

Academia-Industry Interface: The Vital Link

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ABSTRACT

“B-Schools education cannot survive without the corporate and the corporate cannot exist without B-Schools”. This simple statement highlights the fundamental link between management theory and practice. While much has been said about management education meeting the industry needs, nothing much has been done. About it as result, there is a complete mismatch between what is being taught in B-Schools and the requirements of the industry. It is high time we re-engineer the Indian Management Education for the coming times focusing on the B-Schools and business organizations interface. The subject of interaction between Business-Schools and Business organizations has been seeking the attention of academician and practitioners for decades in our country. Against this backdrop, the present paper is framed to analyze the reasons why the two are delinking and what can be done to relink them.

Introduction

“Management cannot exist without industry and industry cannot exist without management”. This simple statement emphasizes the vital link between management theory and practice. While much has been said about management education meeting the industry needs, nothing much has been done. About it as result, there is a complete mismatch between what is being taught in B-Schools and the requirements of the business organization. It is high time we re-engineer the Indian Management Education for the coming times focusing on the B-Schools and business organizations interface.

Main theme of the paper

The present paper attempts to analyze the reasons for the widening gap between B-School and corporate and suggest some innovative methods for bridging this widening gap so that the two not only become a link but A WIN ALL LINK.

Present Trends of interface between B-Schools and B-organizations

Most of the B-Schools and B-organization interaction takes place in the following manner:

- ⊕ Summer placement
- ⊕ Providing consultancy
- ⊕ Conducting EDP
- ⊕ Placing industry leaders on advisory boards
- ⊕ Appointing placement coordinator
- ⊕ Campus recruitment
- ⊕ Designing regional, sectoral and specialization courses
- ⊕ Offering scholarships
- ⊕ Financial assistance in organizing various activities

Yet these are unable to link the two desired. There is a need to reorient these activities for the maximum benefit of students, B-Schools and the organizations.

Reasons for de-linking of B-Schools and B-organizations

- ♣ The first and the foremost reason is that there is minimum interaction between the B-Schools and organizations.
- ♣ There are significant gaps in the management education imparted to the MBA students (Ganguly, 1999); namely
 - Knowledge gap (knowledge of soft skills)
 - Skill gap (primarily soft skill disparity)
 - Attitude gap (also related with soft skills)
- ♣ Passive role played by placement cell/placement coordinator
- ♣ Courses run by B-Schools do not cater to needs of the local organizations in the field of
 - Sectoral and regional requirements
 - Training and development activities

- Consultancy and research
- ♣ Summer placement system is defeating the very objective of its inception.
- ♣ Collaborative management institutes are virtually non-existent in the country. There are two categories viz. either government owned or privately owned management institutes.

To add to this, there is a complete mismatch between what is being taught in B-Schools and the requirement of the B-organization

Linking of B-Schools and B-organizations

The linking of B-Schools and B-organizations must take place according to:

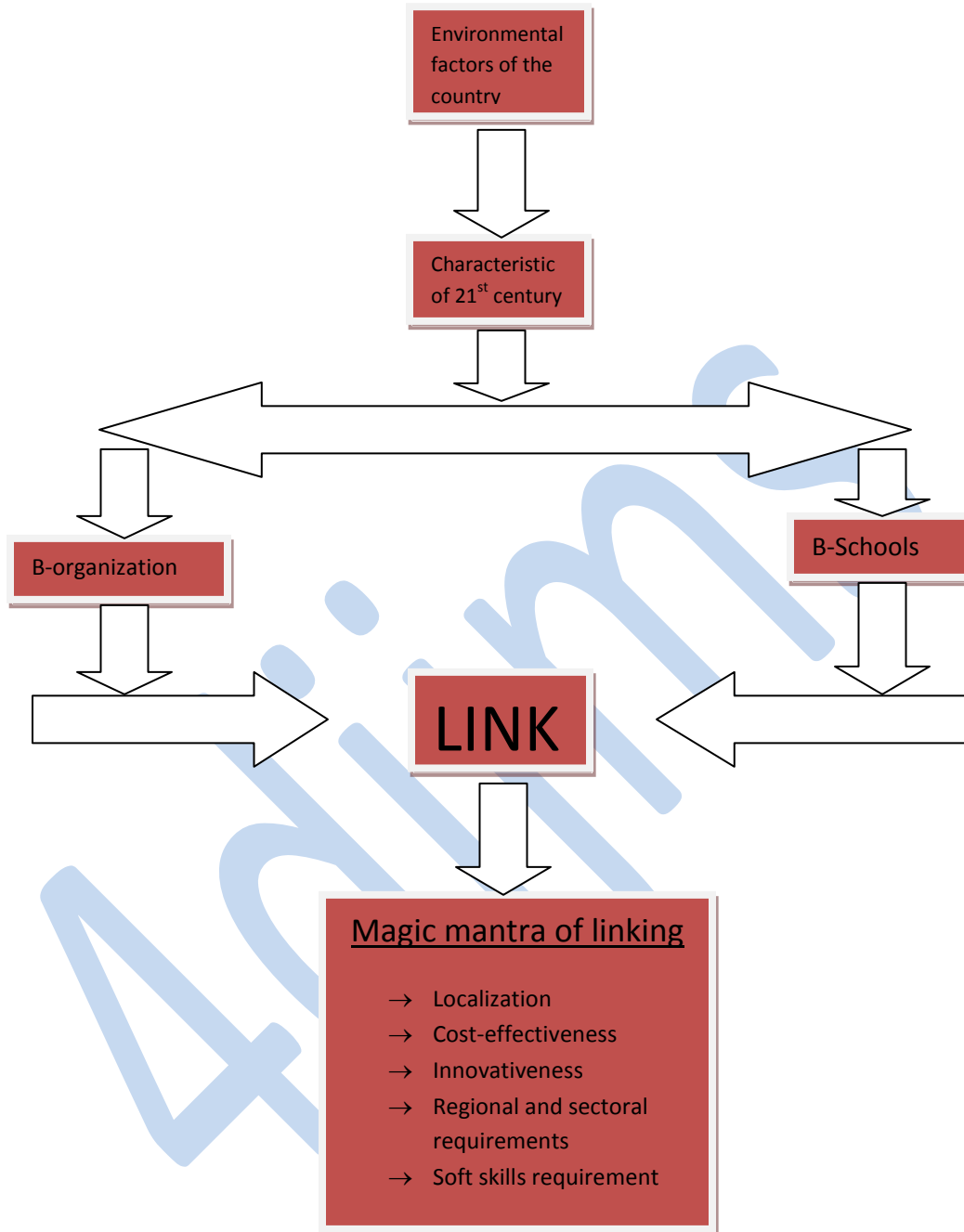
1. The characteristics of the coming millennium (Sholapur, 1999): The future business will be governed by the following characteristics:
 - Information explosion by revolution in Information Technology
 - Increasing role of soft skills
 - Borderless economies
 - Intense competition
 - Era of knowledge worker
 - Diverse work force
 - Continuous innovation
 - Flexible working styles

This would force organizations to recruit a 'value added student resource' (Ganguly 1998). Moreover, the model employee sought by Bill Gates, Microsoft Corporation, USA is one who fulfills the following qualities:

“You need to have specialized knowledge or skill while maintaining a broad perspective..... No one should assume that the expertise he has today will suffice tomorrow, so a willingness to learn is critical”.

2. The environmental factors must consist:
 - Socio-cultural
 - Legal
 - Technological
 - Political
 - Regional, national and international scenario of the country.

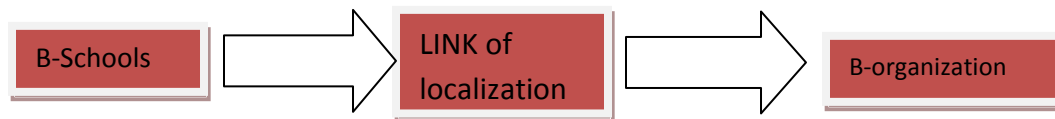
The following model explains this:



Linking for a synergetic effect: magic mantra

The linking for a synergetic effect revolves around the magic mantra as follows:

1. Localization:



- (a) Sinha (1999) says that alliances with local business are very critical. This can be achieved through:
- (i) Including industry leaders on advisory boards
 - (ii) Visiting faculty
 - (iii) Faculty to have sabbaticals in corporations.

Corporations could provide leverage for financial support to EDP, research support, teaching material development, student's placement.

- (b) Active participation of B-organizations in curriculum design of those who recruit students from B-Schools. They can do their own analysis of gap in management curriculum and to make it more relevant from the user point of view. It is being done at Wharton School of Management.
- (c) The training and EDP can be made effective if they are conducted by local B-Schools. It would result in continuous feedback and designing specific training module.
- (d) Use of on-line case studies: The case studies must be designed according to the problem of the local business organization. It would help students to get the exposure of the corporate way of handling problems and B-organizations to select the optimal solution.
- (e) Learning through interaction by organizing the executive meet.
- (f) Blend of core faculty and practicing faculty must be in the ratio of 80:20 (Sinha, 1999).

2. Cost-effectiveness:

- (a) Conducting campus recruitment in the placement week.
- (b) Optimum use of summer placements with the emphasis that every summer placement be converted into final placement.

3. Regional and sectoral requirements: There is an urgent need to design courses which are job-specific (Mehta, 1998). The emerging areas of Information Technology, Hospital Administration, waste Management, Cooperative Management, etc. needs specific inputs. B-School must conduct short courses for up-dating knowledge of professionals (Prabhakar, 1998). Marketing and

Exporting of handicrafts, readymade garments, rural tourism, foreign language and guiding are necessary to strengthen the economy.

4. Innovative methods:

- (a) Establishing Soft skill Laboratories
- (b) Establishing Language Laboratories
- (c) Organizing management fairs.
- (d) Opening incubation units, similar on the lines of IITs. This idea has been borrowed from incubation units of technology of Austin, Manchester and Stanford Universities.
- (e) Consultancy web-sites.
- (f) More national events like All India Summer Project Contest for B-Schools.
- (g) Setting up more collaborative B-Schools such as Indian School of Business, Hyderabad which is supported by Top Indian industrialists and has commitments from Harvard Business School, Wharton and Kellog (Kumar and Dutt, 1998).
- (h) Organizing inter B-School case study competition.
- (i) Endowment of chairs in B-Schools.
- (j) Formation of trust to assist industries (Warrier, 1998)
- (k) Research through collaborative research centres (Bandyopadhyay, 1994).
- (l) More scholarships and awards like JRD trophy for best case study.
- (m) Increasing time frame of summer training: the summer project should be sustained through out second year as a part of the curriculum so that real learning is imparted and the accountability ensured (Sadri, 1999).
- (n) Setting University companies (Ashworth, 1990).

Lastly, we must seek extensive support of various trade and industry associations both at regional and national level.

Conclusion

The B-Schools and the B-organizations can provide extensive support to each other and become a WIN ALL LINK. This linking must be done keeping in mind the requisites of 21st century and the changing environment. This would result in developing a value added student resource as well as Cost effectiveness, Innovativeness, Regional and Sectoral requirement. This new strengthened link would lead towards better and brighter tomorrow not only for the B-Schools, B-Organizations but for the country as well. So start linking, now!

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