

# A Postcolonial Critique of Indian's Management Education Scene

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**Abstract** This chapter explores the history of Management education in India and its current status as a dominated field of knowledge. Building from Ford Foundation's support for IIMs to the 2008 IIM review committee report, it traces the developments in the notions of Management education in India. It also focuses attention on the status of the Management teacher in contemporary times, as an individual who straddles between the subordinated world of Management education and a native teacher. Following the logic of decolonial thinking and the geopolitics of knowledge, the chapter makes a suggestion for decolonizing Indian Management education. It also provides an illustration of how thinking from "other" categories opens up a new world of understanding and insight.

**Keywords** Management education • India • Postcolonial • Decolonization

## Introduction

The All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) lists over 3500 approved Management degree or diploma programmes. There are a total of 20 (existing and proposed) Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) in India.<sup>1</sup> These programmes offer Management degrees/diplomas of various hues—one year, two year, executive, part-time, full-time, postgraduate and doctoral.<sup>2</sup> These close to 4000 programmes constitute the institutional apparatus that provides what we collectively understand as "Management education" in India.

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<sup>1</sup>'2 more IIMs, 1 IIT announced in Budget,' *Business Standard*, Mumbai Feb 28, 2015 <[http://www.business-standard.com/budget/article/2-more-iims-1-iit-announced-in-budget-115022800288\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/budget/article/2-more-iims-1-iit-announced-in-budget-115022800288_1.html)>. Accessed June 6, 2015.

<sup>2</sup>[www.aicte-india.org](http://www.aicte-india.org). Accessed June 6, 2015.

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The Eleventh Five Year Plan of India had suggested the expansion of IIM facilities by setting up six new IIMs, based on a projected requirement of technically skilled manpower. But the MBA degree and Management education in India are much more than a technical manpower market demand. They symbolize upward social mobility. Given such social and economic materiality, the last couple of decades have seen a phenomenal expansion of MBA programs, within both government-supported and private institutions. Even with the expansion of IIMs, getting an IIM seat remains very tough with close to 2 lakh applicants for a couple of thousand seats<sup>3</sup> and several tens of thousands of students who do not have the option of an IIM seat enrol into the vast number of university-based Management programmes. This hints at the popularity and desirability of an MBA degree in India. If we are to follow the first Indian Chief Executive of Hindustan Levers and one of the earliest and most celebrated Indian managers Prakash Tandon, the trends in MBA admissions would lead us to expect that India is managerially well endowed to emerge as a credible and competitive economy on the global stage. Prakash Tandon called “India’s new Managers” her greatest asset (Tandon 1971: 7). In the foreword to one of the first books on Management in India, *Managerialism for Economic Development*, Tandon writes “[T]hat a developing economy needs Management even more than resources is now becoming abundantly clear to all students of growth.” But our expectations soon run aground. A study by the Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India finds that 90 % of these graduates are unemployable in spite of a growing demand for MBA. Barring graduates from IIMs, there has been a decline in placements of up to 40 % from 2009 to 2012 and several hundred programmes have been shutting down due to poor student intake, poor quality infrastructure and Management training.<sup>4</sup>

This phenomenon of the cohabitation of abundance of MBA degrees and scarcity of Managerial capacity raises the interesting question of the meaning of Managerial capacity, its purpose and quality. In attempting to answer this question from a critical perspective, this essay first delineates the character of Managerial capacity, Management education, its ideology and the relationship this has with contemporary crises—ecological, economic and social. Second, by adopting a postcolonial lens, the essay then examines the genesis and growth of Management education in India, highlighting the colonizing subordination implicit in the very notion of “professional Management education” and its corollary “the authentic Indian Management” and the geopolitics of knowledge. Finally, the essay concludes with some imaginations of how we might move towards decolonizing this knowledge.

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<sup>3</sup>“CAT 2014 registrations up marginally; 7000 register on Oct 10” <http://www.bschoo1.careers360.com/articles/cat-2014-registrations-marginally-7000-register-on-oct-10>. Accessed June 6, 2015.

<sup>4</sup>“MBA in India: 90 % graduates unemployable. <<http://www.rediff.com/getahead/report/slide-show-1-career-only-10-percent-mbas-employable/20130131.htm>>”. Accessed June 6, 2015.

## Managerial Capacity and Management: What Art Thou?

In our everyday talk, we frequently refer to homemakers managing their homes and people managing their life and relationships. We also talk of petty traders and craftspeople managing their livelihoods. In these and many other related instances, by “managing,” we are referring to a process of getting along, making do, of continuing to function. However, in invoking the term “Managerial capacity,” we do not refer to any of the above connotations but to a very specific set of practices, processes, behaviours, dispositions and belief systems which are collectively designated by the signifier “Management.” The terms “Management” “manager” and “organization” as used in the field of Management practice and academia carry distinct meanings. In the 1960s, even before Management as a discipline grew to the stature it has today, a career officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development working on building institutional competence in Management and development across the world described Management as giving “proper attention to economic considerations in their political decisions” (Phillips 1969, as cited in Hill et al. 1973). Thus, while wealth creation and distribution could be a political act, it had to be properly subordinated to economic, quantitative and psychologistic logic, as has been evident in the emergence of the field of Management from the parent disciplines of economics, psychology, anthropology, administration and mathematics.

Managers therefore refer to that class of people who manage the organization for the shareholders. The organization or the corporation itself refers to large Weberian corporate hierarchies and bureaucracies that privilege a certain kind of training (Banerjee and Linstead 2004). From Weberian bureaucracies to post-Fordist organizations, the notion of rigid hierarchical bureaucratic control exercised through and by trained Management remains pervasive. Any basic organization behaviour or introductory Management textbook foregrounds this meaning (see Table 1). Managerial training is constructed as one that goes beyond simply coordinating the processing of goods, operations and people to a reliance on scientificity and laws of coordination.

...we have adopted the ‘scientific’ approach of trying to discover patterns and laws, and have replaced all notions of human intentionality with a firm belief in causal determinism for explaining all aspects of corporate performance. In effect, we have professed that business is reducible to a kind of physics in which even if individual managers do play a role, it can safely be taken as determined by the economic, [mathematical and engineering] social and psychological laws that inevitably shape peoples’ actions (Ghoshal 2005: 77).

Economics is the touch stone of such a scientifically engineered decision-making—an economics modelled on *Homo economicus*, aimed at maximizing the value of the shareholder. To be fair, the mantra of shareholder value maximization evolved over several decades of struggles around principals, agents, regulators and the financialization of the American economy and polity (Fligstein 2008).

This version of Management was developed as an uncritical and unself-reflexive discipline to all its glory in the university-based American business schools who

**Table 1** Excerpts on meanings of Management from prominent Management textbooks in use in India

Name of book	Extract	Authors
Organization behaviour	“Work organizations are created to accomplish work goals and they have different criteria for membership. Members of a work organization join it by a conscious decision and there is an element of choice on both sides” (p. 7)	Margie Parikh and Rajen Gupta
Organizational change (India edition)	“Organization: a group of people brought together for the purpose of achieving certain objectives. As the basic unit of an organization is the role rather than the person in it the organization is maintained in existence, sometimes over a long period of time, despite many changes of members” “Organization as a system of interacting subsystems and components set within wider systems and environments that provide inputs to the systems and which receive its outputs” (p. 5)	Barbara Senior and Jocelyne Fleming
Organizational behaviour: a strategic approach (India edition)	“Organization as a collection of individuals, whose members may change over time, forming a coordinated system of specialized activities for the purpose of achieving certain goals over some extended period of time. One prominent type of organization is the business organization, such as Intel, Microsoft.... There are other important types of organisations as well. Public-sector organizations” (p. 9)	Michael A. Hitt C. Chet Miller Adrienne Colella
Business policy and strategic Management	No specific definition, all references to the accepted cannon of strategy discipline	AzharKazmi

(continued)

**Table 1** (continued)

Name of book	Extract	Authors
Human resource Management: text and cases	"HRM, on the other hand, is compatible with the organization design of new organizations. Such organizations have cross-functional and cross-hierarchical teams. They are centralized and flexible, with low formalization and somewhat looser control" p. 5	Sharon Pande and SwapnalekhaBasak
Introduction to organizational behaviour	"organizational behavior is usually studies in the context of organizations (as entities) and is focused on the formal rather than informal dynamics within organizations" p. 14	Michael Butler and Edward Rose
Essentials of Management (Indian edition)	"Organization has a purpose and is made up of people who are grouped in some fashion" p. 4	Stephen P. Robbins, David A. Decenzo, Sanghamitra Bhattacharya, Madhushree Nanda Agarwal
Organizational behaviour (Indian edition)	"organization, which is a consciously coordinated social unit, composed of two or more people, that functions on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set of goals" p. 5	Stephen P. Robbins, Timothy Judge NeharikaVohra
Organizations: structures, processes, and outcomes (Indian edition)	"...some combination of the following four elements: (1) two or more members, (2) a goal or set of goals that guide members' activities, (3) distinctive roles assigned to different members, and (4) an authority system that is accepted as governing decisions"	Pamela S. Tolbert, Richard H. Hall
Organizational behaviour: Key concepts, skills and best practices (India edition)	"Management is the process of working with and through others to achieve organizational objectives in an efficient and ethical manner" p. 6	Angelo Kinicki, Robert Kreitner

were obligated to their corporate patrons and the Ford Foundation (Hall 2005; Prasad 2015). This version of Management (indicated with a capital M) practice and theory has transformed into an ideology of "Managerialism" with support from its Siamese twin—the American version of capitalism. Virtually, every other type of

Management now carries a prefix or a suffix including the famous Japanese style of Management which ironically has been commandeered into the service of Managerialism to maximize shareholder value. As an ideology, Managerialism is characterized by

...a scientific construction of the Managerial mandate; elevation of economic discourse into unchallengeable fact; the occlusion of ideological difference through absorption, calumny, and evasion; ... and the seepage of Managerialist discourses and practices into ever more remote and hitherto marginal corners of the world (Murphy 2004).

This ideology is practically indistinguishable from its American capitalist version “market Managerialism” which insists that “only markets run by professional managers can efficiently organize human interaction” (Murphy 2004; Parker 2002). These therefore are the broad ontological and epistemic contours of “Management.”

How has this ontological status of Management served human kind? It has led to enormous wealth creation. One could not have dreamt that from 1950 to 2000 global GDP could have increased by 800 %<sup>5</sup>. Greer and Singh (2000) writing for the Global Policy Forum find that the 300 largest transnational corporations (TNCs) control a quarter of the world’s productive assets. Size of the TNCs as measured through annual sales far exceeds the GDPs of many a nation’s economy including those of industrialized countries. “Together, the sales of Mitsui and General Motors are greater than the GDPs of Denmark, Portugal and Turkey combined, and US\$50 billion more than all the GDPs of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa.” From the 1950s, technological and financial advances have accelerated internationalization and have led to oligopolistic consolidation of TNCs globally. TNCs control 70–80 % of world trade outside centrally planned economies.

In 1970, there were some 7000 parent TNCs, while today that number has jumped to 38,000. 90 percent of them are based in the industrialised world, which control over 207,000 foreign subsidiaries... The large number of TNCs can be somewhat misleading, however, because the wealth of transnationals is concentrated among the top 100 firms which in 1992 had US\$3.4 trillion in global assets....<sup>6</sup>

This amazing generation of wealth has been almost profligate since global inequality has gone up and unemployment figures remain at historic highs in many regions. The severity of the impact on employment and livelihood comes across when consideration widens to include factors such as labour force participation, long-term unemployment, wage levels and involuntary part-time work.<sup>7</sup> Industrial advancement has also put us on the brink of climate change and social unrest.

<sup>5</sup>Global Poverty Rates and Economic Growth <<http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.in/2014/01/global-poverty-rates-and-economic-growth.html>>. Accessed June 7, 2015.

<sup>6</sup>A Brief History of Transnational Corporations. <<https://www.globalpolicy.org/empire/47068-a-brief-history-of-transnational-corporations.html>>.

<sup>7</sup>World Economic Situation and Prospects 2016: Global Economic Outlook <<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wesp/index.shtml>>.

As many a critical scholar has argued, by celebrating the idea of shareholder wealth maximization on a quarterly basis, Managerial ideology has legitimized the unbridled plunder of nature including human existence<sup>8</sup> and work life in the amoral pursuit of efficient value extraction. It is beyond the scope of this essay to specifically delineate the causal connections between Managerialism and the crises of contemporary world (readers may usefully approach the accumulating body of work in the critical Management studies domain for this.) “By propagating ideologically inspired amoral theories, business schools have actively freed their students of any moral responsibility” (Ghoshal 2005). By positioning the interests of the organization—the empty reified legal carapace as the superordinate entity in which the concerns of the mythical principal, the shareholder, are congealed—Managerialism has made it possible for Managements “to have the power to interfere in the choices” of workers, employees, societies, nations and even ecosystems “with impunity and at will” leading to absolute domination (Pettit 1996). The absence of any meaningful countervailing power in this schema has enabled the massive plunder of social and natural existence through market Managerialism’s mechanisms of dispossession, destruction, displacement and death as evident in a range of instances from the financial crisis to genocide in regions of resource extraction. This has put “Capitalism into question” (Academy of Management Annual Conference theme in 2013), prompting even the mainstream Academy of Management to ask the question: “What kind of economic system would this better world be built on?” in order to fulfil its vision statement, “to inspire and enable a better world through our scholarship and teaching about Management and organizations.”<sup>9</sup> Such questioning has also led to adaptations, revisions and reinventions of Managerialism such as corporate sustainability and corporate social responsibility.

It is this kind of Managerial capacity and Management education that India has been endeavouring to develop over the last fifty years. The history of this effort can be traced to the founding of Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) and the subsequent setting up of Indian Institutes of Management in Ahmedabad and Calcutta. The following section traces some of this history and borrows heavily from Hill et al. (1973) and Sancheti (1986).

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<sup>8</sup>Management literature has usually distinguished between physical and natural environment. Only natural environment has been associated with plunder in this literature including the sustainability strand. In much of this literature, man and environment are seen as different from each other. In referring to nature here to include human existence and not distinct from the natural environment, I wish to foreground that Indian sensibility which sees human existence as a part of nature where the relationship between the part and the whole is neither singularly harmonious, adversarial or dominating, but a blend of different possibilities.

<sup>9</sup>Academy of Management Annual conference. <<http://aom.org/Events/2013-Annual-Meeting-of-the-Academy-of-Management.aspx>>.

## Management Education in India: Genesis and Contemporary Practice

In 1953, following recommendations of the AICTE, a permanent Board of Management Studies was set up, and during the period from 1953 to 1957, seven Management programmes were approved by this board, business administration programmes were meant for students of arts and commerce, and industrial administration programmes were meant for engineering students. The committee also recommended the setting up of ASCI in 1953. ASCI was modelled on the Administrative Staff College at Henley in England. It was promoted jointly by the Government of India and private businesses, and memberships were used to raise funds, and several short-term programmes were offered to working executives to build their Managerial capacity. In the early years of founding, ASCI had been quite successful and had received support from both public and private sector firms such as Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), State Bank of India (SBI), Bata Shoes, Hindustan Lever, Imperial Tobacco and Esso (Hill et al. 1973: 11–13). Ford Foundation that had just come into India at that time had extended some funding support to ASCI. As archival records of the Foundation show, its head in India at that time, Dr. Douglas Ensminger, was “aware of the (sic) India’s Managerial manpower deficiency as early as 1952” (Hill et al. 1973: 46). Ensminger had initiated a vigorous and systematic effort to persuade Indian leaders about the desirability of American style Management education. They reasoned that “A nation’s progress depends on its capability to organize human activity. Progress in economic development will require effective organization in many activities. Effective managers are the key to building economic and enterprise (sic) organizations required in economic development” (Werts, Leo in a Ford Foundation Report, cited in Sancheti 1986: 292).

Discussions began as early as March 1955 between Ensminger and Prof. Humayun Kabir, who was Government of India (GOI) minister for Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs (Hill et al. 1973: 15). Reporting on his persuasions in a letter dated May 15, 1957, to TM Hill of the New York office, Ensminger wrote “... these programmes are of strategic importance to India’s development, they have been formulated in the closest possible cooperation with the Planning Commission and the Ministers concerned” (cited in Sancheti 1986: 85). During this period, the Foundation had also through various grants, provided Management training to ASCI, set up the All India Management Association (AIMA), sponsored an annual Advanced Management Seminar held in Srinagar by professors from Stanford and sponsored Indian participation in Advanced Management Programme in the Philippines. In addition to these, two expert teams were commissioned by the Foundation to study the situation in India and suggest the setting up of a Management institute—the Professors Meriam and Thurlby Report and the Dean Robbins Report. These reports were commissioned to “make recommendations as well as to develop “within the nation’s business leaders,” a broader base of understanding and appreciation for India having a center or centers for training in



Management” (Ensminger Report, cited in Sancheti 1986: 86). While the first Meriam–Thurlby Report made very broad and general recommendations, it was the latter report by Dean Robbins that practically provided the blueprint for setting up the IIMs.

The nature and detail of recommendations encompassed examining the need for a Management centre, its location, its legal and organizational design, its staffing, its curriculum and its objectives and goals; practically, everything necessary for setting up the institute was included in Dean Robbins’ report. In between the commissioning of these two reports, Ford Foundation had also supported the visit of an Indian study team to the USA to examine possible alternative institutional options for Management education. The members of this team, “...the thirteen men, located strategically in business, universities circles and in government throughout India can be expected to give effective support to...the strengthening of this field in India” (Ford Foundation correspondence cited in Sancheti 1986: 86).

The discussions from 1955 to 1959 pertained to the setting up one institute in Bombay, under the auspices of the University of Bombay. But very quickly in 1959, the proposal expanded into setting up two institutes with one of them in Calcutta. Ensminger’s specific recommendation of setting up the institute as an autonomous one outside the influence of the university led to the pull out of University of Bombay<sup>10</sup> eventually leading to Ahmedabad replacing Bombay. Thus, IIM Calcutta was incorporated in 1961 and IIMA a year later. The American technical collaborators—Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)—brought their course outlines, curriculum design and initial faculty. Only the directors of the institutes were Indian for expedient political reasons (Hill et al. 1973; Sancheti 1986). The Foundation and the technical collaborators in the project specified the admission and selection procedures as well. In fact, the Common Admission Test (CAT) for admissions to IIMs in vogue even today in more or less the same form was adapted from the American Graduate Management Education Test based on a Foundation grant of USD 20,000 (cited in Sancheti 1986). Even though it was common knowledge then that English proficiency would not be available to many worthy students in India, the selection procedure had specifically insisted on English. These procedures led to a very elitist student base for Management education. At the time of setting up the IIMs, the technical collaborators had said that they did not find any Indian model and hence had to bring in the American model of Management. This assertion was hardly questioned by India during the incorporation of IIMs. In the eagerness to set up the institutes, India forfeited the opportunity to influence the content of Management education. The technical collaborators specified the contents to be taught, “Management concepts and Practice, including the detailed study of Management functions of planning, staffing ... Major Operational areas of Enterprises—Marketing, Production, Finance, and Personnel—viewed in their functional,

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<sup>10</sup>The primary argument that had been made in favour of setting up of IIMs as autonomous organizations was that it would give the institutions flexibility and enable them to avoid the highly bureaucratic and hierarchized university system and thereby enable them to be more effective.

institutional ... Tools of Management Analysis, Quantitative methods of statistics, accounting operations research and systems, and decision-making..." (cited in Sancheti 1986: 118).

Thus, the modernist aspirations of a modern Indian leadership under Nehru with active guidance from Ford Foundation and its technical collaborators, the MIT and Harvard University, manifested in the dawn of American style Management or what we recognize as Management education in India. These IIMs explicitly aimed at developing people for Managerial careers. Dean Robbins in his report identified some of the goals of the proposed institute as:

- (i) To select and prepare outstanding and talented mature young people for careers leading to Management responsibility.
- (ii) To provide opportunities for practicing executives in middle and top Management to obtain training and education in Management knowledge, attitudes and skills (cited in Sancheti 1986: 35).

The American technical collaborators celebrated this immediate career focus in Management education and practically loathed upon the liberal tendencies in existing programmes in India which they saw as an undesirable consequence of the British emphasis on liberal education. Thus, the Foundation and the technical collaborators were dismissive of the Management degree offered by the Indian Institute of Social Welfare and Business Management (IISWBM), an autonomous society affiliated to the University of Calcutta way back in 1953 itself (Hill et al. 1973). The education at IISWBM had aimed at providing the "participant a liberal business education and simultaneously prepare him or her for their chosen career." Similarly, the commerce departments of Indian universities (the first of which was established at Sydenham college in Bombay in 1913) were seen as catering to a student base of "poor quality," i.e. not the top Management cadre, and operating in a system that was delinked from real business (Hill et al. 1973). Even ASCI which had received very good industry support was seen as competent at meeting the needs of only lower rung managers and not senior Management. The senior Management was getting an experience of American Management through the Annual Management Seminars at Srinagar. Xavier Labour Relations Institute's (XLRI) programmes which began from 1949 were seen as industrial relations focused and not complete Management.

In the shifting locus of expertise from England to USA, from British liberal education to American practical education, thanks to the post-World War II balance of power, independent India with a modernist leadership forfeited its chance to get closer to its own realities. The Foundation's experts said that Indian business and development needs were "different from what they were familiar" with and urged the setting up of a "...program closely attuned to India's needs rather than an attempt to transplant any existing foreign program..." (Merian-Thurlby Report, cited in Sancheti 1986: 34). Even Dean Robbins's recommendation listed one of the aims of the proposed institute as "to develop an Indian literature in Management through research and publication of studies centered about the nature and role of the

enterprise unit in India and relate it to world literature” (cited in Sancheti 1986: 35). But finally in the process of technical collaboration, the experts MIT and Harvard did not find any model of Management in India and therefore orchestrated importation of their system.

In their search of Management practice in India, the technical collaborators only saw the British and Scottish style Management practices in the Managing Agency Houses of the early independence period. The British systems were out of favour with the Americans both due to “balance of power” reasons and for British orientation towards liberal education. Even with the leadership of newly independent India, the British and Scottish practices which thrived on overt racism and stifling paternalism of rigid formalized hierarchies found disfavour. Thus, the importation of the American model was also welcomed by some of the political and business elite (Srinivas 2008, 2013); especially, the large non-family businesses of India where the British folk had a substantial business interest in the past can be seen in the composition of the businesses that had patronized ASCI. Non-resident Indian academics of Management also seconded and promoted the desirability of Western Management (Negandhi and Prasad 1968). Along this way, India got constructed as a society which did not have any home-grown Management (small m used here to indicate the difference in these practices from Management).

Thus, the efforts of native managers and supervisors<sup>11</sup> (otherwise known as jobbers) working in the factories or even business owners prior to and after independence were rendered non-Managerial. Their *Managerial* processes and systems of managing resource flows, operations, workforce and finance were all based on customary, informal and embodied practices. These embodied and personalized systems of negotiated interactions and reciprocity where work and non-work intermingled were governed through neighbourhood and personal relationships and dense availability of information and accommodation of the human and social needs of the stakeholders (Morris 1965; Chandavarkar 2002; Birla 2008). All these practices were made illegitimate and invisible in a single stroke. Even though these home-grown systems created business value (Wolcott and Clark 1999) while preserving social value of communities, they were criticized as inefficient practices by the colonial experts and rulers before Independence and later by the American experts. In colonial India, several visiting experts of Taylorian practices found Indian shop floor and worker Management practices completely unsatisfactory, lazy and inefficient (Morris 1965). Other European managers understood the embodied, personalized systems of negotiated relationships as expressions of paternalism and concluded that the Indian workers were truant and ignorant children who had to be dealt with a firm hand in order to secure the interests of the business (views of noted British industrialists in colonial India Sir William Benthall and Sir Alexander Murray cited in Chakrabarty 1983).

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<sup>11</sup>Of the different types of enterprises in India in the preindependence times, most of the Managerial positions were occupied by Europeans. The supervisory or jobber positions were manned by Indians. But in the textile industry of Bombay, both Managerial and supervisory positions were manned by Indians.

Such “illegitimization of practice” was not limited to workforce and shop floor Management practices but encompassed financial and associational practices also. The series of legislations—Societies Act, Trust Act, Companies Act, Trade Union Act, Industrial Disputes Act and so on—enacted by British in the period after 1860 repeatedly rendered customary Indian business and Management practices illegal (Birla 2008). These notions of illegality continued into the postindependent era with legacy legal systems firstly and later globalization. In combination with Managerialism, these “notions of illegality” formed a potent discursive force which silenced Management of the Indian kind.

## **Affirming in Denial: Making Managerialism Indian**

While Management began with and continued to consolidate its discursive dominance, it was not completely unchallenged. On one side, such resistance took the form of everyday practices of the new IIMs asserting their operational autonomy from the technical collaborators and Ford Foundation leading to even cessation of funding from Ford Foundation. One of the other side, some the academicians soon started realizing and questioning the relevance of completely Western notions of Management—especially in the domain of people Management and organization behaviour. Scholars such as Udai Pareek and T.V. Rao extended the practice of personnel function and transformed it into human resource Management.

Their work actively highlighted the need for enabling the employee to grow instead of focusing only on work performance. They also outlined mechanisms for managing people in such a manner. In the broader disciplines of psychology and sociology as well, there were efforts to identify particularly Indian exceptions or variations from the mainstream. Management did not remain unaffected by this nativist turn. Writers like J.B.P. Sinha (1982) emphasized the cultural differences of Indian workforce as lacking in ambition and a hindrance to economic development and work organization and therefore the need to change Western motivational approaches in this regard. Other writers examined the psychoanalytic consequences of the Indian’s religious and caste identifications (Kakkar 1979, 1982; Paranjape 1975; Sinha 1964) and thereby its implications for organizational behaviour and economic development. Speaking during that era, Hiten Bhaya, ex-director of IIM Calcutta, said:

There is a need for replenishment of indigenous material of fundamental, functional and applied nature. This can only be done through research. The kind of research mostly carried out has been the application of some Western models and hypotheses to the Indian situation. This, I felt, was not good enough. There was need for more research in behavioural areas like motivation, etc., which are more culture-specific (cited in Sancheti 1986: 43).

A third track of resistance to Western Management developed in the work of scholars such as Chakraborty (1991, 1995). This strand of work sought to incorporate elements of spiritualism into improving workforce Management and

reduction of workplace stresses. Broadly framed as value-based Management, this strand spilled over into ethical perspectives and sought to reduce the stresses of workplace by emphasizing spiritual aspects of work (Rao and Murthy 1975). The Management Centre of Human Values (MCHV) at IIM Calcutta was also set up for the purpose of examining Indian mythologies, scriptures and history to develop leadership lessons for Management. A significant volume of non-academic writing of this kind also developed in India.

These indigenizations highlighted the Managerial need to tap into native sensibilities of the ethic of the “worker” and the “employee” for effective work performance. They, however, left unscrutinized the “employer” ethic or “Management” ethic modelled on the Western profit maximizing corporation. The paradigm of shareholder value maximization, profit maximization and instrumental view of everything as a resource was unquestioned. The Indian ethic of work became applicable only for the employee and not the employer. The appropriation of Indian texts and native sensibilities by these Management scholars was selective and stressed only the submissive and devotional aspects of work and emptied them out of all their tactical and political repertoire, rendering the Indian worker/employee docile and defenceless against an amoral corporation. To the extent that these indigenizations did not apprehend the meaning of “organization,” “business owner” and “Management” in the Indian sensibility but only contextualized the “worker” and the “manager” inside the decontextualized “organization”, such indigenizations inadvertently became the handmaiden of Managerialism and permitted greater exploitation of the Indian employee and worker. Some scholars have even termed this indigenization as a quest for identity in which the West continues to be the reference point (Srinivas 2012). In all these attempts at resisting and Indianizing, the epistemic and ontologic dominance of Management and Managerialism was never questioned.

## Contemporary Management Practice

The epistemic and ontologic domination of Management was not questioned then, and it is not questioned in today's globalized context. Today, all pretences of resistance have also disappeared in the rush of Indian Management institutions to become global Management leaders. If at the founding moments of IIMs, one nurtured the fond hope that over time Indian material and content would be generated, all those hopes have dashed now. In the early years after the founding of IIMs, there continued to be a keen interest in developing the nation, in building the country and in doing whatever was necessary for taking care of its people. “Whatever was necessary” included learning modern Management and applying it for the nation's sake. This sentiment was echoed in the mood of the convocation addresses at IIMs during the period. It was also evident in the observations and deliberations of the IIM review reports of 1981 (Nanda committee) and even as late as in 1991 (Kurien committee). Clearly until the 1990s, IIMs were considered as

institutions producing Managerial talent to serve the needs of the nation even though some of its graduates joined multinational organizations.

With the coming of liberalization and globalization in the 1990s, the mood of the country's leadership changed. The era became more and more characterized by a growing global orientation and competing globally as an economy, as a polity and as a society. This global orientation permeated even the IIMs. The deliberations of the IIM review committee of 2008 unhesitatingly underline the global orientation of IIMs and lay the framework that would presumably make the IIMs global leaders. The agenda set forth in these deliberations highlights international expansion and the need to fare well in global business school rankings—a goal which the report argues could be materialized through research leadership. The nationalist flavour of the previous assessments became conspicuous by its absence. Rather, one could possibly argue that nationalist sentiment now meant becoming a global business school from India very much like multinationals emerging from India competing globally. This transformation in the agenda brought its own consequences. If earlier, the issues of Management were local, but the frameworks were imported, in contemporary times, even issues have had to be imported because only that would guarantee that the issue would be globally relevant. A locally relevant issue faced a high probability of being termed parochial in the global arena and therefore was unfit to provide greater publishing leverage. For instance, a reviewer comment from an international journal writes “The case's focus on the role of corporate grant subsidy for project development is relatively interesting in today's entrepreneurially driven non-profit funding environment” (reviewer comment on manuscript id no. ACRJ 2151203). The case deals with the important issue of non-profit business collaboration following the new Companies Act of India 2013; however, this does not elicit international interest. To create and sustain international reception for publishing from India, in order to build research leadership IIMs and other Indian Management, researchers have to start looking at problems in India from the international angle. For instance, international business has become more about how to enter an emerging market as against how an Indian multinational can enter a developed market or some other country. The perspective for instance remains “Google in China” and not “India entering Malaysia” or “Indian corporation entering the USA.”

If research agenda has thus been dominated, teaching has not been left unscathed. If earlier, one nurtured the belief that Indian context was different, today, one tends to see all contexts as similar due to globalization. The Harvard Business School (HBS) case repository forms the bulk of the learning material as also textbooks which are written by respected international authors. Even if cases on Indian businesses are used, these again are from the HBS repository where the cases are written from a Western perspective for a Western audience. At one of the top IIMs, of the 27 textbooks used in the first year only four are by Indians (even in these, the premises and theories are unquestionably still Western!), the rest of the books are all by international authors. Some have Indian editions with adaptations by authors from India which trivialize the idea of indigenization with an illustration of Bill Gates in the textbook being replaced by an Indian business leader for

instance. This phenomenon which some academic colleagues have termed “vulgar indigenization” appears to be more of a response to market dynamics and intellectual property regimes rather than any kind of indigenization per se. In fact, the internationalness of the curriculum is invoked as a badge and certificate of the world-class quality of Management education being offered in these institutes. As one senior faculty of IIMs put it in the context of AACSB Accreditations, “IIMs have the most internationalized of all curricula—all their teaching material is from outside the country!”

If the Nanda Committee had lamented the wastage of national resources manifest in the IIM training, with students receiving subsidized engineering education first and then subsidized Management education only to join Western or private Indian businesses modelled on the West neglecting the Managerial needs of several sectors such as agriculture, public sector and small enterprise sector (AIMA study of 1975, cited in Sancheti 1986); the scene has not changed much today with foreign MNCs remaining the most coveted employers of students (Varman et al. 2011). Even today about 25–35 % of Management graduates join these global firms, and while it is difficult to say whether this offtake has reoriented the training to global needs as described previously or the reoriented training has opened up the offtake by global financial firms, there does appear to be a relationship between the two. I wonder why we have lost sight of the fact that close to 60 % of the Management graduates from these top Management schools actually work in Indian firms in the Indian contexts whether public or private. I wonder whether we have even been able to equip them sufficiently for this purpose given the overwhelming orientation of our Management curriculum to Western priorities. In the 50 years of Management education we have had, we have only become more perfect at subordinating ourselves to a metropolitan centre. Our sensibility of and for *Management* has been heavily clouded by Management, so much so that nowadays we not only talk of professionalizing family-owned businesses but even reforming all those segments of our economy and society where *Management* might still be present—namely the informal and unorganized sector such as artisanal, agriculture, small- and medium-scale enterprise and inducing Managerial orientation in them. Probably, even Ford Foundation would not have anticipated this success!

## **Straddling Two Worlds: Being a Management Teacher Today**

As a Management teacher in one of the most prestigious Management institutes of the country, I live and become the site of the everyday conflict between my native sensibilities and the epistemic domination of my discipline. As a member of this professional community, I am tasked with the responsibility of teaching Management to tomorrow's managers. But it is only with a great sense of unease that I practise this responsibility. In being a teacher, I am straddling two worlds. In

the world of Management education, I am a foot soldier who dutifully executes and conveys the knowledge received from the centres of power. In my “other” world, I am a native teacher who is responsible as the custodian and patron of native knowledge and Management. This straddling of two worlds makes me a very hesitant teacher. Sometimes when students want to know whether Erikson’s identity crisis explains the mentality of Indian youth who put fulfilling family expectations above personal career aspirations, I feel hesitant to side with Erikson or his colleagues. I feel like being on the side of the questioning student. There are many Indian psychologists who have asked similar questions, but the whole conversation has occurred outside Management, so I can not appropriate that easily.

At other times when I stand in class sharing the finding that Indians are high on the personality trait of “self-monitoring,” I am not sure that the observation of literature is free from a value judgment of the Indian psyche. I can only speak with equivocality—a part of me teaches the book, a part of me suspects it. When I teach industrial history and Management, I am tormented by the question: Did this happen in India? And when I talk of power and politics, I experience a schizophrenic split, where an “another” mouths the lines of “A having power over B” and the adverse consequences of politics for organizational work. The real me wants to speak about the political repertoire of the Indian, informed as he/she is by the wisdom of the ages travelling through folklore, mythologies and literature and the workplace dynamics that emerge from it, but this “me” has to hide because this knowledge is illegitimate. Only Dhal and French make a legitimate curriculum in/of power! The only means by which I can remedy my schizophrenic existence is by engaging in a search for alternatives and creating these alternatives in pedagogical techniques, in teaching material and in theory.

Standing in a classroom teaching organizational behaviour concepts (whether micro or macro) from books and studies which do not recognize the Indian existence, I am at a loss to defend that knowledge during a classroom scrutiny. It is only by undermining the authoritativeness of that knowledge itself and my own authority as a teacher who imparts that knowledge; by mocking myself and my theory; and instilling the spirit of a coinvestigator that I build my solidarity with students who probe concepts for their relevance to the experience of my society. It is in scrutinizing Management in the light of anecdotal everyday experiences, along with my students (instead of teaching my students) that I am able to find my wholeness. It is by producing cases and illustrations informed by native sensibilities that I am able to engage with the student’s curiosity much more meaningfully. It is only after discovering the *Management* practices in the Indian-owned textile mills of Bombay in the end of 1800s and early 1900s does industrial history become manageable for me. The discovery gives me the confidence to teach Industrial history of the West as a “local history of Europe” and the Bombay textile mill as the “local history of India.” I still need to teach the “local history of Europe and its knowledge” because only then would it be called Management education in a world racing for *Financial Times* (FT) rankings. Such is the intellectual subordination I inhabit. And I know that I am not alone.



## Imaginations of *Management* Education for the Future

With the kind of epistemic subordination, we have accomplished for ourselves, we might even begin to question whether there is any meaning in thinking of a future of Management in India. The question appears illogical. But politics is about possibilities, the possibility of provincializing Europe. And the geopolitics of knowledge is about the ethical possibility of redressing epistemic violence. It is about the possibility of decolonising knowledge and breaking free from the epistemic violence of subordination. The fact that academics like us can talk about local histories of Europe and India in our classrooms attests to such a decolonising possibility, a possibility that our intellectual subordination is not complete, even though we have been dominated.

The dominating and colonizing process in knowledge has been shown by several thinkers and writers on geopolitics of knowledge from Latin America such as Dussel, Glissant and Mignolo who have interrogated Eurocentric epistemologies and ontologies. Walter Mignolo has argued that coloniality is not a consequence of modernity, but in fact constitutive of modernity and exists as modernity/coloniality that the Spanish colonization of Latin America 500 years ago made modernity possible. Studying the geopolitics of knowledge, Mignolo has demonstrated that the idea of epistemology and its Eurocentrism represents the coloniality of power. The idea of the colonial difference “reveal[s] the way in which power has been at work in creating the difference (that is, the way in which colonialism creates “backwardness” both materially and ideologically) as well as the way in which colonial power represents and evaluates difference” (Alcoff 2007: 87). The colonial difference makes the metropolitan centre of the West as the locus of enunciation and thus its epistemology, methods and categories as the only possible ways of enunciation. Through this, local histories of Europe turn into global designs. The colonial difference legitimizes subalternization of knowledge and renders the non-West as only producers of culture, incapable of producing knowledge (2000: 5–16).

It is such colonial difference that has rendered *Management* practices of India as the absence of Management, the “most important form of epistemic coloniality in the last 150 years” (Ibarra-Colado 2006). The colonial difference is not restricted to economic or social differences but includes epistemic differences. As Mignolo (2000) says, epistemic domination has been so intense that even language does not exist to express these differences, for instance “episteme” has taken over and subordinated all other forms of knowing that are still in practice in different parts of the world. All the other forms of knowing of gaining knowledge have been reduced to “folk” wisdom or “gnosis” and denied the status of “real scientific knowledge.” In this process, “what is under dispute is our capacity for intellectual autonomy and our capacity for seeing with our own eyes and thinking in our own languages (Spanish, Portuguese, Nahuatl, Aimara, Zapotec, Quechua or Mapuche), even though sometimes we must write in English” (Ibarra-Colado 2006).

In imagining a future for *Management* education in India, it will therefore be necessary to recognize this colonial difference. It is only after recognizing our

subordination to Managerialism, can we think of effectively leveraging this subordination to make decolonizing gains. Decolonization of knowledge is not about abandoning one set of knowledge—the Eurocentric Managerialism for another set of knowledge—like *Management* in an uncritical, unreflexive way. This would be as barbaric as colonization itself! Decolonization of knowledge can be accomplished only with a respectful acknowledgement of the differences in ways of knowing, ways of living and the life worlds of different societies. It begins by *delinking* (Mignolo 2006) from Western epistemic categories and examining phenomena from other sets categories including those of the once colonized.

Thus, decolonizing Management would mean seeking to understand practices in India from perspectives other than efficiency or profiteering that are central to Management. It would mean unshackling ourselves from the notions of manager, organization and Management. It would mean recognizing the traditional and customary roles of business and elite in our society, their politics, their ethics and their pragmatics. It would mean recognizing the traditional notions implicit in the employer–employee relationship in India, its politics and its ethics. It would mean recognizing the legal violence these relationships have endured in the process of colonization and modernization and now globalization. It would mean recognizing and respecting the perspectives of those who are practising—the workers, the *sardars*, the owners, whether they be “making a living,” “getting along,” “making profits,” “taking care,” “settling down,” “satisfactory profits” or whatever else. It is recognizing the wisdom informing these actions of the Indian people and not seeking to subordinate them to Eurocentric categories but dispensing those categories if necessary and creating a fresh vocabulary that honours the once colonized’s capacity to “*manage*.”

For instance, in a recent consulting engagement, I happened to encounter a CEO of a Rs. 4 billion business. While we were discussing, an assistant walked in with a diary and an envelope of money on which he signed and then the person quietly left. The CEO explained that it was one of his employees who was returning some personal loan he had advanced. My theoretical training prompted me to classify this behaviour as a “personalized system of authority in the workplace,” which undermines the effectiveness of the organization. But native sensibility nagged me to probe more. Upon exploring this incident further with him, I learnt that he believed that it was his bounded duty to help his employees who were in need. He believed that it would be inappropriate on his part if he, as a man of means, did not become useful to those around him who were in need. By framing the incident as a “personalized system of authority,” I was certainly glossing over this understanding of the moral and social responsibility of the “person with means,” or “business owner.” When I suspend this framing, several things start becoming clearer. The CEO was conscious of his responsibility towards his workers. He was also conscious of the limits of the capitalist enterprise in enabling him to pursue this responsibility.

The capitalist enterprise on the one hand made it easy for him not to fulfil this responsibility at all, since he was not legally obligated to advance any loan for personal needs to his employees. On the other hand, it made it too costly for him to

fulfil this responsibility by locating it inside the enterprise as a formal policy because he would either have to make it universally available to all employees and open it to improper use increasing his employee costs in the process, or be accused of interference in the personal affairs of employees.

However, by choosing to locate his loan to workers outside the enterprise in the domain of the social relations between those with means and those without it, he was not only honouring his social and moral responsibility but also managing to keep his business competitive. In invoking this social space, both he and the worker not only limited their subordination to a capitalist logic but also ensured that more fine-grained information of the need and the support required could be factored into the decision-making guarding the process against abuse. Any obligations that were generated in this process remained effective in the social space outside the reach of the legal and economic processes of contract and its enforcement. One could argue that this process ultimately hinges on the moral strength of the CEO and that the employee cannot claim it as a right. Yes, this criticism is valid; however, this criticism does not take into account the fact that the social prestige which the CEO enjoys rests not only on his Rs. 4 billion business but more importantly on his ability to satisfy the claims that are made on him by the community on an ongoing basis. To that extent while the employee does not have a right to make a claim on the CEO, he/she does have the ability to withhold respect or grant prestige to the CEO, something which the CEO cannot coerce out of the employee.

Thus, delinking from Eurocentric categories and unshackling ourselves from some of these sedimented categories such "personalized system of authority" in the above instance open up the possibility of alternate explanation and theorizing from other perspectives which could lead to decolonization of knowledge. Such decolonization of knowledge may or may not provincialize Europe, but it could at least provide ways to rescue and transform Management out of the social, economic, political and ecological crises it has perpetuated on this world and on itself.

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