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International Approaches and Developmental Perspectives on Management Education

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ABSTRACT

The present study briefly reviews three international approaches and three developmental perspectives on Management Education and Management Development (ME-MD). The first section outlines the main components of approaches to ME-MD in the Conventional-North American perspective; followed by those in the Japanese and European perspectives. Further, the needs for an Indian/South Asian perspectives and approaches in context with ME-MD have been discussed. The second section outlines the need for considering a set of broader developmental perspectives in ME-MD, more suitable for India and other developing countries. Section III attempts to briefly elicit possible strategies for expanding the scope of ME-MD based on these broad approaches and perspectives, to improve the quality of ME-MD.

ABBREVIATIONS

ME-MD: Management Education and Management Development

MNC's: Multi-national Companies

I-INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES

(A) Conventional- North American Approaches:

The main components of this approach towards ME-MD are: free and competitive markets; focus on Commercial private and corporate sectors; and mathematical and statistical techniques and analysis for profit maximisation, cost minimisation and optimisation of financial performance under constraints. Academically, the primary focus is on managerial functions and analysis, and much less on coverage of soft and behavioural skills, corporate social responsibility, entrepreneurship, global environment, and multi-disciplinary aspects (Bhattacharya, 2010). The role of the government is minimal in regulating the market and in facilitating economic development and welfare. The market is taken as the predominant guide for decision-making. Labour is considered just like other inputs-capital, energy, materials, technology etc., for profit maximisation and cost minimisation. It's value – i.e., its wage rate – is the combined outcome of demand and supply in the labour market, and the market-determined prices of goods and services which labour produces. Producers, traders, consumers and workers are uniformly assumed to behave rationally, that is, on the basis of the calculus of actual or perceived quantifiable costs and benefits, and self-interest. There is little explicit consideration of the larger economic, developmental, social, psychological, cultural,

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environmental, legal, moral and ethical dimensions and impacts of managerial decisions. These characteristics of the North American approach have evolved from the historical experiences and the development of economic and social institutions in North America.

These components are also predominantly present in the design of programmes in most management schools in India (D'Mello, 1997). Recently, some schools have added some of the missing aspects in the above approach. But mostly they remain as add-ons, and are not effectively integrated in the overall curriculum of study, research and consultancy.

B) Japanese Perspective:

“You can be perfectly rational with a machine. But when dealing with human beings, understanding has to take precedence over logic.”

– Akeo Morita, Founder –Chairman, Sony Corp.

The three major components of the Japanese perspective and approach to management and economic decision making are: to treat workers as human beings; to emphasis quality and to pay attention to minute details; and to view management and economic activities as ultimately nation-building activities.

Traditionally Japanese enterprises have focused a great deal of their organizational

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activities on providing welfare to their workers and their families, including, until recently, life-time employment and basic educational, health and cultural benefits etc. In return, the workers respond by “loving” the product (service) they produce, that is, by a more focused work ethic.

The Japanese concern for quality and details is reflected in their production and economic activities in work places. They were among the first to adopt the quality based concepts and approaches to management developed but not implemented in the USA, including quality circles. The aesthetic aspects of tea ceremony, flower arrangement (Ikebana), brush stroke paintings, among others, are indicators of how a concern for quality permeates even their day-to-day lives.

The Japanese, historically as well as in modern times, have taken a lot of pride in their country’s economic, cultural, political and military strengths. All citizens in general, managers and workers are expected to contribute to this nation-building ethos. These considerations tend to override purely commercial and market considerations.

Since the Meiji Revolution in the 1860’s, the Japanese have adopted their own variant of the capitalist model of development (Waqif, 1977). Apart from the three variations mentioned above, economic development in Japan has been based relatively more on cooperation and collaboration, than competition among industrial, financial and governmental sectors. Several Zaibatsus historical conglomerates of private industrial and financial houses - have been the major

economic building blocks. Until recently, Japanese MNCs have behaved more cooperatively than competitively even in international markets.

It is interesting to note that South Korea’s economic development in the last 50 years or so is also characterized by similar emphasis on nation-building & cooperation. The underlying developmental motivation for the Koreans has been “to beat the (formerly-colonizing)-Japanese,” not militarily, but by setting up strong and internationally competitive steel, ship-building, automobile, electronics industries, through cooperation among industrial and financial houses and government.

More generally, analysts of the development experience of the East Asian countries, popularly known as the East Asian Miracle, have observed that in these countries, “the invisible hand” of the market has been effectively guided by “the visible arm” of the government.

C) European Perspective:

In the UK, the predominant approach to ME-MD is based on the Conventional - North American Perspective. But in the European Continental countries, attempts have been made recently to evolve a distinguishable European paradigm and approach to ME-MD. This has evolved from the recognition that Europe is a multi-cultural and multi-lingual historical and geographical region. Its economies and governments have traditionally had greater

focus on economic and social welfare than elsewhere.

The basic implications of this recognition on ME-MD are: 1) the market is not always the best institution for promoting socio-economic welfare and development. This is because decisions based purely on market considerations not only affect the economic but also social, cultural, psychological and family lives of people. 2) ME-MD needs to go beyond the calculus of profit maximisation, and should include considerations related to cultural, social, environmental, psychological, legal, political and organizational implications of decision making. In short, ME-MD need to be multi-disciplinary, and should emphasize more on interpersonal, cultural, social skills and dimensions rather than techniques of quantification and analysis (European Training Foundation, 1997).

D) Indian Perspective:

Considering the above discussions, it is clear that the three broadly outlined approaches reflect distinctly different historical, cultural, social and economic needs, experiences and institutions of the three regions. These differences comprise the “5 per cent” difference in “all major respects” in their approaches to ME-MD. The question which emerges from this review is: to which extent the approach to ME-MD in India/South Asia takes into account the different needs, institutions and historical experiences of this country/region? In fact, Indian ME-MD have not had any strategic focus. Indian ME in particular tries to offer “everything to

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everybody,” and is relatively over-loaded with compulsory functional and analytical approach, as in the US (Bhattacharya, 2010).

In the following section we have explained the developmental perspectives which reflect some of the useful components of the above three approaches as well as the developmental needs of India/South Asia

II-DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVES

Before we delineate three components and indicators of this perspective, it is necessary to recognize at the outset of the institutions of market and the large private organised industrial and financial enterprises have recently gained prominence in the economies of India and other South Asian countries. But when the contributions of small scale, household and unorganized self-employed sectors, the agricultural and rural sectors, the government, public infrastructure and the non-market sectors, are taken together, continue to be much higher in terms of output and employment. To what extent is ME-MD in India and South Asia oriented towards improving productivity and efficiency in these economically and socially important but under-managed sectors? Given that vast proportions of Indian and south Asian population do not have affordable and reliable access to basic needs like nutrition, health, education, housing, sanitation transport, water, other natural recourses, etc. , to what extent does ME-MD in India/South Asia address these issues?

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Before discussing about the considerations of sectorial and related issues, the broader dimensions of education in general will be explored.

A) Skill and Character Development:

In India and neighbouring countries the higher education is focused on employable skill development. Although it is important, but is not sufficient, for their society and economy, with well recognized inequities and exclusions. It is heartening to note that not only the Constitution of India but also the National Education Policy have placed emphasis on the role of education in developing a socially sensitive and nationally responsible character in young Indians, over and above skill development (Waqif, 2008). Among Mahatma Gandhi's seven social sins are: education without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity and politics without principles. The dimension of national character-building has to go much beyond Corporate Social Responsibility and Business Ethics in ME-MD. It encompasses the development of sensitivity and willingness to take responsibility for the country's socio – economic problems arising from inequitable and non – inclusive development. In other words, education in general and ME-MD in particular have to go beyond employable skill development, and encompass broad –based character building.

B) Human Resource and Multidisciplinary Perspectives:

From the above discussion, it seems that the Japanese and European approaches to ME-MD and economic development emphasize the multi-developmental role of human beings in economy and management. However, the focus on human resources and multi-disciplinary education is also important from the perspective of developing socially and economically sensitive and responsible individual character. Moreover, most economic and social development activities are by their nature multi-disciplinary. This is not to say that ME-MD should cover several disciplines in depth. But it should expose the students to how not only developmental activities but also commercial and profit generating activities may be viewed from different disciplinary perspectives, such as those of psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology, history, among others. Finally, multi-disciplinary education can be expected to develop more broad-based and balanced and round character among the students.

Multi-Sectorial Perspective:

It is not surprising that the commercial and corporate sectors are not the only ones which need better management, the relatively low productivity and efficiency which characterise India's economic and social infrastructural, governmental, agricultural, developmental, environmental and self-employment (entrepreneurship) sectors, there can be little argument that these sectors, too, need better management (Waqif, 2000). In fact, better management of

power, transport, education, health, governmental and non-profit developmental (NGO) and natural resources sectors would not only contribute to improvements in the quality of life of people – it would also help improve the efficiency and productivity and therefore the profitability of commercial and corporate sectors themselves. From the developmental perspective, therefore, ME-MD needs to expose students to these relatively under-managed and neglected but economically and socially important sectors, as observed above.

III) Possible Strategies for Broad-based ME-MD:

Based on the above international approaches and developmental perspectives, the following strategies for broad-basing ME-MD can be considered.

To include consideration of non-market, non-competitive and non-profit based activities and enterprises, including those concerned with pure public and merit goods and services, by introducing course assignments, electives and project work in these areas.

Incorporate broad-based applications of management principles and analysis to economic and social infrastructural, agricultural, environmental, developmental, governmental and self-employment sectors, by introducing appropriate assignments, modules, courses, electives and project work in these areas.

Build in exposure to multi-disciplinary perspectives not only in management

courses and electives, but also by inviting guest speakers, and by enabling students to take a couple of optional courses in other departments and schools, or through appropriate self-study assignments.

To introduce local community development and outreach projects based on group field work, for credit. Broad basing ME-MD along these lines would involve suitably integrating multi-sectorial, multi-disciplinary and developmental aspects in the syllabi and contents of core and elective courses, assignments and project work in ME-MD programmes. More importantly, it would require broad basing the orientation and academic skills of faculty by promoting appropriate research, training and consultancy, to enable them to integrate multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral and developmental perspectives in their teaching and other academic activities.

Note: Such a broad-based approach to ME-MD was initiated by the author as founder-dean of a management school in an Indian university. Modules on environmental concerns were integrated in some of the existing courses, and project work and electives in environmental and development management and entrepreneurship were introduced. Several students, initially reluctant to be drawn away from traditional management areas and sectors, eventually ventured into environmental, developmental, infrastructural, entrepreneurship and civil service areas, and even found employment in these sectors. The faculty also took up

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research in infrastructural, environmental and non-traditional human resource areas. The underlying motivation was to develop a school as a Centre of “distinctive excellence.”

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