

A new prescription

B-schools in India have to consider a few things starting with the selection process itself. I am not a great admirer of the current selection process, including the CAT. The CAT excludes everybody other than engineers by way of its construct; it asks for quantitative skills, which does not prove that people turn out to be good managers. In the last many years, nobody has had any proof that the current selection method is a valid, reliable one. That it selects people, we all know. How it eliminates people, we are not so sure. Any selection process that excludes bright people across science, commerce, economics, humanities and other disciplines and implies that they won't make good managers because they can't clear the CAT, is a faulty proposition to begin with.

The issue is not against engineers. My issue is against a selection process that takes only 15 per cent women. It implies that women don't like to become managers or do not make good managers. That only engineers make good managers, people from other disciplines don't make good managers or that women don't make good managers, are all faulty propositions. So, any selection system that results in this is a faulty selection system.

Second, I believe that B-schools are there to produce entrepreneurs and business leaders. Unfortunately, the curriculum today is highly memory-based and cognitive and no better than an undergraduate curriculum. It is not skill-based. It is still a memory test. It is still a marking system. You don't learn customer service by writing an answer paper. That's one problem of the curriculum.

The second problem is what B-schools believe is relevant. For example, they have courses in international marketing, international banking, and strategic finance. About 90 per cent of the jobs in the world that B-school graduates work in have no use for these subjects. Subjects like supply-chain management, distribution and channel management and project management are not given enough importance. They treat it as cursory.

The B-schools require to be remodelled



The manner of teaching is also faulty. It is lecture-based teaching. Case-based teaching is sparse and not done through cases that are contemporary. In the last 20 years, there are only three or four economies that have grown consistently. So, to bring cases from economies that have not grown at this pace and to teach them to people in rapidly growing economies is fundamentally faulty. There are not enough contemporary cases being written.

The third problem is the faculty. Unfortunately, barring a few B-schools, the majority do not pay well. As a result, the best and the brightest with a passion for teaching tend to opt out of the teaching profession. Also, most of the faculty still relies on textbooks to teach. For instance, how many B-school teachers today teach about the Euro crisis? What is the quality of discussion that takes place in the classroom about the euro-crisis? How many B-schools are contemporising the anti-corruption movement in India and creating a learning about politics and group dynamics? For me, that kind of imaginative teaching is not happening in the classroom. People are still teaching from their old notes.

Additionally, teaching is still being run in a siloed manner. In business there is nothing that is as siloed as the subjects taught in a B-school. B-schools need to learn to teach in an interdisciplinary manner. You need professors that do not teach verticals, but jointly teach a business area or a business process. And lastly, any management education which does not have 30-40 per cent of education through internships is not a skill-building education. Medicine, law, chartered accountancy, architecture – all have rigorous fieldwork and internships. The only skill-based education that has an apology of an internship is management education.

Deans and directors of B-schools need to take cognisance of this, accept that the B-schools have to be remodelled and be willing to really change it. The government should not come anywhere near it.

♦ (as told to NAMRATA CHOKSEY)



K. RAMKUMAR

The author is executive director, ICICI Bank, and is responsible for Human Resources, Customer Service & Operations