Role of Curriculum in Management Education: A Demographic Study

Sheetal Singh* and Alka Agarwal**

Provided the need to fill the gap between industry expectation and quality of management education, a study led to construction of a scale on Indian managers’ perception towards the management education curriculum. An Exploratory Factor Analysis (Singh and Verma, 2018). Total four factors were obtained namely Improve performance and thinking ability, Leadership and functional competency, Personal competency development and collaboration attitude. This study is an extension with the detailed analysis of the variables that constitute the constructs of the scale to answer the research question that what role does the curriculum play in management education to enhance employability as skills needed by the industry. In addition the analysis has been extended to examine whether there is a significant difference between the perceptions of respondents across various sub groups based on age, experience, gender, etc. Total 137 executives’ were included as sample for the study and they were well informed about the purpose of the study. Analysis has been done via descriptive statistics, ANOVA (analysis of variance), and independent sample t tests. Software tool employed for the purpose is SPSSv20. Findings indicate importance of aforesaid constructs in management education curriculum. Particularly the most important contributors in the scores are the variables like data management, managerial skills, decision making, basic knowledge, adaptive skills. Implications are for both industry and academia to design and execute right course contents in management education for budding managers. The study adds to dearth of literature on management education in Indian context.

[Keywords: Curriculum, Management education, Demographic study]

* Research Scholar, Mewar University, NH-79, Gangarar, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan (India)
E-mail: <mrsheetalsingh@gmail.com>

** Director, Mewar Institute of Management, Vasundhara, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh (India)
1. Introduction

The curriculum represents a conscious and systematic selection of knowledge, skills and values: a selection that shapes the way teaching, learning and assessment processes are organized by addressing questions such as what, why, when and how students should learn. Curriculum is, in the simplest terms, a description of what, why, how and when students should learn. The curriculum is not, of course, an end in itself. Rather, it seeks both to achieve worthwhile and useful learning outcomes for students, and to realize a range of societal demands and government policies. It is in and through the curriculum that key economic, political, social and cultural questions about the aims, purposes, content and processes of education are resolved. The policy statement and technical document that represent the curriculum reflect also a broader political and social agreement about what a society deems of most worth - that which is of sufficient importance to pass on to its children.

A principal objective of a quality curriculum is, in a fair and inclusive manner, to enable students to acquire and develop the knowledge, skills and values, and the associated capabilities and competencies, to lead meaningful and productive lives. Key indicators of curriculum success include the quality of the learning achieved by students, and how effectively students use that learning for their personal, social, physical, cognitive, moral, psychological and emotional development. A quality curriculum maximizes the potential for the effective enhancement of learning. Underlying this paper is the premise that educational quality should be understood primarily in terms of the quality of student learning, which in turn depends to a great extent on the quality of teaching. Of prime importance in this is the fact that good teaching and learning are greatly enhanced by the quality, relevance and effectiveness of the curriculum.

Curriculum of management course has essential role in quality learning and in articulating and supporting education that is relevant in holistic development. It is the curriculum that determines to a large extent whether education is inclusive, thus plating a significant role in ensuring that provision is equitable.

It is the curriculum that provides the structure for the quality learning. And it is the curriculum that articulates both the competencies necessary for lifelong learning and the competencies needed for holistic development. Curriculum provides the bridge between education and development.

Curriculum should be have following role in student’s life:
1. Type of knowledge, skills and values to student.
2. Association between competencies and capabilities that leads to meaningful and productive lives.
3. Paradigm of a set of subjects constituting a curriculum adequate.
4. Process of making relevant and interesting learning to students.
In the context of the European Union (EU), for example, competence is defined as “a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context”, and key competencies “are those which all individuals need for personal fulfillment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment” (European Parliament, 2006). The EU Reference Framework sets out eight key competence for lifelong learning, namely: communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; mathematical competence and basic competence in science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; social and civic competencies; sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and cultural awareness and expression. Competence in fundamental basic skills of language, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is seen as an essential foundation for learning, and learning to learn supports all learning activities.

Students need to realize that education is not all about to attain good marks but to explore and develop personal capabilities for achieving success in career and life as well (Tran, 2013). Professional skills and competencies that were seen as a by-product of educational process in past, are now considered as a core part of a professional degree (Coll et al., 2002). Therefore, employability support in HEIs should be more holistic and go beyond the set of skills that one can acquire or be taught (Markes, 2006). Responsibility to enhance employability of graduates does not lie in the hands of a single party (Lim et al., 2016) instead, an effective coordination among students, industry, professional bodies, faculty, placement officers and directors of HEIs is needed (Ayoubi et al., 2017; Rao, 2014; Tran, 2013).

In this context, authors have tried to find out the role of management course curriculum across different demographic profile of the respondent like age, experience, and area of the working.

2. Review of Literature

According to Baruch (1996, p. 1) “the aims of MBA programs are to prepare their graduates for managerial roles, help them gain a better understanding of the industrial and business world and its needs, enrich their skills and provide them with competencies relevant to their careers.”

“IBE UNESCO international bureau of education” has clearly defined the knowledge, skills and values which is build by curriculum of the course. The development in students of broadly defined competencies or capabilities, such as critical and creative thinking, depends on the integration of three broad learning domains: knowledge, skills and values.

When used in this limited sense and contrasted with skills and values, the term, ‘knowledge’, refers to content knowledge, or to propositional, or declarative, knowledge, including, for example, both theoretical and empirical knowledge: knowledge ‘that’, as in “I know that ...”.

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‘Skills’ refers to procedural knowledge, and includes, for example, cognitive and non-cognitive skills, ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ skills: knowledge ‘how’, as in “I know how…”

‘Values’ refers to dispositional knowledge, and includes, for example, attitudes (which are consequent on the values we hold), moral dispositions, and motivation, will and commitment: knowledge ‘to’, as in “I know to …”.

Curriculum is typically a phenomenon which includes many dimensions of learning, including rationale, aims, content, methods, resources, time, assessment, etc; which refers to various levels of planning and decision-making on learning (for example, at the supra-, macro-, meso-, micro- and Nano-levels); or, international, national, local, classroom and individual levels; and which relates to multiple representations of learning.

Hoberman and Mailick (1994) note that graduate students do not learn how to integrate the competencies needed to run an organization and relate to people.

Haworth (1996) noted that employers have raised critical concerns about the often poorly developed communication skills, as well as interpersonal skills, of many advanced-degree recipients.

According to International bureau of education (UNESCO), there is more of an emphasis in an increasing number of education systems across the world on preparing learners through the development of broad competencies or general capabilities. This acknowledges that, while still important, the learning, retention and repetition of knowledge is not enough. Our contemporary world is increasingly uncertain: constantly changing and presenting new challenges. It requires people to develop and apply new understandings and to adapt to new ways of doing things. To address these challenges it is increasingly being proposed that, across subjects and learning areas, the curriculum needs to develop student competency in such areas as: Communication; Collaboration; Critical thinking; Problem-solving; Creativity; The management and appreciation of diversity; and Learning to learn.

Jaeger J. (2003) find that emotional intelligent can be improved through instruction in a classroom setting and it has positive correlation with academic performance. Emotional intelligence can be enhanced in graduate professional students through curriculum and pedagogical design.

The IBE-UNESCO argues that achieving such learning demands the reorientation of national curricula to competence-based approaches, rather than simply the more traditional, subject-based approaches. It also requires the transformation of teaching, learning, and assessment to best support the implementation of competence-based curricula.

In the curriculum domain the division between cognitive, emotional and ethical aspects is linked to the division between hard and soft sciences, or between scientific disciplines on the one side, and arts and humanities on the other. It seems clear that the countries making more progress in education design their
curriculum proposals on the basis of a diversity of learning experiences connected to the demands and expectations of society and to students’ motivations (UNESCO-IBE, 2013).

Although many schools acknowledge the importance of competencies or skills in graduate management education, many faculty still see them as the responsibility of the career placement office or adjunct faculty hired to conduct non-credit workshops. The challenge today is to integrate the development of these competencies into the curriculum as an essential element in its mission; in other words, to adopt the challenge of developing the whole person so that it is as fundamental to our objectives and methods as accounting.

Full time MBA curriculum significantly improved on leadership, relationship, helping, sense-making, information gathering, information analysis, theory building, goal setting, action and initiative skills and self confidence derived from the total (Richard, E. and et al, 2002).

Holistically oriented, learning-centered research curriculum seems to equip students with good, transferable employment-related knowledge and skills that successful managerial practitioners need to make intelligent, context-driven decisions in complex and dynamic business and market environments. Research oriented curriculum help the students to develop the critical understanding of research findings based on quantitative and qualitative knowledge production forms relevant to management practice. A constructively aligned two-year research curriculum also provides opportunities for students to gain meaningful, hands-on research experience and tacit knowledge in close interaction with both academic and work environments, tackling real management problems they are likely to face in the workplace.

More than a decade later, the Karpin Report (1995) noted “an overemphasis on curriculums based upon the more scientific analytical areas of business, i.e. accounting, finance and economics had precluded the development and enhancement of key leadership and integrative skills, and had resulted in continued deficiencies in those graduating from Australian tertiary institutions”. This was noted by Fish (2013), while others including Schwartz (2010), Billsberry and Birnik (2010) and Dyck and Kleysen (2001) have reiterated earlier concerns that a strong emphasis remains within the business curriculum on developing the technical expertise at the expense of a more balanced approach between “the need for meaningful experience, and any educational/scholarship” (Fish, 2013).

Espey and Batchelor (1987) indicated such a contribution, having studied a programme tailored for a specific organization. They report how the company gained from the students carrying out projects and writing dissertations relating to the real needs of the company, thus making the graduates better managers, more involved and caring for the company, and experienced in personal development and self-actualization. The conclusion was that MBA studies in a tailored programme
produce better decision makers who increase their knowledge of the company and thus improve both in the short and long term than those on conventional programmes. Thus, as Kane found, the importance of an MBA in recruitment decisions is increasing.

Singh and Verma (2018) have identified the four factors on management curriculum after factor analysis. These four factors are as follows:
1. Improve performance and thinking ability (IPTA).
2. Leadership and functional competency (LFC).
3. Personal competency development (PCD).

Researchers have identified the gap in literature review that barely any studies have been conducted across the different demographic profile of Indian executive regarding the management curriculum. This study help to different stakeholder like students, academia and industry to reform their curriculum accordingly.

3. Objectives

RQ 1 - What will be the importance of curriculum in management education?
RQ 2 - Is there a significant difference in perception of executives of different groups of experience, age and gender?

4. Research Methodology

Participation in the survey was voluntary & respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt the items of curriculum. Total 200 questionnaires were distributed among Indian executive who have done management course from management institution in Delhi/NCR. Total 157 filled questionnaires were gathered back, but only 137 considerable samples were made the part of the study due to the limitations of incomplete survey and missing values. Age, experience and gender were recorded of the respondent for demographic profile. Categories of age are below 25, 26-35 and 36-45 years. Respondents were also asked to report their Work experience under less than 5 years, 5-10 years and more than 10 years. Gender is recorded as male and female. The data was analyzed using SPSS 21.0 with appropriate tools like Descriptive Statistics, Independent sample T test and ANOVA.

5. Results

Majorly young managers have participated in our survey whose age group lies between 26 years to 35 years. In our study majorly respondent have less than 5 years. Male respondent have major contribution to this study.
Table-1: Demographic Profile of the Respondent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 25</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table-2: Mean Score across the 4 Factors Identified by
(Singh and Verma, 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>IPTA Mean Score</th>
<th>LFC Mean Score</th>
<th>CA Mean Score</th>
<th>PCD Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 25</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>IPTA Mean Score</th>
<th>LFC Mean Score</th>
<th>CA Mean Score</th>
<th>PCD Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than 10 years</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>IPTA Mean Score</th>
<th>LFC Mean Score</th>
<th>CA Mean Score</th>
<th>PCD Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table-3: Result of ANOVA and t Test across Different Demographic Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age (F)</th>
<th>Experience (F)</th>
<th>Gender (T)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IPTA</td>
<td>1.029</td>
<td>3.832**</td>
<td>-1.401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFC</td>
<td>.282</td>
<td>5.283*</td>
<td>-.978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>.194</td>
<td>.673</td>
<td>-.886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCD</td>
<td>1.699</td>
<td>2.079</td>
<td>-.095</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*significant at .001, **significant at .05

6. Discussion

Particularly the most important contributors in the scores are the variables like data management, managerial skills, decision making, basic knowledge, adaptive skills.
ANOVA across demographic factors like gender, age and experience revealed that there is significant difference in the factors (LFC and IPTA) only across experience levels. It means male female think same, all age groups think same but perception about LFC & IPTA varies with experience level. Here there is difference in perception of managers of 5 to 10 years experience and more than 10 years experience (p<.05), with 5 to 10 years having higher mean than more than 10 years. It can explained as who have 5 to 10 years experience and have done their MBA in recent times realize that curriculum plays important role for IPTA. Perhaps they wished to have a better curriculum for better match upto the level of performance expected from them.

On other hand people who did MBA long time back and have more than 10 years experience. They have adjusted to industry having developed themselves as per industry and hence they don’t perceive curriculum as much important for IPTA.

Further, there is significant difference between less than 5years experience and 5to10 years exp. And also between 5 to 10 years and more than 10 years experience managers. The mean scores of less than 5 years experience is higher than 5 to 10 years experience. Similarly mean scores if 5to10 experience is higher than mean scores of more than 10 years experience. It may be argued that with rising experience levels the executives give less importance to the role of curriculum in improving leadership and functional competency. This might be because getting acquainted with their functional and leadership roles with rising hierarchical levels, the executives realize that their curriculum dint actually prepares them to assume leadership roles and functional responsibilities later in careers. In other words those who have joined orgs in recent times utilize lessons from MBA curriculum to function well but gradually with passing career days they discover new experiential ways of doing things instead of applying bookish knowledge in performing their duties. The perceptual difference about IPTA and LFC (higher means scores by less experienced executives) may further be justified with Katz model that suggest that lower levels require technical skills (similar to IPTA & LFC) more as compared to the conceptual and human skills (similar to PCD&CA).

7. Implications, Limitations and Scope for Future Research

Implications are for both industry and academia to design and execute right course contents in management education for budding managers. Based on the discussed ANOVA results, it is implied that there is no gender based or aged based perceptual difference amongst managers about role of curriculum in terms of Improving performance and thinking ability, Leadership and functional competency, Personal competency development and collaboration attitude. Therefore, Organizations shall better manage the talent that foster all four factors
and realize its importance. However, there is implication that internal recruitment (promotion and transfer) should be preferred over external recruitment (campus and other hires) on the profiles at top and upper middle levels of the Organization. It is due the realization about importance of curriculum for IPTA and LFC amongst the fresher’s. A well exposed recruitment drive from various places may fetch better human capital in the workforce. Updated curriculum and inclusion of all latest management phenomenon therein enrich the workforce not only with IPTA, LFC but also with PCD and CA. In long run such young talent could climb up the career ladder to reach at senior levels in organizational hierarchy. Simultaneously, Training programs modules must also be upgraded in pace of the latest developments. Perhaps than the experienced senior level executives may not bear significantly different perception about role of curriculum. Implications are also for the researchers in the field to further examine the factors with different sample, demographics and contextual settings.

The results are subjected to limitations of sample size, sample type, survey data and cross sectional design (one time data collection). The limitations may further be addressed by future researchers along with re-examination of the results of this study.

8. Conclusion

The findings and discussion revealed answers to the research questions. RQ 1 - What will be the importance of curriculum in management education? And RQ2 - Is there a significant difference in perception of executives of different groups of experience. Age and gender, particularly it is evident that Indian executives of all age, experience and gender groups have agreed to the importance of management education curriculum for IPTA, LFC, PCD and CA. Hence the study points importance of aforesaid constructs in management education curriculum. Moreover, the perceptual differences about IPTA and LFC across experience levels have added a yes in the answer to RQ2. There are certain implication and future research scope as well. Also, the study adds to dearth of literature on management education in Indian context.

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