



A New Look MBA Curriculum

By R. Rajagopalan

Over the last two years, we at TAPMI have been engaged in conducting a series of internal workshops and external consultations with reputed academics and industry leaders to evolve a suitable MBA curriculum. This has culminated in a restructured curriculum currently under implementation. It seeks to transform students into people with a long-term potential for a successful career.

We have structured this transformation into 10 successive themes. Each theme has a set of courses. The duration, pedagogy and evaluation are tailored to the nature of each theme. We have moved away from many a convention to facilitate this process.

We are ensuring that our graduates would continue to meet the expectations of recruiting organizations. More importantly, we are developing in them an urge and ability for lifelong learning. In the process, we had to break down disciplinary barriers typical of management institutes. The focus is thus squarely on the learning needs of the student.

The 10 themes with their approximate durations in parentheses are:

1. Personal Competency (4 weeks)
2. Individuals and Roles (7 weeks)
3. Firms and Markets (6 weeks)
4. Firm and its Functions (17 weeks)
5. Firm's Performance (7 weeks)
6. Management in Practice (11 weeks in three phases)
7. Managerial and Leadership Role (4 weeks)
8. The Firm's Context (4 weeks)
9. Professional Expertise (20 weeks)
10. The Complete Manager (3 weeks)

Students also undergo a week-long outbound programme and a 2 week long attachment with local NGOs. The traditional PGDM curriculum is characterised by a 'high-pressure Term 1'. Simultaneous demand on students for changes in learning styles, working habits, a significantly higher pace and a diverse range of content resulted in high stress levels and burnouts. Our Theme 1 eases this transition by imparting the required basic skills

and attitudes to maximise learning from the programme including a unique module on "unlearning".

We have abandoned the undifferentiated first year curriculum. In Theme 2, we take students through why individuals behave the way they do - using perspectives from psychology, sociology, economics, etc. In Theme 3 we explore the question of why and how individuals and societies choose between firms and markets to organize their economic interactions. Who are the stakeholders in firms and markets? What do they look for in either?

Armed with this understanding, students learn in Theme 4, how and why a firm divides its activities into various functions and what role each function performs in the overall organizational context. After all, students should be prepared to deal with novel ways of organizing firms in the emerging sectors of importance.

We are building on our past success in our Management in Practice. We are looking for

'industry mentors' for students and continuing efforts to ensure that teaching materials are renewed through cases written on the basis of MIP projects.

We have retained the traditional strengths of a good MBA curriculum:

- * hard-nosed grounding in core functional areas (Theme 4)
- * diagnostic skills of an 'internal consultant' (Theme 5)
- * expertise in chosen areas (Theme 9)

We encourage students to think beyond traditional functional specializations and shun terms like 'dual specialization' as oxymorons. Instead, we ask students to choose a package of courses with an eye for emerging demand for skills in managing services, risk management, change management, etc.

Our pedagogy is undergoing a dramatic change. Significant emphasis on experiential learning, team teaching, an eclectic choice of participative methods of learning, evaluation without grade points and group-evaluations are becoming our daily bread and butter.

We have taken the leap... into the unknown.

Prof. R. Rajagopalan is Dean - Academic Affairs at T.A. Pai Management Institute at Manipal and can be contacted at raja@mail.tapmi.org



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NURTURING WEALTH CREATOR SERIES

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Management Education is at cross roads of transformation. "Do we create industry managers or self-developed leaders" is a question that defies the intelligence of educators.

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