knowledge and a human spirit of inquiry. Higher education and scholarship become truly worthy of their names "when they are embraced

as arbitrary matters of faith, not a matter of usefulness. Higher education is a vision, not a calculation. It is a commitment, not a choice. Students are not customers, they are acolytes. Teaching is not a job, it is a sacrament. Research is not an investment, it is a testament."

Apparently there is big difference between these two visions of **humanist's model** of management education: one is prosaic, the other is poetic. The former tries to lower the ideals to bring them nearer realities of life; the latter keeps ideals at poetic height and tries to attract realities of life up towards them.

Perhaps the biggest conflict of human life is between what one ought to do but cannot do. Much of this conflict can be avoided if human beings have sets of clear beliefs, values, and ideals. These sets represent arbitrary and not rational choices. They are created by poets, other literati and artists, not by the scientists. The scientist's role is to know and understand the working of the phenomenal world. The poets interpret life by trying to find hidden and deeper meaning behind that world. Whereas realities of life drive human beings to keep their score boards moving, it is only their visions and ideals that make their actions meaningful. Great organizational leaders like great poets

develop their own interpretations of life, their own visions, and their own ideals. Henry Ford said: "A business that makes nothing but money is a poor kind of business." The ideals are pursued, goals are achieved.

This model is also vulnerable to criticism. **Humanists' model** does not demand being rigid. A rigid person is ego-centred and feels he will lose self-esteem even if he changed a bit. This difference is very well brought out by Irawati Karve in *Yuganta* (Orient Longmans, Bombay, 1974) in her analysis of two somewhat opposite characters of Bhishma and Krishna. Further, as it is dangerous to imitate the past, so it is to negate the past. Continuity and change are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, the need is to 'reinvent,' to reconcile tradition with modernity, emotion with reason, and humanities with science.

For continuous education in future, we ought to use all three models of management education: the **pragmatist**, the **professional**, and the **humanist** to learn from. For that, we have to be holistic enough to have a three-dimensional vision to learn simultaneously and together from characters like Vatsyayan, Kautilya, and Patanjali and avoid one-sided view of life or the 'completeness of a limited man' syndrome.