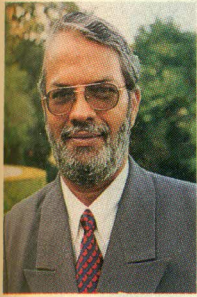




TAPMI

NURTURING WEALTH CREATOR SERIES



By S. Balasubramanian

# MBA - PANACEA OR PERIL?

This is the admission season in B-Schools. Tens of thousands of aspiring young men and women queue up for their "passports to affluence and corporate life". I have been a part of the admissions committee at TAPMI and my experience in this process over the past five years has raised a key question - is MBA a panacea or peril?

I have come across numerous men and women who have completed their graduation in engineering - a vast majority of them in IT related fields. Universities across the country award qualifications such as Bachelors in Computer Science, Computer Engineering, Information Science, Information Technology, Computer Applications, Communications, etc. The students, disillusioned with the not-so-exciting prospects have come to believe that an MBA would be a better option. Almost all of them have been "coached" to say that they spend their leisure time in reading (Sidney Sheldon, Jeffrey Archer and John Grisham are favourites), rendering social service (funding the education of the less-privileged, for example), and listening to music (classical, preferably)! They have been "coached" to believe that their academic performance as reflected by the marks obtained, is not truly reflective of their "potential". They "possess the necessary technical skills, but would like to look at organisations from a holistic perspective, understand how an organisation works, the different functions and departments, and hence need to acquire managerial skills".

It is not their fault, after all. The society we live in has encouraged them to develop and grow in their own world of illusion and self-denial. When the former Union Minister for HRD decided to "cut the IIMs to size" by cutting the fees, he was in essence, sending out a message to the society - that MBA is

not an elite domain, nor is it the answer to all the aspirations and expectations of the young. I think that we, collectively, need to bring the youth to ground-realities. We need excellence in engineering and science, arts and architecture as much as we need excellence in management. In B-Schools, we ought to develop measures and metrics to identify those with true potential to grow as business leaders. Personality dimensions such as communication, values, ability to work in teams, empathy, and social consciousness should be identified. We ought to discourage those who want an MBA only for personal prosperity from opting for management education.

There are many personality instruments that can help identify such a "potential" in an MBA aspirant. Traditional tests like the GD and Written Test should be reviewed and if necessary, done away with. We need to realise that in our quest for numbers, we should not overlook our greater responsibility to the society. It is not a question of catering to the demands, but consciously educating the youth in their career aspirations and goals. In our anxiety to admit numbers, we should not be blind to our own basic objective of developing leaders for tomorrow.

**We ought to develop measures and metrics to identify MBA aspirants with true potential to grow as business leaders.**

MBA is not the panacea for all that bedevils the business organisation today. Is it not true that some of the greatest and most respected entrepreneurs in India and the world, never stepped into the portals of a B-School? Tomorrow's leaders would require an innate sense of right and wrong, a sense of values, a sense of timing, a sense of judgement, a sense of self-esteem, a sense of confidence, and a sense of self-belief. These, unfortunately, are not taught in all the B-Schools!

Prof. S. Balasubramanian is a Professor at T.A. Pai Management Institute, Manipal and can be contacted at sbala@mail.tapmi.org





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