

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND STUDENT SUCCESS: A NOVEL CONCEPT FOR NOVEL INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

India is witnessing a profound transition phase in terms of positive economic conditions, better international relations, digitalization of commerce and many promising plans and programs at the time to come. Indian government initiatives like Make in India” set hopes and vision for a new and novel India and several sectors like automobile, engineering, IT and many more are contributing to this initiative. However, while talking about the rise of new India, the importance and contribution of Higher education sector cannot be ignored as they produce the young graduates for Indian as well as International markets. While demand for high quality and productivity in business schools has been continuously growing, the nations' institutions are still battling with low success rates of management students in terms of poor employability status. There are ample studies conducted internationally revealing the positive relation between student engagement and student success. Apparently, the same cannot be said for India as the contribution of student engagement in management education has been undermined so far. This paper has taken the literature review as a medium to understand the present status and factors influencing employability of PG students. Also, the paper discusses the benefits and linkage between student engagement and student success, especially in the context of employability skills of management students.

**KEYWORDS:** Student Engagement, Student Success, Management Education, India

### INTRODUCTION

India is witnessing a profound transition phase in terms of positive economic conditions, better international relations, digitalization of commerce and many promising plans and programs at the time to come. However, while talking about the rise of new India, the importance and contribution of Higher education sector cannot be ignored as they produce the young graduates for Indian as well as International markets. Apparently, the downfall in the quality of students graduated from B-schools has forced the academicians, government and policy makers to rethink over the issues related to the academic environment and its impact on the student success. Student engagement is found to be a promising predictor of academic success. It is also a determinant for quality learning. The positive relation of student engagement and academic success of students has been researched and documented thoroughly in many western countries but the same cannot be said for India. Thus, it is imperative to study the engagement level of students and its benefits in relation to student success. The purpose of this literature review is to discuss the concept of student engagement in relation to Indian higher education.

In India, the economic growth is reflected through the growth of business schools in the country. Notably, the number of B-schools has increased from 1000 to 3600 from 1988 to 2015 which is a big number indeed. When it comes to

quality of education in business institutions, China is ahead of India as in 2012, there were 5 Chinese Management institutions featured in the top 100 as compared to 2 Indian schools (Financial Times Ratings, 2012). The essence of novel India shows itself in the successful outcome of educational programs and for any management Institution, a student is successful if he/she is competent enough to match the requirements of business corporations and contribute to the economic development of the country. The Indian Higher Education sector must nurture the graduates with required competitive skills to fulfill the aspiring Initiative to Make in India. Also student engagement is such a topic that has been almost ignored by the Indian education system and its contribution is overlooked. This paper is an attempt to the factors which helps in increasing the engagement level of students and contributes to the quality up gradation in Indian Business schools by upgrading the employability of the students.

## RELEVANCE TO PRESENT SCENARIO

There is no doubt that Management education in India is witnessing a rapid growth in terms of addition of professional studies institutes, especially the B-schools imparting professional education. According to Baruch and Lemming (1996), the MBA programs incorporate a prime objective and responsibility towards the nation to assist students to develop a better understanding towards industrial and business world. This would further help in developing and preparing them for managerial roles through enhancing their skills and endow with competencies which are pertinent to their Careers. No doubt, a developing country like India, where education is the foundation for future developments certainly needs to screen the mass of students who are trained and graduated by it. India is emerging as one of the promising markets in terms of business and growth opportunities in the world. Unfortunately, India is trying to change from an agriculture-based economy to an industrialized economy and in doing so, it is lagging due to the shortage of skilled labor (The skill development landscape in India and implementing quality skill training, August 2010). However, B-schools actual academic success lies in preparing employable or development of essential skills to be a market ready graduate. Student engagement is such a topic that has been almost ignored by the Indian education system and its contribution is overlooked. It is relevant to study the factors which help in increasing the engagement level of students and contributes to student success through the quality enhancement in Indian Business schools.

Although enhancing employability skills in management education are considered as an important task by all universities and colleges. Still in India, the positive link between student engagement in professional institutions and success in the workforce after graduation has been understudied so far. This gap is depressing news indeed, especially when the Indian economy is hovering for rapid growth rate and ambitious initiatives like “Make in India” demand skilled manpower. Thus, the relevance of this present study lies in understanding the impact of student engagement on student success.

## RESEARCH GAP

There were a number of studies conducted on issues like Business schools and their teaching pedagogy, benefits of joining professional courses like MBA (Powell, 1995; Citron, 2009, Mason, 2009). Also, several studies in India talked about the problems in Higher education like poor teaching pedagogy, poor infrastructure, poor quality education, poor employability skills of graduates (Padmakali & Kumar, 2016; Reddy, 2016; Dhar, 2012;). It is dismal news that student engagement has not been studied in relation to higher education, especially in relation to B-schools in India. As compared to India, western countries are far ahead in measuring student engagement and its impact on educational outcomes and

academic success of students both at school and college level. This research gap needs to be filled in India as well and this led to review this paper considering the role of student engagement in higher education and its impact on the student success in terms of employability.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is substantial evidence that student engagement is imperative in promoting student success and learning. Student engagement is found to be a strong predictor of student learning. Student engagement is a topic that has been studied and measured through several surveys in many countries for the past so many years and has gained considerable importance. No doubt, a vast country like India, where education is the mainstay for future developments certainly wishes to monitor the mass of students who are trained and produced by it. This section would help understand student engagement in a better way by reviewing the existing literature related to the concerned topic.

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Alexander Astin (1984) developed a theory which was based on the conception of involvement for the college students, which was called as 'engagement' afterwards. He defined engagement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience."

Since 1984, the researchers have done an extensive research outlook to the construct of "engagement". According to Kuh (2009), the concept of student engagement along with its historical factors was shown positive links with different desired outcomes of college and it has been supported by many years of research studies.

The word 'engagement' requires feelings and sense making and is more than involvement or participation. In other words, engagement requires activity because one has to feel engaged otherwise, any activity is just involvement or even compliance. Moreover, if someone is feeling without getting engaged is dissociation (Harper and Quaye, 2009). Fredericks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) studied student engagement with school students and came out with three useful dimensions of student engagement, as behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement.

D. Kuh, M. Cruise, and Shoup (2008) studied the impact of engagement on two key outcomes of college that is academic achievement and persistence in educationally purposeful activities from different racial and ethnic background. They found that student engagement has a positive effect on the academic outcomes in first-year student's grades in educationally purposeful activities. Also, engagement of students had positively impact on the persistence in first-year and second year of college. According to Schaufeli (2002), engagement is a positive, fulfilling, affective and motivational state. He viewed engagement as the exact opposite of burnout.

According to Newmann (1992), "student engagement is the level of participation and intrinsic interest that a student shows in school." He further suggested that when students are engaged in activities in the classroom and outside then the output leads to success and learning.

According to Chapman (2003), the lack of student engagement is indicated by unexplained absences from classes, damaging school property and cheating on tests. Disaffection is the opposite of engagement and students who are found disaffected are passive, resist challenges and do not try hard on efforts. Sometimes they are found bored, depressed and angry to sit inside the class (Skinner, 1993).

### **Student Engagement and Management Education in India: An Embracing and Novel Concept**

As the globalization is marking its presence in Indian economy and the impact can be felt and has already been acknowledged in all important sectors like services, manufacturing, IT and others. This has been witnessed by progressing growth in this sphere of Higher education as it led to the rising demand of trained management graduates. Undoubtedly, Management education has gained popularity as one of the most sought after education today and this actually set off the entrance of private sector in Indian management scenario and invested an immense amount for this.

Anyhow, the mushrooming of B-schools offering management courses did bring remarkable change in the number of admissions to these schools. The admissions however, did not connect with the quality of education. Student Engagement is the active involvement of a student in educationally relevant activities and this involvement should be cognitive, emotional and behavioral. The existing literature abroad has witnessed it that the poor engagement of students likely to result in unreal and incomplete learning. It is surprising that in India the educational institutes and research scholars both have not tried it yet to study student engagement. The literature reviewed below describes the state of study and research of student engagement specifically in India.

Sharma (2013) conducted several exploratory studies to measure the level of student engagement and its antecedents in Postgraduates Institutes of Management. He measured student engagement along several dimensions and found that there is plenty of scope existing to improve the level of student engagement in terms of faculty input, IT facilities etc. It was found that in order to perk up the quality of higher education, the role of student engagement is the key input to that. He found that 'self-efficacy' is the strong predictor of student engagement (Sharma, Kahndelwal & Ningthaujam (2012), Sharma & Saxena).

Pandey (2003) studied the relationship between student engagement and academic performance of post graduate management students in India. The results revealed that student engagement leads to positive learning outcomes and grades. He found that active collaborative learning is the best outline of student engagement.

### **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND STUDENT SUCCESS**

Student Success is a multi-dimensional concept. It is difficult to define it in one standard way as there is no consensus over one single dimensions of it. According to Perna & Thomas (2007) success can be defined into a sequential chart of four changes as college readiness, college enrolment, college achievement, and post-college attainment. Smart, Feldman, and Ethington (2006) defined success in different context. According to them, different academic environments required to award different set of competencies. So, in spite of using a common set of criteria, that particular college major rather consider different approach for different educational programs. In other words, the author tried to propose that student success should be judged in relation to the interests, abilities and this perspective should be reinforced and rewarded to the students at the time of their admissions.

Astin (1991) developed a beautiful model which served as a theoretical framework to examine academic success. This model was called as INPUT-Environment-Outcomes (I-O-E) model. This model viewed student success as academic success comprising of academic achievement, acquisition of required skills and competencies and persistence and retention. In other words, academic achievement is not the only formal indicator of student success, rather success lies in acquisition of required skills and competencies.

Kuh et al (2005) suggested that the High levels of student engagement lead to purposeful student-faculty contact, active and collaborative learning, and inclusive and affirming institutional environments. According to the author, the high level of engagement of students is positively related to student satisfaction, learning, and development. In other words, for a college student success, student engagement contributes positively.

Pascarella & Terenzini (1991, 2005) stated that student engagement comprised of the purposeful activities which lead to positive educational outcomes including persistence, satisfaction and academic success.

### **Indian Higher Education Dilemma:-I Am Not Employable! Am I Successful Graduate???**

Employability can be defined as the skills needed by an individual who can be transferred to make them 'employable'. Mostly, employers believe that along with gaining good technical understanding and subject knowledge, the graduates should acquire a set of skills like Self management, Team working, Problem solving, business knowledge, ICT knowledge, Good interpersonal and communication skills. The graduates should possess the ability to initiate efforts and follow instructions and Leadership skills as and when necessary (Lowden et al, 2011). According to Mason (2003), employability is centred on several graduate skills like development of communication, numeracy, information technology, and learning how to learn.

According to a study, there are approximately 5,500 B-schools in India and around ten thousand management graduates are churned out by these schools, the employable graduates were only 7 per cent of the total (Chakrabarty, 2016). Mr. Pranab Mukherjee(Former President of India, January2016) said, “ if (the situation is) not reversed quickly, we will land ourselves in a scenario of having a large number of people with degrees but not enough manpower with proficiency to meet the emerging requirement of our industrial and other sectors.“ Indeed, India has enough potential to cater to the needs of the global talent market, yet the poor employability figures of the graduates turns out to be the bottleneck for the growth of t he country (Talent shortage survey, 2005) (Global talent risk-seven responses, 2011).

According to a report (ASSOCHAM,2016), Indian Higher Education lacks in quality across several disciplines and the graduates are not capable of meeting the needs of corporate world.” There were many similar reports available (Aspiring minds, 2016) suggesting the poor employability status of MBA graduates and focusing on several reasons for the same situation.

There are several researches trying to pin down the possible reasons for poor employability of Indian Graduates. Some of the strongest reasons are pointed out in the section below:

- Excess Supply
- Poor Quality
- Lack of Basic Skills
- Lack of B-school and Industry Interface
- Under qualified Faculty
- Poor engagement level of students
- More emphasis on academic performance rather than skill development

### **Student Engagement: A Predictor for Student Success**

There is substantial evidence that student engagement is important in promoting student success and learning. Kuh (2009) gave the statement that student engagement and its historical antecedents have been supported by decades of research which has shown positive associations with a range of desired outcomes of college. There is a positive relationship between student engagement and student success and it has been firmly established. According to Centre for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE, 2012), “student learning, persistence and attainment in college are strongly associated with student engagement.”

Kuh & Klien(2006) stated that the student engagement is positively related to student success and positive educational outcome.

Talking specifically about employability and student engagement, a study conducted by University of California measured graduate student success in terms of employability and found that the students who were high on engagement were found to be earning high salary after graduation with rich work profiles. Thus, concluded that student engagement positively influence the employability of the students. According to an Indian survey conducted on 32,000 MBA graduates from 220 business schools across India to test the employability skills. The test, which quizzed graduates on topics ranging from grammar to quantitative analysis, found that only 10% of those tested had skills that recruiters typically look for while hiring management graduates (Indiarealtime, 2012).

### **DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Management education these days face the ultimate challenge of turning more practical oriented and more industry specific as without this, theory based teaching and growth are worthless. There is no doubt that professional courses offered by B-schools still holds a lot of scope and capability to stand up to its towered standards. All these programs require is a well thought-out and an intentional strategy to overcome the problems that haunt them today. The existing literature abroad has witnessed it that the poor engagement of students likely to result in unreal and incomplete learning. Student engagement is a goal in itself and this paper has highlighted the need to recognise, accommodate and provide opportunities for engagement to students with specific motivations and goals.

#### **Engage them to Make Successful/ Employable Graduates**

- Become a learner-centered institute and provide good infrastructure and facility including proper labs, canteen, clean toilets, spacious classrooms, seminar halls, good library etc.
- Customize student related programs outcomes to meet the specific demand of global market.
- give institutional support to students like counseling, carrier guidance, self assessment and more to improve their decision making ability
- Emphasis more on ‘learning by doing’ and practical exposure through summer and winter internship programs, industry visits, projects etc.

After reviewing the previous researches, it can be certainly concluded that Higher education Institute (business schools) should realize that only attainment of good grades would not justify the success for graduates but developing them as employable students would bring justice to the real output of these schools both for India and other countries. Student

engagement promotes and predicts student success in terms of satisfaction, better skill development, retention, persistence and academic achievement of students. Novelty lies in the new and improved ways to do things and it's time for Indian education society to work by adhering to new and improved ways of teaching, training and developing the future managers for new India.

#### **To Sum It Up, It Can Be Said That:**

- Clear understanding that student engagement is the key to active learning; so it is the need of the decade to prioritize it.
- Institutions should develop the curriculum and teaching pedagogy according to the required aim of that programme specifically rather than following the notion “one fits to all.”
- Creating and maintaining a “learning by doing” culture so that the students can develop their interpersonal skills and they are in a state to reflect on and assess critically the class concepts.
- A student is successful if that education program he pursued in Higher Education not only polishes his /her employability skill which is one of the strongest reasons to go for higher education. So higher education must consider this as one of the biggest responsibility.
- Institutions are required to be pro-active in analyzing and measuring the effects of student engagement timely and effectively.

India is on its way to evolve as a developed nation from the status of developing in the years to come. This along with a sense of pride brings a sense of responsibility that all the sectors must develop according to the requirement of the time. Thus, government should also come up with better plans and policies to upgrade the existing level of higher education. To develop a holistic framework for effective management education and student success, higher education in India needs to revitalize its policy and refresh its vision towards a more comprehensive and productive output i.e. graduates who are civic and competent enough to reflect and face the new waves in the ever changing business world.

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