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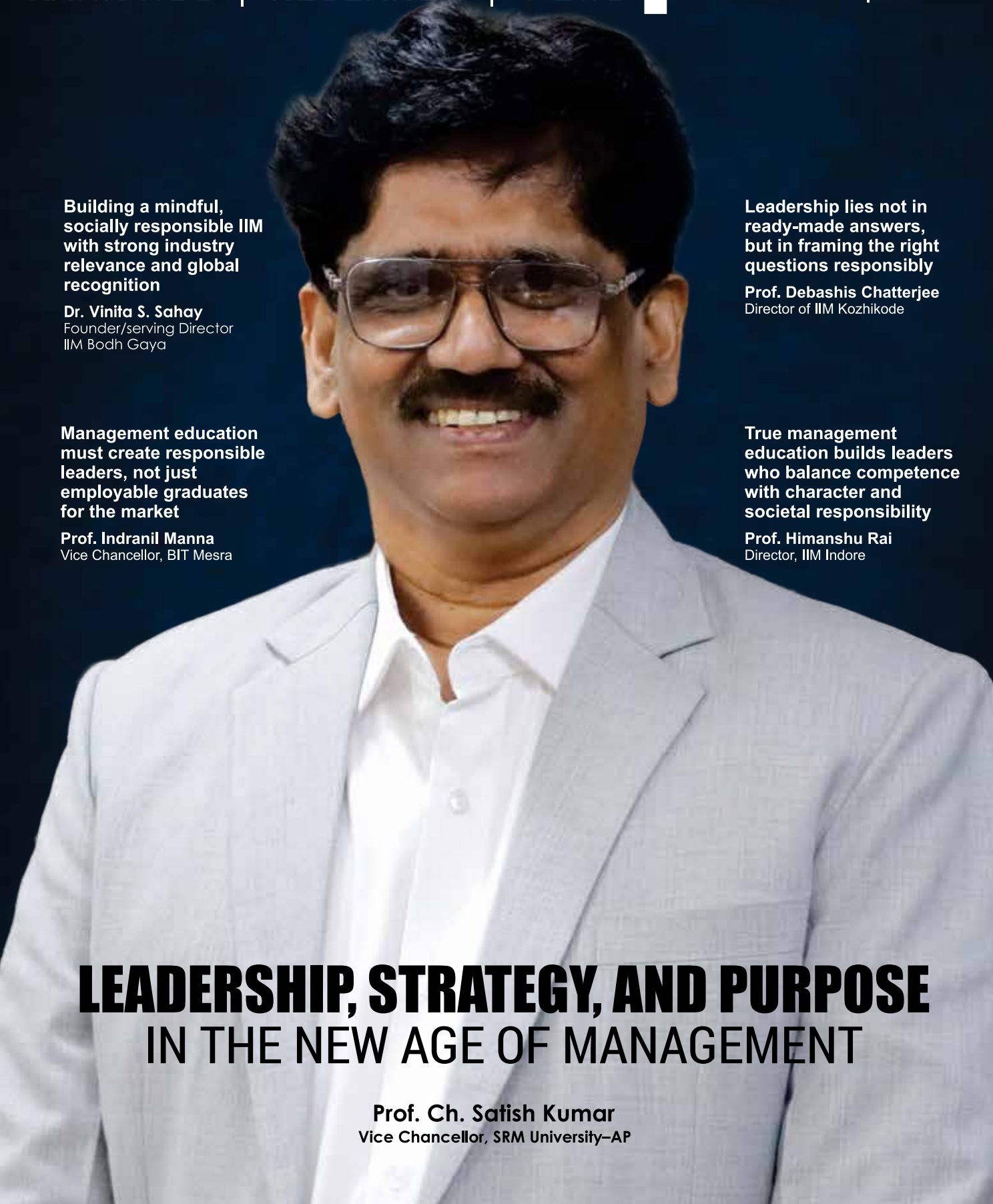
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TOO MANY MBAs IN INDIA

TOO MANY BAD ONES

India does not suffer from an MBA glut. It suffers from an MBA quality crisis. The degree itself is not the problem. The way it is taught, staffed, marketed, and sold is.

Over the last two decades, management education has expanded at breakneck speed. Campuses have multiplied across metros and small towns alike. The promise has been aspirational and seductive. Two years in, and a stable corporate career comes out the other end. No wonder, for many families, the MBA still represents order in a chaotic job market.

But scale has come at a cost, and that cost is now painfully visible.

The clearest fault line is faculty. Or rather, the lack of it. India's MBA boom has far outpaced its ability to produce experienced, credible teachers of management. Good faculty are not just people with PhDs and publications. They are practitioners who understand markets, decision-making, failure, and trade-offs. They are rare, and they are concentrated in a handful of elite institutions.

Everyone else is scrambling.

As new B-schools open each year, the same limited pool of teachers is stretched thinner. Faculty shuttle between campuses. Fresh graduates teach fresh graduates. PowerPoint decks replace insight. Case discussions become scripted exercises with predictable answers. The classroom begins to resemble a coaching center, not a place of intellectual friction.

This is not an abstract academic concern. It directly shapes outcomes.

Students graduate fluent in jargon but weak in judgment. They can recite frameworks but struggle to apply them. Recruiters notice. Quietly at first, then decisively. Many companies now treat large parts of the MBA market as noise. They hire from a narrow band of schools, and even there, expectations have hardened.

The rest are left chasing placements that look good on brochures and feel hollow in reality.

What makes the situation worse is the lack of real accountability. Regulators are busy ticking boxes. They look at buildings, classroom sizes, sanctioned seats, and paperwork. They spend far less time asking harder questions. Who is actually teaching these courses? How connected are they to the industry they claim to prepare students for? Do graduates leave with skills that employers want? Quality, in other words, is assumed, not measured.

Meanwhile, marketing fills the gap. Aspirations are sold aggressively. Success stories are amplified. Median outcomes are buried. Students take on debt believing they are buying certainty. Many discover too late that they have bought a credential without muscle.

This is not an argument against MBAs. India needs managers. It needs people who can scale businesses, navigate regulation, allocate capital, and lead teams. But it needs fewer assembly lines and more craft.

That starts with faculty. Serious investment in teaching talent. Incentives for industry professionals to enter academia. Fewer seats, taught better. If a school cannot staff a program with credible faculty, it should not be allowed to run it. Expansion without depth is not access. It is dilution.

The uncomfortable truth is this. India does not have too many MBA graduates. It has too many institutions offering a weak version of a powerful degree. Until that imbalance is corrected, the MBA will continue to lose meaning, not because it failed, but because it was overpromised and underbuilt.

And that would be a loss not just for students, but for the economy that depends on them.

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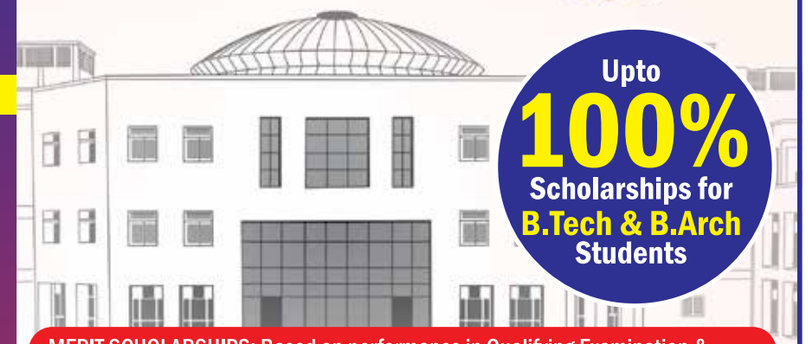
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COVER INTERVIEW

UNIVERSITIES MUST GO BEYOND DEGREES

TO CREATE THINKERS, INNOVATORS, AND RESPONSIBLE NATION-BUILDERS



Prof. Ch. Satish Kumar
Vice Chancellor
SRM University–AP

As Indian higher education undergoes a decisive shift toward multidisciplinary learning, research intensity, and industry relevance, SRM University–AP has emerged as a young institution with a clearly articulated long-term vision. In this cover interview, the university's leadership presents a comprehensive perspective on how academic excellence, governance, innovation, and social responsibility are being woven together to create a future-ready university.

Prof. Ch. Satish Kumar, Vice Chancellor, SRM University–AP, outlines how outcome-based curricula, flexible academic structures, and early research exposure are central to developing critical thinkers and socially conscious graduates. **Prof. C. V. Tomy,** Dean, School of Engineering and Sciences, explains the institution's strong focus on industry-aligned engineering education, global exposure, and research-led learning. **Prof. Vishnupad,** Dean, Easwari School of Liberal Arts, highlights the role of community engagement, interdisciplinary learning, and social immersion in shaping empathetic and responsible citizens. From a management education lens, **Dr. S. V. Ramana Rao,** Dean, Paari School of Business, details how experiential learning, corporate mentorship, and global certifications are narrowing the industry–academia gap.

The conversation also captures insights from **Prof. Ranjit Thapa,** Dean, Research, on building a socially relevant and well-funded research ecosystem, **Dr. R. Premkumar,** Registrar, on transparent governance and regulatory compliance. This in-depth interaction, conducted by Education Post's **Prabhav Anand,** offers a nuanced understanding of SRM University–AP's strategic priorities and its roadmap for sustained excellence in management education and beyond.

Q You have often said that education should go beyond knowledge transfer to foster innovation, critical thinking, and research that truly transform lives. How do you translate this philosophy into actionable strategies at SRM University-AP, especially in curriculum design, faculty development, and student engagement?

Vice Chancellor: Education must extend beyond knowledge accumulation to inspire innovation, curiosity, and societal impact. At SRM University-AP, this philosophy is embedded across curriculum design, faculty development, and student engagement. Our curricula are outcome-based, industry-aligned, and research-integrated, ensuring students learn by doing rather than merely listening. We have introduced flexible academic structures, multidisciplinary electives, and project-centric learning from the first year to nurture creativity and analytical thinking.

Faculty development is equally pivotal; we run continuous pedagogy training, global immersion programmes, and research capability enhancement workshops to ensure our educators remain catalysts of innovation.

At SRM AP, we also foster a vibrant research culture across levels. Undergraduate students engage in research early through interdisciplinary projects, dedicated mentorship, state-of-the-art labs, and opportunities for publication and conference participation. Postgraduate

learners advance into deeper, specialised research supported by modern facilities, industry collaborations, and global research networks. Together, these efforts equip students to tackle real-world challenges and contribute meaningful innovations.

Q With your academic training in anthropology (Andhra University), management (McGill University under Henry Mintzberg), and public health (PhD), you bring a uniquely interdisciplinary perspective. How has this eclectic background informed your approach to leading a modern university, and what advantages do you think it gives SRM AP?

Vice Chancellor: I am a strong advocate of multidisciplinary education and research. My academic journey reflects my commitment to integrating knowledge across disciplines for impactful learning and research.

It is my Public Health background that led me to the establishment of the School of Public Health at SRMIST, Chennai, introducing public health courses for non-medical graduates. I have also been able to lead public health projects in over 15 countries, collaborating with the WHO, UNDP, and other international health bodies. Similarly, my tenure at SRM University Sikkim, my foundations in Anthropology and Strategic Management have played a key role in formulating student-centric policies and institutional strategies that laid the framework for organizational excellence.

SRM University-AP was established as a multidisciplinary research-centric university in 2017. In the span of 8 years, the university has risen to the forefront of interdisciplinary research and academics emphasizing holistic education for its students.

I believe that my background in Public Health, Strategic Management and Anthropology has enabled me to integrate various academic disciplines to formulate educational strategies for a new-age university such as SRM University-AP. Whether it is strengthening the multidisciplinary research, curriculum development or policies that emphasize innovation, my scholastic experience in versatile fields has played a pivotal role in institutional governance as the current Vice Chancellor of SRM AP.

Q Reflecting on these roles, which leadership decision(s) at SRM have been most pivotal in building institutional capacity, and why?

Vice Chancellor: During my tenure as Registrar and later as Vice Chancellor at SRM University Sikkim, several strategic decisions were undertaken to establish the institution's administrative framework, strategic growth, and academic governance.

One, SRM University Sikkim was the first institution in the state to adopt the National Education Policy framework, marking a foundational shift in academic structure. This not only modernized the academic ecosystem but positioned SRM as a policy-responsive institution that aligns with national priorities and laid the groundwork for sustained academic competitiveness.

Second, I secured the first-ever ICMR-funded project in SRM University Sikkim, which substantially elevated the university's research capabilities. This achievement built the institution's scientific rig our, opened up opportunities for high-impact research, and established laboratories and faculty training & development.

Third, I put in place strong administrative processes, academic governance mechanisms, and operational frameworks that still serve as the backbone of the university's day-to-day functioning. These foundational systems have facilitated the institution to expand its programmes, streamline decision-making, and maintain high-quality standards.

Together, these decisions have enhanced SRM University Sikkim's operational capacity. I intend to bring the same robust governance to SRM AP to position ourselves as a forward-looking institution providing premier education in the grassroots of the country.

Q Education today caters to developing skills that extend beyond academics. What does a "holistic education" mean to SRM AP? How does the university prioritize student well-being and mental health?

Vice Chancellor: We live in a time of rapid technological evolution, evolving job markets, and a constantly growing need for individuals to be adaptable and solve real-world problems. In such times, the archaic approach to considering education as a mere transfer of knowledge will get you nowhere. Our approach to holistic education is to nurture well-rounded individuals who are thoughtful, compassionate, and capable of making a positive impact in society.

Our flexible, interdisciplinary curriculum encourages cross-departmental dialogue. We emphasize experiential learning rather than theoretical instruction, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. The university provides support through the Directorate of Student Affairs and a well-rounded training system that includes sports facilities, recreational activities and initiatives like the NCC programme to instill quality of leadership, discipline and teamwork among the students. Students are also encouraged to be innovators and change-makers. The Directorate



of Entrepreneurship and Innovation at SRM AP offers incubation support, startup mentorship, and hands-on entrepreneurial training to equip students with the necessary skills to thrive in a changing, modern world.

Registrar: Holistic education goes beyond academic instruction; it fosters the social, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being of a learner. At SRM AP, our approach to education is inherently holistic. To begin with, every aspect of university life is guided by the principles outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP 2020). Furthermore, the university's Five-Year Strategic Plan places a special focus on enhancing the overall student experience. We achieve this by focusing not only on academics but also on nurturing personal growth, well-being, and real-world readiness through numerous clubs and sports activities, and cultural events.

The interdisciplinary research and innovation ecosystem is strengthened through Research Summits, Hackathons, Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) and Capstone Projects, and cultivates a supportive and safe environment through our Counselling and Mentorship programmes. The varsity also strengthens community engagement through programmes such as Samaj Seva. We also observe national and international festivals to promote inclusivity and while recognizing the diversity in teaching, learning, and social engagement.



Prof. C. V. Tomy
Dean, School of Engineering and Sciences

Q The dissonance between industry and academia is one of the most pressing gaps in India's tertiary education sector. What measures have SRM AP undertaken to tackle the industry-academia divide?

Vice Chancellor: Bridging the industry–academia gap is not a choice but a necessity. At SRM University-AP, we ensure that industry relevance is built into every aspect of our teaching and learning, from curriculum design aligned with the National Credit Framework and NEP 2020 to research initiatives, internships, and global immersion programs. Our graduates gain practical knowledge, professional skills, and international exposure, empowering them to step confidently into the world as innovators ready to solve real-world challenges. Through dedicated foreign language training, we empower students to confidently pursue international placement opportunities across global markets such as Japan and Germany..

Dean-SEAS: At SEAS, engineering education is driven by industry-aligned, outcome-based learning. Through collaborative research, state-of-the-art labs, internships, and global programmes, our students acquire hands-on technical expertise, problem-solving abilities, and professional competencies. The Academy for Industry Readiness further strengthens its global employability, preparing them for placements and careers in



Dr. S. V. Ramana Rao
Dean, Paari School of Business



leading companies across Japan, Germany, France, South Korea, and beyond. This integrated approach ensures they remain technologically current and ready for the evolving demands of the global industry.

Dean-PSB: At the Paari School of Business, we redefine learning through an experiential, industry-integrated curriculum. Students gain practical insights, leadership skills, and contemporary business acumen through corporate mentorships, live projects, and global internships. Our programmes include exposure to cutting-edge management practices, industry certifications from global leaders like Google, Data camp, HBS Online, and NISM, and immersive industry experiences with companies such as Tech Mahindra, Idealabs, and SRM Tech. Around 30% of courses are taught by industry leaders, complemented by mentorship and training from senior professionals and hands-on exposure to emerging technologies, ensuring our students are globally competitive and industry-ready.

Q SRM University-AP has achieved recognition, including awards like "National Best Private University", "Top Emerging Engineering Institute", "New-age Emerging University" and "Best Business School". How do you view these accolades in terms of institutional excellence — what contributing factors do you credit for these successes?

Vice Chancellor: SRM University-AP has earned remarkable recognitions and rankings, a testament to our shared commitment to excellence. We have been conferred the QS-I GAUGE Diamond Rating for overall institutional excellence. We have also received various accolades for all three of our schools – our deans will elaborate on this.

Dean-SEAS: The School of Engineering and Sciences is the largest faculty of SRM University-AP with a legacy of excellence for disseminating holistic, value-driven education. We have been ranked No.1 Top Emerging Engineering Institutes in Placements and Research Capability by Times Engineering Ranking Survey and No. 1 Engineering Institute in the state by Hans India, ranked 20th in the Top 200 Best Engineering College Rankings in the nation by Outlook, one of the Top Engineering Colleges in India with an AAAAA rating by Careers360, to name a few. It is our focus on interdisciplinary learning, research-driven programmes, dedicated faculty and global partnerships that have contributed to these achievements.

Dean-PSB: Paari School of Business have also been awarded several accolades for our management programmes. We have been ranked No.1 in the State (Govt. & Private) as the Top B-School by the Competition Success Review B-School Survey 2025, ranked as the No.1 in Best Business School in Andhra Pradesh by The Hans India, ranked No.2 in the Best Private B-School at the Andhra Pradesh State level by IIRF and recognised as one of India's Best B-Schools 2025 with AAAA rating by Careers360. These accomplishments further enhance our commitment to providing education par excellence to our students.



Vice Chancellor: It is our dedication of our faculty, the curiosity and drive of our students, and the unwavering support of our leadership and stakeholders that have led to these remarkable recognitions. We will continue to strengthen SRM AP's resolve to advance knowledge, foster innovation, and contribute meaningfully to India's progress as a hub of world-class higher education.

Q In an era where private universities balance rapid expansion, regulatory challenges, and quality assurance, what governance models or management practices do you think are essential to sustaining both excellence and compliance?

Registrar: At SRM University-AP, the visionary leadership of our Chancellor and Pro-Chancellor, the clarity provided by our Vice Chancellor, Five-Year Strategic Plan, and the steady guidance of the Governing Body, Board of Management and our



Prof. Vishnupad
Dean, Easwari School of Liberal Arts

Academic Leadership teams constitute the core of how we govern the university. Their direction, combined with the dedication of our faculty and staff, enables the university to grow quickly while maintaining excellence and regulatory responsibility.

We rely on a governance model that prioritises transparency, clear policy frameworks, and academic autonomy. Regular reviews, internal audits, and the work of our statutory bodies enable us to stay compliant while maintaining innovation. Much of our stability comes from strong coordination between academic and administrative leadership teams, and decisions are based on what best serves our students.

Academic excellence is strengthened by active committees in academics, research, and examinations, each ensuring that constant checks and balances. Together, these practices, grounded in leadership, collaboration, accountability, and a shared commitment to student success, help SRM University-AP uphold high standards while navigating expansion and regulatory expectations with confidence.

Q How do you cultivate a research ecosystem at SRM AP that encourages faculty and students to pursue socially relevant, interdisciplinary research — rather than only commercially profitable work?



Dean-Research: Our University is known for its multidisciplinary, research-oriented academic framework. Research is ingrained in our system's fabric, right from the undergraduate level through capstone projects, research internships, and Research Day. This approach emphasizes inquiry, critical thinking, and the pursuit of knowledge.

The research advisory board, research council, and department-level doctoral committees, along with the university's research policies, ensure a profound commitment to addressing pressing societal challenges. At SRM AP, research is a purpose that can transform lives.

One of our goals under the 5-year strategic plan (2023-28) is to Intensify Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurial Spirit. The university has established seven high-end centers of excellence, over 80 advanced research laboratories, and several projects with nation-building and public cause in mind. While we facilitate commercialization through the Technology Transfer Cell, we also actively secure non-commercial funding from governmental and non-government agencies, including ISRO, DST, ANRF, and ICSSR, to support both fundamental and applied research.

The university also offers incentives, awards, and travel grants to faculty and students involved in high-impact research. These initiatives have helped us strike a balance between commerciality and scholarly enquiry.

By 2027, we aim to achieve 100 H-Index, 1000 Published Patents, 100 Granted Patents, 10 Technology Transfer and 100 Cr External (Industry + Govt) Grant Funding through our dynamic research ecosystem, establishing SRM AP as a premier research institute.

Q SRM AP aims at providing premier education to the grassroots of the country. How does social equity factor into SRM AP's strategic plan? Do you envision partnerships with government bodies or

COVER INTERVIEW





NGOs to embed community-engaged learning and research into the academic fabric?

Vice Chancellor: At SRM University-AP, social equity is the core of our mission. We are committed to ensuring that high-quality education reaches students from every socio-economic stratum, especially those from rural and underserved communities. Through scholarships such as the Founders Scholarship, Merit-Based Scholarships, Need-Based Scholarships, and the Dr T R Paarivendhar Scholarship, along with mentorship and inclusive academic support, we strive to remove barriers to learning. Our strategic initiatives also foster partnerships with government agencies and NGOs, enabling students to engage in community-focused projects and contribute meaningfully to grassroots development across the nation.

Dean-ESLA: Social equity shapes the very spirit of Easwari School of Liberal Arts' academic philosophy. Our programmes immerse students in India's diverse social and cultural realities through interdisciplinary community projects, fieldwork, and language outreach, ensuring that learning extends far beyond the classroom. With internships and a first-year summer immersion at leading NGOs built into the curriculum, students directly engage with issues of livelihood, education, and equality. We believe that universities must serve as a bridge between knowledge and societal development. Through collaborations with public institutions, civil society groups, and development organizations, SRM AP integrates real-world problem-solving into its academic framework and prepares graduates who are empathetic, socially conscious, and equipped with strong critical thinking and problem-solving skills to drive sustainable change.

Q You delivered the annual report highlighting growth across academics, research, infrastructure, and innovation at SRM AP's 5th convocation. Looking ahead, what are the top three strategic priorities the university has set for SRM AP in the next 5–7 years?

Vice Chancellor: As we embark on the next phase of SRM AP's growth, our strategic priorities are centered on three strategic priorities.

One - is Attracting High-Calibre Faculty and Students

Our priority is to cultivate a vibrant academic community. We are committed to recruiting distinguished faculty with strong research portfolios, global exposure, and a passion for mentorship. Parallelly, we aim to attract talented, diverse students from across India and the world. This will facilitate building an intellectual ecosystem that will elevate our research output, teaching quality, and institutional culture.

Two- Expanding Academic Horizons with New Disciplines Over the next 5–7 years, SRM AP is preparing to establish high-impact schools in emerging and professional fields, notably Law and Medicine. This will broaden our academic spectrum and position the university as a comprehensive institution addressing national workforce needs. We have already established an AI Institute, Industrial Research Park and Academic Cluster, making SRM AP a future-oriented university that addresses global challenges.

And Three – Strengthening Brand Perception and National Visibility Another strategic priority is to enhance SRM AP's reputation as one of India's leading universities. We will focus on showcasing our research achievements, industry collaborations, innovation ecosystem, and student success stories. Strengthening our digital presence, global partnerships, and participation in national rankings and accreditations will be pivotal in positioning



SRM AP as a top-choice institution in the country.

Together, these priorities will drive SRM AP toward becoming a benchmark institution known for excellence, innovation, and societal impact.

Q Finally, what advice would you give to emerging academic leaders and management professionals who aspire to build and lead future-focused universities — drawing upon your four decades of experience in education, research, and institutional leadership?

Vice Chancellor: Emerging academic leaders must understand that building a new-age, future-ready university is not just an administrative responsibility, but a commitment to shaping knowledge ecosystems. Based on my years in academia, research and institutional development, I would offer four core principles:

1. Lead with Vision but Build with Systems A university evolves through ideas but survives through strong systems. Develop a clear academic vision—yet invest equally in governance, accountability, and transparent processes.
2. Embrace Multi-disciplinarity and Innovation The future belongs to institutions that break silos. Encourage interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary learning, research convergence, and curriculum models that prepare students for complex real-world challenges.
3. Prioritise Research and Global Collaboration Quality research gives a university its intellectual identity. Empower faculty, attract external grants, and ink partnerships with national and international bodies. These collaborations bring not just resources, but global perspectives and opportunities for students and researchers.
4. Practice People-Centric Leadership Students, faculty, and staff are the heart of any institution. Listen, mentor, and empower. Create policies that value well-being, respect diversity, and reward merit. Strong human capital ultimately becomes an institution's greatest asset.

If young leaders can balance vision with discipline, and innovation with integrity, they will not only build institutions—they will transform the future of education. EP

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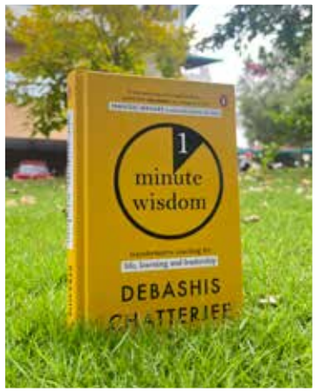
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LEADERSHIP LIES NOT IN READY-MADE ANSWERS, BUT **IN FRAMING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS RESPONSIBLY**



Prof. Debashis Chatterjee
Director of IIM Kozhikode

In an expansive and thought-provoking conversation, ***Prof. Debashis Chatterjee,*** *Director of IIM Kozhikode, reflects on the deeper philosophy that has shaped the institute's rise as a globally respected management school. Moving beyond rankings and accreditations, he articulates how the strategic focus on Diversity, Digitalisation and Disruption has guided IIM Kozhikode's academic, cultural and institutional evolution. Prof. Chatterjee offers nuanced insights into balancing AI-driven management education with mindful leadership, ethical judgement and human-centric values. He discusses pragmatic frameworks for integrating generative AI into learning while safeguarding originality and higher-order thinking, and explains how inclusive excellence is translated from policy into lived classroom and placement outcomes. The interview, conducted by Education Post's* ***Prabhav Anand,*** *also explores globalising Indian thought, strengthening research culture, and reimagining management education in India for the next decade—anchored in academic freedom, societal relevance and long-term institutional purpose.*

Q You have led IIM Kozhikode through multiple terms and the institute has achieved EQUIS/ AMBA accreditations and higher national/international rankings under your tenure. Looking back, what three specific strategic decisions (curriculum, faculty development, or institutional partnerships) proved decisive in transforming IIM-K's national and global standing – and which of those decisions would you advise other newer B-schools to replicate or avoid?

When I reflect on IIM Kozhikode's journey over the years, what stands out is not any single initiative but a coherent strategic philosophy. We consciously chose to anchor our growth around what I often describe as the three Ds — Diversity, Digitalisation and Disruption. These were not reactive responses to trends or rankings, but deliberate institutional choices rooted in our belief that management education in India must evolve alongside the country's social and economic transformation.

Diversity, for us, was never confined to demographic representation alone. We broadened its meaning to include academic backgrounds, lived experiences, cognitive styles and career trajectories. This expanded understanding influenced admissions, curriculum design and faculty hiring. The result was classrooms that were intellectually vibrant and more representative of real-world managerial complexity. Such diversity, we found, sharpened debate, improved peer learning and prepared students far better for leadership in plural, ambiguous environments.

Digitalization was the second decisive pillar. Much before the pandemic accelerated adoption across the sector, IIM Kozhikode invested in technology-enabled learning to expand access while retaining rigour. Digital platforms allowed us to reach working professionals and learners across geographies, particularly through executive and blended programmes. Importantly, technology was not used to dilute faculty engagement but to deepen it, making learning more flexible, interactive and continuous.

The third element, disruption, was perhaps the most challenging. We consciously questioned inherited assumptions about what a B-school should look like — rigid disciplinary silos, narrow definitions of merit, and the idea that global relevance requires imitation. Instead, we encouraged experimentation, interdisciplinary teaching and partnerships that were intellectually reciprocal. For younger institutions, I would strongly recommend this courage to disrupt orthodoxy, while cautioning against expanding scale or chasing rankings without first building depth and clarity of purpose.

Q In earlier interviews and your writings you emphasise "mindful leadership" and the "human factor" in leadership. In an era where management education is rapidly adopting AI, data analytics and techno-centric pedagogy, how should top B-schools balance teaching technical competencies (AI, ML, analytics) with the cultivation of empathy, ethical judgement and the reflective practices you advocate? Please give concrete curriculum changes, assessment methods, or faculty development moves IIM-K has implemented or is planning.

The rapid integration of AI, analytics and data-driven tools into management education has raised an important question: how do we preserve the human core of leadership while embracing technological advancement? At IIM Kozhikode, we believe this is a false dichotomy. The real challenge is not choosing between high-tech and high-touch, but learning how to integrate them meaningfully.

While technical competencies are undeniably essential, leadership ultimately rests on judgement, empathy, ethical reasoning and the ability to make sense of complexity. These capacities cannot be automated. Our pedagogical response has therefore been to design an education that is not intimidated by technology but is, in many ways, astonishingly human.

This has translated into curricular shifts where courses on AI, analytics and emerging technologies coexist with strong emphasis on behavioural economics, ethics, sustainability and reflective leadership. Assessment methods increasingly value interpretation, context-building and moral reasoning over mechanical correctness. We have also encouraged



reflective practices such as learning journals, dialogue-based evaluation and experiential learning, which help students internalise insights rather than merely acquire tools.

Faculty development plays a critical role here. We encourage our faculty not only to adopt new technologies, but to critically engage with their assumptions, limitations and societal implications. Our aim is to develop leaders who can work fluently with intelligent systems while remaining grounded in human values and responsibility.

Q You've spoken publicly about pragmatic uses of ChatGPT and AI in academic work. Many faculty and accreditation bodies worry about academic integrity, while employers demand AI-savvy graduates. What policy framework has IIM-K adopted (or do you propose) for AI use in assignments, research and placements – and how do you evaluate student originality and higher-order thinking in an age of powerful generative tools?

The debate around artificial intelligence and academic integrity often begins from a position of anxiety and prohibition. At IIM Kozhikode, we have consciously chosen a more pragmatic and future-oriented stance. Generative AI tools are no longer peripheral technologies; they are becoming integral to the professional environments our students will soon enter. The real question, therefore, is not whether students will use these tools, but whether they will learn to use them thoughtfully, transparently and ethically.

Our evolving policy framework rests on three foundational principles: transparency, accountability and higher-order thinking. Students are encouraged to explicitly disclose the nature and extent of AI usage in assignments and projects. Rather than attempting to police usage through blanket restrictions, we have redesigned assessments to move beyond information retrieval towards synthesis, judgement, contextual reasoning and application. Oral defences, reflective essays and applied, real-world projects play a critical role in evaluating originality and depth of understanding, ensuring that learning remains authentic and student-driven.

As I have said earlier, our goal is to prepare students to become masters of ambiguity, not mere consumers of ready-made answers. AI excels at generating content, but leadership lies in framing the right questions, navigating uncertainty and taking responsibility for decisions. That element of human accountability — ethical judgement, ownership of outcomes and reflective capacity — remains non-negotiable, regardless of how powerful our tools become.

Digital and AI-enabled platforms today occupy the same place in management education that IT literacy and spreadsheet modelling did a decade ago. At IIM Kozhikode, in line with leading global business schools, we are witnessing a systematic integration of AI-driven learning tools, digital literacy and prompt engineering into the curriculum. The classroom of the future is already taking shape — one where traditional productivity tools are increasingly complemented, and in some cases replaced, by creative and analytical platforms such as Canva, Gamma and GravityWrite, and where Perplexity and ChatGPT are used as everyday research and ideation aids rather than occasional novelties. This shift is fundamentally transforming how students search for information, conduct research and construct knowledge.

AI has also made a meaningful entry into our academic and operational systems. We are deploying AI-enabled tools to manage information overload, streamline research processes and enhance academic efficiency. Our online and hybrid learning environments now incorporate interactive AI capabilities that allow students to engage dynamically with recorded lectures — summarising extended sessions, generating flashcards and even gamifying aspects of learning. In parallel, AI is being used to automate routine and repetitive academic processes, freeing both students and faculty to focus on areas where human creativity, insight and judgement add the greatest value.

The student response to these initiatives has been overwhelmingly positive. Rather than undermining learning, thoughtful AI integration has enhanced efficiency, deepened engagement and, importantly, aligned educational practice with the realities of a technology-driven workplace. In that sense, our approach to AI is neither defensive nor uncritical; it is rooted in the belief that management education must evolve with technology while remaining anchored in human values and intellectual responsibility.

Q Diversity, outreach and inclusivity have been flagged as strengths for IIM Kozhikode in recent years. How do you define "inclusive excellence" for a premier management school – what measurable targets does IIM-K set for social/geographic/academic diversity, and how do you ensure inclusivity translates into classroom experience, leadership opportunities and placement outcomes? Could you share a success story and one area where outcomes still fall short?

At IIM Kozhikode, we define inclusive excellence as the point where diversity translates into capability, confidence and outcomes. Representation alone is insufficient unless it reshapes classroom experience, leadership opportunities and career trajectories.

Our approach begins with admissions that value varied competencies and non-linear career paths. This diversity is then supported through curriculum design, pedagogical flexibility and course management practices that recognise different learning styles and forms of participation. Students are encouraged to take on leadership roles across academic, cultural and institutional platforms, ensuring that inclusion is lived rather than symbolic.

We have seen tangible success in areas such as gender diversity and the growing confidence and performance of first-generation learners. However, challenges remain. Addressing them requires sustained institutional effort as well as a broader shift in industry hiring mindsets.

Q You write and speak often about integrating Indian philosophical insights into leadership teaching ("globalising Indian thought"). How do you operationalise that in a management programme so it remains rigorous and relevant for international recruiters and global exchange partners – i.e., what courses, case studies or assessment designs at IIM-K reflect this synthesis and how are they received by students and industry?

The idea of Globalising Indian Thought is often misunderstood as being inward-looking or culturally nostalgic. In reality, it is about intellectual confidence. It recognises that Indian philosophical traditions offer robust frameworks for leadership, ethics and decision-making that are highly relevant in a volatile global environment.

At IIM Kozhikode, this philosophy is embedded through carefully designed courses, case studies and leadership modules that draw from Indian ideas while subjecting them to rigorous analysis and contemporary application. We study Indian organisations succeeding globally, not as exceptions, but as evidence of alternative leadership paradigms at work.

Students and international partners increasingly appreciate this synthesis because it is not rhetorical. It equips learners to operate globally without intellectual dependency, grounded in values yet fluent in global practice.

Q Faculty recruitment and research culture determine an institute's long-term academic reputation. In the context of evolving expectations

(interdisciplinary work, industry collaboration, policy engagement), what is IIM-K's current strategy for hiring, tenure, and incentivising research impact – and how do you reconcile short-term placement pressures with the need for a strong research faculty?

Faculty quality is the bedrock of an institution's long-term academic reputation, and at IIM Kozhikode we have been very conscious of building this foundation with patience and purpose. Our approach to faculty recruitment and development is anchored in three interlinked priorities: interdisciplinary strength, research impact and societal relevance. We actively seek scholars who are comfortable working across disciplinary boundaries and who can engage meaningfully with industry, public policy and wider societal discourse, while remaining grounded in rigorous academic traditions.

In response to evolving expectations of business schools globally, we have consciously broadened our understanding of research impact. While high-quality publications remain central, we encourage faculty to engage with practice and policy through consulting, case development, public writing and advisory roles. This ensures that research remains connected to real-world challenges and enhances its relevance for students, organisations and society at large.

To structurally support a strong research culture, the Institute has created dedicated research chair positions at the levels of Professor, Associate Professor and Assistant Professor. These positions are designed to allow faculty members to focus more intensively on research, supported by institutional research grants and reduced teaching responsibilities. This reflects our belief that sustained, high-quality research requires both intellectual space and organisational commitment.

Incentivisation is another key lever. At IIM Kozhikode, incentives are structured to recognise not merely the volume of output, but the quality, influence and reach of scholarly work. Faculty members are awarded special incentives for publications in top-tier journals, including FT50, ABDC (A*, A and B), ABS (4*, 4, 3 and 2) and Web of Science (Q1 and Q2) categories. At the same time, we also encourage publications in other reputable Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals, recognising the diversity of disciplinary outlets and research approaches.

Beyond journal publications, we actively promote a wide spectrum of scholarly engagement. Faculty members receive support and incentives for presenting and publishing research papers at conferences, developing case studies with teaching notes through leading publishers such as Harvard Business School and Ivey, and producing working papers. We also value and incentivise public scholarship in the form of articles and commentaries in newspapers and magazines, as well as the publication of books and book chapters with reputed publishers. Patents, editorial leadership roles and the organisation of research conferences, workshops and symposiums are similarly encouraged, reflecting our commitment to building a vibrant and outward-facing research ecosystem.

Faculty development is further strengthened through support for doctoral supervision, with incentives provided based on the faculty member's role as research advisory chair or committee member. Additionally, the Institute offers sabbatical leave of up to one year, enabling faculty to pursue intensive research, deepen literature engagement and develop long-term scholarly agendas without the pressure of routine teaching commitments.

A recurring question is how such a research-oriented approach can be reconciled with short-term placement pressures. Our answer is a principled one. While placements are undeniably important for students, we resist allowing immediate market fluctuations to dictate academic priorities. A strong and credible research culture enhances teaching quality, sharpens intellectual leadership and builds institutional reputation over time. In our experience, this ultimately strengthens placement outcomes in a more sustainable and meaningful manner, rather than through short-term compromises.

Q Earlier interviews of yours discussed organisational culture being a "switchboard" for performance. During your leadership, which cultural interventions (governance changes, leadership development, student governance, or transparent KPIs) had the biggest effect on faculty-student engagement and institutional agility – and were there any cultural changes you expected to work but did not?

I have often described organisational culture as a switchboard that determines how effectively energy

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flows within an institution. During my tenure, interventions that enhanced transparency in governance, empowered student participation and aligned performance indicators with institutional values had the greatest positive impact.

Not every experiment succeeded. Some formal mechanisms introduced to stimulate innovation proved less effective than expected. We learnt that trust, openness and psychological safety create far greater agility than elaborate control systems. Culture, ultimately, cannot be engineered mechanically; it must be lived consistently.

Q Looking ahead 5–10 years, what is your vision for management education in India – especially regarding (a) programme formats (executive, hybrid, degree vs modular credentials), (b) the relationship between B-schools and industry/ startups, and (c) how public policy (regulation of higher education, accreditation, funding) should evolve to foster world-class, inclusive management education? Which concrete policy or institutional reforms would you prioritise if you had a seat at the national policymaking table?

Looking ahead over the next decade, I see management education in India entering a phase of profound transformation—structural, pedagogical and philosophical. The traditional two-year, full-time MBA will continue to remain central to the identity of institutions like the IIMs, but it will increasingly be complemented by a more flexible ecosystem of programmes designed to meet learners at different stages of their professional lives.

Programme formats will evolve toward hybrid and blended models, with modular credentials, stackable certifications and lifelong learning pathways becoming mainstream. Executive education will expand significantly, not merely in scale but in depth, allowing professionals to periodically return to the classroom—physical or virtual—to retool, reflect and recalibrate. Undergraduate programmes in management will also assume greater importance. While they will not replace the flagship MBA, they will broaden the talent pipeline and nurture early exposure to research, interdisciplinary learning and ethical reasoning, shaping a new generation of leaders well before they enter the workforce.

The relationship between B-schools and industry will also undergo a qualitative shift. Recruitment will no longer be the dominant axis of engagement. Instead, we will see deeper co-creation of knowledge, particularly with startups, public institutions and mission-driven organisations. Industry will increasingly become a partner in curriculum design, research agendas and experiential learning, while B-schools will serve as spaces for reflection, foresight and responsible innovation rather than merely talent suppliers.

Technology, and particularly artificial intelligence, will be a defining force in this transition. AI will reshape not only jobs but also how we teach, learn and evaluate. Institutions will need to ensure that AI literacy becomes as foundational as IT skills were in the 1990s, while simultaneously safeguarding human judgement, ethics and creativity. At the same time, competition in the sector will intensify. The entry of global business schools into India will raise standards for quality and differentiation, while the growing influence of international accreditations and rankings may push institutions toward greater standardisation and research productivity. The challenge will be to meet global benchmarks without eroding distinctive cultural and pedagogical identities.

Public policy will play a decisive role in determining whether this transformation is enabling or constraining. Regulation must evolve from control to trust-based autonomy with accountability. Accreditation systems should focus more on learning outcomes, inclusion and societal impact rather than compliance and form. Funding mechanisms, too, need rethinking—shifting towards supporting faculty development, interdisciplinary research and institutions that demonstrate genuine commitment to access and excellence.

The National Education Policy has already set in motion important changes, including four-year undergraduate programmes and flexible credit transfer systems. These reforms may eventually alter the conventional MBA pathway, compelling business schools to rethink programme sequencing, learner mobility and the meaning of a management degree itself. While these shifts pose significant challenges, they also open up opportunities for reinvention.

If I had a seat at the national policymaking table, I would prioritise three reforms: academic freedom with accountability, large-scale and sustained investment in faculty development, and incentives for interdisciplinary, socially relevant research. Together, these would create the conditions for Indian management education to be globally respected, locally rooted and genuinely future-ready. EP

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Prof. Himanshu Rai
Director, IIM Indore

At a time when management education is being compelled to redefine its relevance, **Prof. Himanshu Rai,** Director of IIM Indore, offers a deeply reflective and values-driven perspective on what it truly means to create future leaders. In this wide-ranging interaction, he speaks about moving beyond profit-centric models to nurturing managers who combine competence with character, ambition with empathy, and global capability with social responsibility. Prof. Rai elaborates on how ethical leadership, mental well-being, and experiential learning have been woven into IIM Indore's academic and institutional fabric, alongside a strong focus on technology, sustainability, and global engagement. He also reflects on India's emerging voice in global management education and the responsibility that comes with it. The conversation, facilitated by Education Post's **Prabhav Anand,** captures his belief that management education must remain profoundly human at its core. As he succinctly puts it, "Management education must prepare individuals to navigate uncertainty with courage and make choices that strengthen society."

Q As the Director of IIM Indore, you have consistently emphasized purpose-driven leadership, ethics, and holistic development. To begin this conversation, how do you personally define the larger purpose of management education today, and how has that definition shaped the strategic direction and culture of IIM Indore under your leadership?

The primary purpose of management education is to cultivate leaders who can balance competence with character. Knowledge and analytical skills are essential, but they are incomplete without empathy, integrity, and a deep understanding of society. Management is not only about maximizing efficiency or profits, but also about improving the human condition, resolving complex societal problems, and creating institutions that are both high-performing and humane. This belief has shaped IIM Indore's direction and culture, where we emphasise contextual relevance, social consciousness, and global quality. Our programmes, research initiatives, and collaborations are designed to serve not just the corporate sector but also the nation. We cultivate an environment where students learn to balance ambition with responsibility and self-awareness. Our focus on ethical leadership, inclusivity, and well-being influences policies and campus culture. In the last seven years, the institute has invested immensely in interdisciplinary learning, global engagement, and experiential education. These initiatives encourage students to understand multiple perspectives, think holistically, and act with purpose. Management education must prepare individuals to navigate uncertainty with courage and make choices that strengthen society; that is the ethos guiding IIM Indore.

Q In many of your earlier interviews, you have spoken about infusing management education with values such as empathy, authenticity, and moral courage. How do you ensure that these principles translate beyond classroom rhetoric into measurable learning outcomes, student behaviour, and institutional policy at IIM Indore?

Yes, I firmly believe that values must be lived, not merely spoken about. At IIM Indore, we embed empathy, authenticity, and moral courage into academic structures, experiential learning, and campus culture. I ensure that every initiative we take focuses on the OCEAN framework – which I have often spoken about – it encourages students to internalise Openness, Conscientiousness, Empathy, develop a positive Attitude, and Perseverance. These traits are assessed through reflective assignments, classroom participation, group behavior activities, and leadership roles in student committees. Courses such as ethics, morality, and identity exploration encourage students to examine their beliefs, recognise biases, and build compassion. Faculty members are encouraged to incorporate ethical questioning and value-based discussions into their teaching. Experiential initiatives, such as our unique Rural Engagement Programme, the Himalayan Outbound Programme, and other community projects, enable students to apply these principles in real-world contexts. Students witness how management decisions have human consequences, which in turn shape their maturity and judgment. Even institutional policies reflect these values, as our disciplinary processes prioritise fairness and restorative approaches. We also encourage peer support and respectful dialogue, ensuring a safe environment for growth. Leadership conclaves, wellness initiatives, and mentorship programmes constantly reinforce the idea that authentic leadership demands integrity and courage. In this way, values move from rhetoric to measurable practice.



Q IIM Indore has distinguished itself with several innovative programs–ranging from the Five-Year Integrated Programme in Management (IPM) to initiatives in public policy, sustainability, and international immersion. What gaps in Indian management education do these initiatives aim to address, and what new programmatic innovations can we expect in the coming years?

Indian management education has traditionally focused on technical proficiency and corporate readiness; however, it is now time to also pay attention to interdisciplinary thinking, societal relevance, and early talent development. Our IPM programme addresses the gap between high-potential young minds and structured early management education. It builds foundations in the social sciences, humanities, analytics, and communication before introducing advanced management courses. Furthermore, our international immersion addresses the need for managers who can operate in a world shaped by technology, globalization, and environmental urgency. These initiatives provide students with a broader worldview, a deeper understanding of local realities, and the ability to work across various domains.

Looking ahead, we aim to strengthen dual degree paths, expand global offerings for the IPM course, and introduce specialized tracks in climate management, behavioral science, and human-centered technology. We also plan to deepen our focus on experiential learning and societal engagement so that every student graduates with practical exposure to both corporate and developmental contexts. Our goal is to prepare leaders who can simultaneously solve problems that are economic, social, environmental, and technological in nature.

Q You have often highlighted the importance of mental well-being and resilience, especially in highly competitive environments like IIMs. What systemic measures has IIM Indore introduced under your guidance to support student emotional health, and what more needs to be done by management institutes nationally?

Mental well-being is integral to success, and at IIM Indore, we have consciously designed systems that support emotional resilience. We conduct yoga, meditation, and contemplative workshops to help students build mindfulness and self-awareness. Faculty members are oriented to maintain supportive academic environments. The institute has strengthened counselling services, peer support groups, and channels for anonymous communication. Our events and leadership conclaves emphasise compassion, reflective practices, and balanced definitions of achievement. We encourage healthy competition rather than stressful comparison. Our programmes, like the Rural Engagement Programme, Himalayan Outbound Programme, and Extreme Outdoors, also help students reconnect with nature, understand diverse human experiences, and reflect on their own lives.

At a national level, management institutes must normalise conversations on mental health and create policies that respect students as human beings rather than performance units. Counselling should be professional, accessible, and stigma-free. Workload structures must be reviewed to balance rigor with well-being, and faculty training on emotional intelligence should become a standard practice. Most importantly, institutions must cultivate cultures of kindness, humility, and inclusion. When students experience compassion from the system, they learn to extend it to others as future leaders.

Q Your past work on negotiation, leadership–character formation, and the psychology of decision-making has been widely referenced. How have these research insights influenced the way IIM Indore trains future managers and leaders, particularly in areas like conflict management, organisational behaviour, and ethical leadership?

My research emphasises that effective leadership begins with understanding oneself. Negotiation and decision-making are not merely analytical processes, but are also emotional, ethical, and relational. At IIM Indore, this philosophy shapes both the curriculum and the pedagogy. Our courses – whether negotiation, communication, psychology, ethics, or nature walks and yoga - encourage students to explore their values, examine the biases that influence their decisions, and understand the relational nature of leadership. We utilize simulations, role-plays, and real-world cases to train students in conflict management and responsible decision-making. Students are encouraged to strike a balance between assertiveness and empathy, and to approach disagreements constructively. The activities provide them with opportunities to practice negotiation, build trust, and manage uncertainty in unfamiliar environments. Organisational behaviour courses integrate insights from psychology and philosophy, showing students how character, self-regulation, and moral courage shape long-term leadership impact. We want our graduates to lead with clarity, humility, and a commitment to fairness, so that they are prepared not only for boardrooms but also for the complex social realities that surround them.

Q In previous conversations, you have stressed that management graduates must be prepared for a world driven by AI, automation, and rapid digital transformation. How is IIM Indore reimagining its curricula, industry collaborations, and faculty development to ensure that graduates are future-ready in both technological and human-centered competencies?

The future demands managers who are fluent in technology yet grounded in human understanding. At IIM Indore, we have made deliberate changes to ensure this balance not only at the MBA level, but also at the executive education level. Our updated curriculum encompasses topics such as analytics, digital transformation, and technology strategy, equipping students with the quantitative and computational skills necessary for the emerging economy. Our industry partnerships expose students to real applications of AI, automation, and digital tools. We engage with global institutions to bring in contemporary perspectives on ethical AI, sustainability, and innovation. At the same time, we strengthen courses in ethics, communication, systems thinking, and human-centered leadership. This prepares students to make technology decisions

responsibly and to lead teams with empathy and clarity. Our aim is not only to produce data-literate managers but also leaders who can ensure that technology benefits society and supports human well-being.

Q Under your leadership, IIM Indore has expanded its international presence through global partnerships and student exchanges. What is your assessment of India's position in global management education today, and what steps are essential for Indian B-schools to evolve into globally comparable knowledge ecosystems?

India stands at a critical moment in global management education. Our demographic strength, entrepreneurial energy, and cultural diversity give us unique advantages. It's a delight to witness Indian B-schools, along with IIM Indore, being increasingly recognized for their academic rigour and the distinctiveness that comes from blending global thinking with local insight. This is clearly reflected in the international rankings, such as FT and QS. All the programmes we offer at IIM Indore are now in FT 100. Further, IIM Indore, with its Triple Crown Accreditation from AMBA, AACSB, and EQUIS, has strengthened international collaborations (67 collaborations in 27 countries as of 2025), expanded student exchanges (for PGP, IPM, PGPMX - Weekend MBA conducted at our Mumbai Campus, and EPGP – One Year MBA), and hosted global academic events to deepen our international engagement.

To become globally comparable knowledge ecosystems, Indian institutions must prioritise high-quality research, interdisciplinary curricula, global faculty mobility, and meaningful industry linkages. We must nurture intellectual diversity and encourage students to think beyond narrow occupational goals. It is also essential that we embrace our cultural strengths. Indian management thought, rooted in values, community orientation, and resilience, offers the world a fresh perspective. If we can combine world-class academic standards with our rich cultural heritage, Indian management education will become not only competitive but also globally influential.

Q You often speak about creating leaders who are deeply connected to India's social realities. From rural immersion to ESG-focused initiatives, IIM Indore has taken distinctive steps in this direction. How do these socially oriented programmes contribute to shaping responsible, context-aware managers, and what new societal challenges do you think future managers must be trained to confront?

Socially oriented programmes at IIM Indore extend well beyond immersion in rural settings and are woven into both student life and institutional priorities. For example, the student-run Social Impact Committee and related student-driven cells, such as Aasha and i-Help, organise a wide range of activities that promote social welfare, environmental stewardship, and inclusion. These initiatives include scholarship tests for underprivileged children, blood donation drives, sustainable tree plantation projects, community awareness discussions on diversity and equity, and cultural events that blend sustainability education with creative expression. These platforms encourage students to design practical solutions to social and environmental challenges, while developing empathy, collaborative problem-solving skills, and inclusive leadership.

Additionally, Social Placements provide structured internship opportunities in CSR, impact investing, and non-profit sectors, enabling students to engage with organisations addressing inequality, skill gaps, and community development.

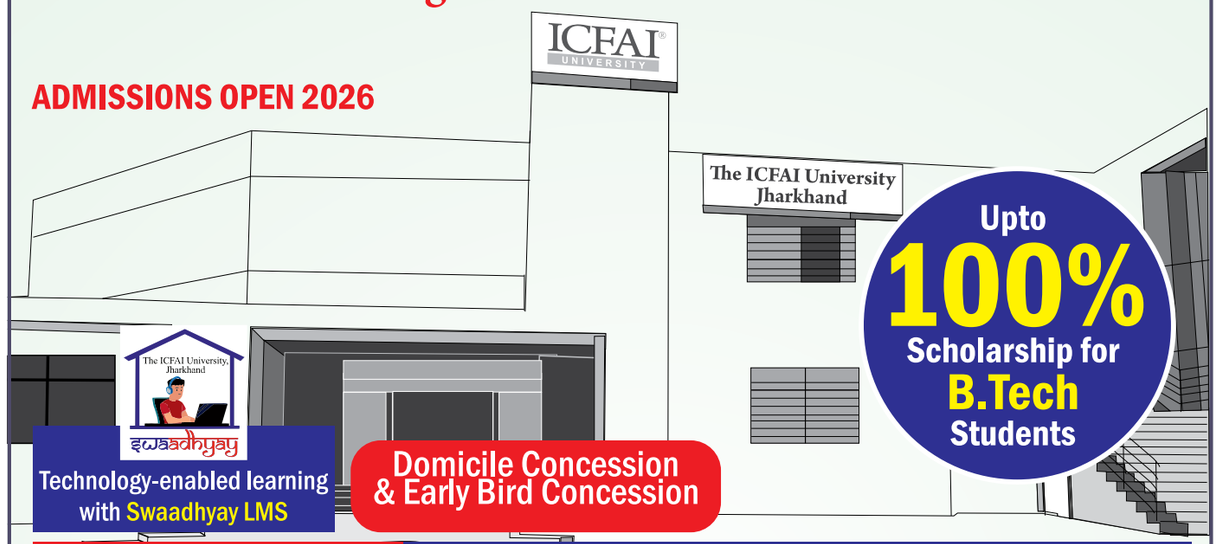
At an institutional level, the institute emphasises ecological sustainability through extensive greening efforts, biodiversity preservation, renewable energy adoption, and campus initiatives that model environmental responsibility. These experiences shape managers who appreciate complexity, are attuned to societal needs, and can make decisions that balance organisational goals with long-term human and planetary well-being. EP

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Dr. Vinita S. Sahay
Founder/serving Director, IIM Bodh Gaya

This exclusive interaction offers a compelling insight into how a young Indian Institute of Management is being shaped with strategic intent, academic rigour, and social consciousness. The interview explores the critical decisions taken during the formative years of IIM Bodh Gaya, its post-pandemic focus on fully residential education, early accreditation, and a clearly differentiated institutional identity. It also delves into the institute's growing engagement with public policy and governance through close collaboration with state and local governments, leveraging regional presence for impactful solutions.

In conversation with Education Post—in an interview conducted by **Prabhav Anand**—**Dr. Vinita S. Sahay**, Founder and serving Director of IIM Bodh Gaya, shares her vision for strengthening faculty development, fostering an applied yet rigorous research culture, and embedding industry relevance through specialised MBA programmes in digital business and healthcare management. She further highlights inclusive campus practices and outlines her goal of positioning IIM Bodh Gaya as a mindful, socially responsible institution with strong rankings and placement outcomes.

Q You joined IIM Bodh Gaya as its Founder Director in 2018 and were recently reappointed for a second term. Looking back, what were the three most important strategic decisions you made in the institute's formative years – and which one do you believe had the largest impact on raising IIM-BG's profile nationally?

In the post-Corona landscape, our focus will be on fully committing to residential courses, which will allow us to scale rapidly and achieve financial independence. We will emphasize a clear differentiation in our identity, underscoring our vision and mission to ensure that all stakeholders understand what we stand for. Additionally, we plan to embark on our accreditation journey at an early stage, which will lead to the establishment of clearly defined processes and transparent governance. This approach will not only enhance our credibility but also foster trust within our community.

Q Public-sector engagement appears to be a growing priority for IIM-BG (for instance, MoUs with state government initiatives). How do you see the role of a newer IIM in shaping public policy and administrative reforms – and what governance or ethical safeguards do you put in place when academic institutions partner with government?

The strategy of putting IIMS in far flung areas in all the states of the country has led to presence of academic and consulting help to the government. Being in the local community helps us in understanding the local and regional issues and the solutions thereof and physical proximity also helps in execution policy formulation.

Q In previous interviews you've discussed institutional growth and visibility. What are the remaining capability gaps you see – faculty specializations, research capacity, placement network, or infrastructure – and how are you prioritising investments over the next three years to close them?

The biggest priority for the campus is faculty and faculty development and we are investing in intensively on FDPs, case writing/teaching workshops, research seminars, conferences, sending them across the length and breadth and also overseas we have already started investing heavily on the employability skills of our students whether it is buying softwares or hiring experts who can help in mentoring our students to make them industry ready. Since we are already the largest IIM in the country, infrastructure development is a constant investment.

Q Management education is being reshaped by AI, hybrid work, and new industry models. How is IIM-Bodh Gaya redesigning its pedagogy, internships and industry-mentoring models to ensure graduates are both technologically fluent and ethically grounded?

WE have two industry led MBAs which is MBA Digital Business Management and MBA Hospital and Healthcare Management has helped us to continuously evolve our curriculum because in both these courses we are constantly talking to industry advisory boards. We have included AI in our curriculum by having not just having full time course around AI but every subject has at least one session which is being delivered by the industry expert like for example in HRM we get industry experts who shares with our students in understanding how AI can help recruitment and selection.

Q Your academic work shows interest in areas like customer value and mindfulness research. How do you encourage a research culture at IIM-BG that balances applied, industry-



relevant studies with theoretical contributions – and how do you ensure research outcomes feed back into teaching and student projects?

By having the rigorous Ph.D. program - both full time as well as Executive Ph.D. helps us in keeping a very robust research culture on campus, also most of our faculty are young researchers who are still very actively engaged in research and at the same time they are exposed to multiple practitioners from the Govt. and Private sector which helps them making research very applicative and industry relevant. Brown Bag Seminars by renowned researchers from across the globe and also our current researchers sharing their white papers and current research in progress.

Q As one of the relatively few women to head an IIM and the founder director of a newer campus, what structural or cultural reforms do you believe are necessary within management schools to improve gender parity – at faculty, leadership and student levels?

IIMs per se are very inclusive campuses and already we are giving brownie points to the girl so that we can have a better diversity on campus when it comes to gender. These initiatives have already started showing results and today on campus we have many more girls than what used to be earlier. We also have ensured a very good diversity amongst our faculty colleagues and in spite of being very young campus we already have three to four differently abled professors on campus and we have ensured that entire campus is completely accessible which gives them a really good working/learning environment.

Q Looking ahead: if you could set three measurable goals for IIM Bodh Gaya to achieve by the end of your current term (for example: NIRF or international rankings milestone, a specific research output, or a placement/ industry metric), what would they be – and what immediate steps are you taking to make them happen?

We wish to be a socially responsible mindful campus which is triple crowned with a very decent average salary offered to the students, a place in global rankings and a top 15 ranking in NIRF. EP

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TRUE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION SHAPES LEADERS WHO DELIVER RESULTS WITHOUT EVER COMPROMISING ON VALUES

Fr. Nelson A. D'Silva
S.J., Acting Director, XLRI Delhi

Fr. Nelson A. D'Silva, S.J., Acting Director of XLRI Delhi-NCR, offers a thoughtful and future-facing perspective on management education that seamlessly blends global relevance with Jesuit values. In this wide-ranging interaction, he speaks about strengthening meaningful international collaborations—particularly with European universities—to deepen curriculum design, faculty research, and student immersion through measurable academic outcomes. He reflects on balancing XLRI's values-driven ethos with market expectations, emphasising the creation of leaders who are both competent and compassionate. The conversation, conducted by Education Post's **Prabhav Anand**, also explores his human-centric leadership philosophy rooted in workplace spirituality, the responsible integration of AI and digital transformation, and a strong focus on student well-being and resilience. Fr. D'Silva further outlines XLRI Delhi-NCR's evolving approach to careers in sustainability, impact entrepreneurship, and policy, while sharing a clear long-term vision for academic excellence, research leadership, and societal impact.

Q XLRI Delhi-NCR is rapidly expanding its global footprint through collaborations with European universities. From an academic design standpoint, how will these partnerships reshape your curriculum, faculty interactions, and student immersion, and what concrete indicators will you use to evaluate their real impact within the next few years?

Our international collaborations, especially with leading European universities, are designed to strengthen XLRI Delhi-NCR's academic foundation rather than simply add global labels. These partnerships help us modernise our curriculum with global case studies, contemporary management perspectives, and cross-cultural learning components. For faculty, they open avenues for joint research, co-teaching, and academic exchange, which enriches the intellectual environment on campus. Students benefit through immersion programmes, visiting faculty interactions, and exposure to diverse pedagogical approaches. Over the next few years, we will evaluate the success of these tie-ups through measurable indicators such as the number of joint research outputs, participation in exchange programmes, co-developed courses, and student feedback on global learning experiences. Our aim is to ensure that every collaboration translates into deeper academic value and tangible developmental outcomes for our students and faculty.

Q Jesuit management education is globally known for integrating ethics, compassion, and social justice into business leadership. In today's highly competitive MBA environment—where rankings, placements, and ROI dominate—how do you personally balance XLRI's values-driven ethos with the market-driven expectations of students and recruiters?

At XLRI Delhi-NCR, we don't see Jesuit values and market expectations as opposing forces. The institute was founded on principles of ethical conduct, social conscience, and whole-person development, and we consciously embed these into our academic and co-curricular design. At the same time, our programmes maintain the rigour, industry alignment, and placement strength that students and recruiters expect. The balance comes from ensuring that every student graduates with strong business acumen and a deeply rooted sense of responsibility. We regularly evaluate this through placement outcomes, recruiter feedback, the nature of student projects, and the growing interest in areas such as sustainability, inclusion, and impact-driven work. The goal is to produce leaders who are both competent and compassionate, professionals who deliver results without compromising on values.

Q Your research interests include organisational behaviour, workplace spirituality, and human competence. How do these academic domains influence your leadership style at XLRI Delhi-NCR, and in what ways have you embedded these ideas into classroom pedagogy or campus culture to shape responsible future managers?

My research was primarily aimed at understanding meaningfulness in life and how work gives meaning to the lives of individuals. I still continue to reflect on my own life and the lives of others to understand and propose changes so that life and work becomes more meaningful. While discussing meaningfulness in life and work, we try to see the whole person, not merely the economic benefit. Here the definition of the person involves psycho-spiritual integration. Discussion and dialogue, reflection and discernment with faculty, staff and students to understand their needs is the process I follow and intend to follow. Shaping culture is a long-term process and the process is dialogue and discernment.

Q With the rise of AI, digital transformation, and automation, business education is being redefined. What strategic steps is XLRI Delhi-NCR taking to build AI literacy and responsible technology management into its programmes, and how do you ensure that students understand both the opportunities and ethical complexities of AI-enabled organisations?

We recognise that the future of business leadership will be deeply intertwined with AI, digital



transformation, and automation. At XLRI Delhi-NCR, we are strengthening technological literacy across our programmes by introducing industry-relevant modules, analytics-driven coursework, and case discussions around digital-era organisations. But technological competence alone is not enough; we place equal emphasis on the ethical and human dimensions of AI-led decisions. Our values-driven approach ensures that students think critically about issues such as bias, data governance, workplace impact, and responsible use of technology. The intent is to prepare graduates who can leverage AI strategically while upholding ethical principles and societal accountability.

Q You have previously highlighted the importance of meaningful, not ceremonial, international tie-ups. How are you ensuring that XLRI's global linkages lead to tangible academic outcomes—such as joint research, faculty exchanges, co-taught courses, or global case development—rather than superficial collaborations?

At XLRI, we are very clear that international collaborations must go beyond symbolic memoranda. They need to generate genuine academic value—for our students, faculty, and global partners. To begin with, I have collected the complete list of all Memoranda of Agreement (MoAs) signed so far, and I am currently evaluating each one to assess the scope, relevance, and potential for meaningful engagement. I also plan to share this consolidated information with colleagues across the Institute so they can proactively explore opportunities for mutual benefit.

Going forward, we are institutionalising a more outcome-driven approach to global linkages. This includes identifying high-potential partners for joint research initiatives, creating structured pathways for faculty exchanges, and co-developing courses or global case studies aligned with our academic strengths. We are also working toward developing mechanisms to track deliverables from each partnership, ensuring that collaborations translate into tangible academic outcomes rather than remaining superficial.

Ultimately, the goal is to cultivate deep, sustained relationships with select institutions where both sides see clear academic value—whether that is through co-taught modules, student immersion programs, impactful joint scholarship, or global classroom experiences. Meaningful partnerships take effort, but they also offer immense long-term dividends, and that is the direction we are committed to.

Q Mental health and student well-being have become critical concerns in rigorous management programmes. Drawing from your experience in student affairs and pastoral



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roles, what structural systems, academic policies, or campus practices have you introduced to reduce burnout and create a supportive, health-conscious learning environment?

We are recruiting counselors for the benefit of students. Our attempt is to involve the students in activities so that they find avenues to overcome stress through activities. For this, we are involving the students' council representatives and others. My focus is more on building resilience rather than evading stress. The VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) world we live in requires more resilience and a capacity for realistic evaluation of the world than creating a fictitious picture of easy life ahead. I have asked the faculty to help students prepare for the business world by demanding more and pushing the boundaries rather than making things easy for students. At the same time we teach them how to handle the stress of the demands placed on them and come out on top by providing resources like the Art of Living and other spiritual inputs.

Q As management careers evolve beyond traditional corporate roles, how is XLRI Delhi-NCR reimagining career preparation for emerging fields such as impact entrepreneurship, sustainability, climate tech, and policy-driven roles, while still sustaining its legacy in HR, business leadership, and consulting?

The world of management careers is expanding rapidly, and at XLRI Delhi-NCR we are consciously preparing students for roles beyond traditional corporate pathways. While we continue to build on XLRI's long-standing strengths in HR, business leadership, and consulting, we are also integrating exposure to emerging fields such as sustainability, impact entrepreneurship, climate tech, and policy-driven roles. Through electives, live projects, industry interactions, and entrepreneurship-focused programmes, we encourage students to explore opportunities in socially relevant and innovation-led domains. The idea is to equip them with both functional expertise and the mindset to contribute to high-growth, future-oriented sectors. By balancing legacy strengths with new-age career preparation, we aim to develop graduates who are agile, purpose-driven, and ready for the evolving demands of business and society.

Q Looking ahead, what is your long-term vision for XLRI Delhi-NCR in terms of academic excellence, research leadership, and societal impact? What three strategic priorities do you consider fundamental to positioning the campus as a national and global leader in management education over the next decade?

Our long-term vision is to establish XLRI Delhi-NCR as a centre of academic excellence, research leadership, and societal impact aligned with the legacy of XLRI. Over the next decade, three priorities will guide us. First, building a globally oriented campus that combines international exposure with strong Indian contextual relevance. Second, strengthening research capabilities in areas such as ethical leadership, human-centred management, sustainability, and innovation. And third, enhancing our role in shaping socially conscious leaders through programmes, centres of excellence, and partnerships that address emerging national and global challenges. We are committed to creating a campus that not only excels academically but also contributes meaningfully to business, society, and the broader leadership ecosystem. EP

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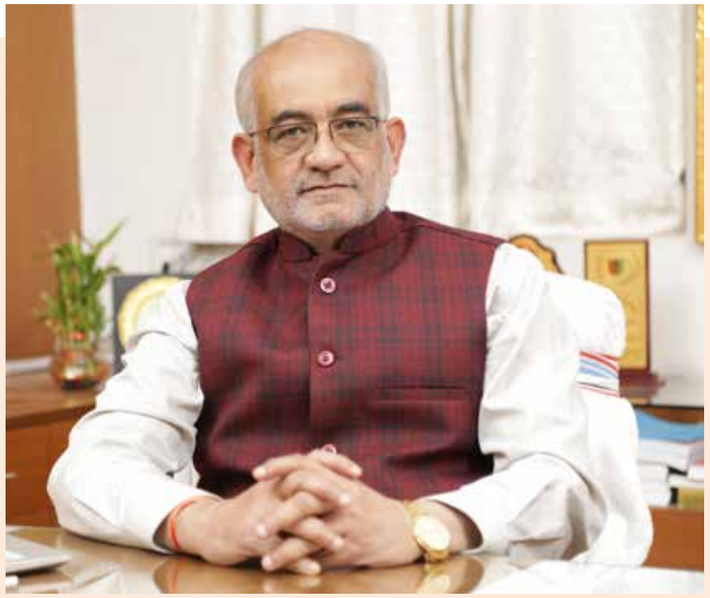
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MANAGEMENT EDUCATION MUST CREATE RESPONSIBLE LEADERS, NOT JUST EMPLOYABLE GRADUATES FOR THE MARKET

Prof. Indranil Manna
Vice Chancellor, BIT Mesra

As BIT Mesra marks seven decades of academic legacy, Prof. Indranil Manna, Vice Chancellor, articulates a forward-looking vision for management education that is deeply rooted in relevance, responsibility, and impact. In this wide-ranging conversation, he underlines how BIT Mesra is moving beyond conventional classroom learning by embedding live industry projects, leadership development, and entrepreneurship into its management programs. He speaks about strengthening industry–academia partnerships with measurable outcomes, bridging the urban–rural exposure gap through skill-building and student engagement, and balancing emerging technologies like AI with ethics and sustainability. The interview, conducted by Education Post's Prabhav Anand, also highlights the institute's commitment to equity, multidisciplinary learning under NEP 2020, and long-term impact beyond placements. Prof. Manna's roadmap aligns institutional transformation with the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, focusing on creating leaders who contribute meaningfully to society.

Q As BIT Mesra marks 70 years, how are you ensuring that its management programs move beyond adding new courses and genuinely build critical thinking, leadership, and real-world problem-solving skills that match India's rapidly changing economic landscape?

At BIT Mesra, we firmly believe that learning should go beyond textbooks. Our management programs incorporate real projects with businesses, case studies, and leadership workshops. Students work on addressing actual business problems, not just theoretical ones. For instance, they take part in live projects with startups and industries, which helps them learn decision-making and problem-solving. We also support group activities and leadership exercises that cultivate teamwork and confidence, allowing students to develop critical thinking and practical skills that prepare them for real-world challenges.

Q You often emphasize industry–academia partnerships, but many such collaborations in India deliver limited value; what concrete mechanisms ensure BIT Mesra's partnerships lead to measurable gains in employability, entrepreneurship, and practical learning for all students?

At BIT Mesra, we ensure that industry partnerships offer tangible benefits to students. Every partnership comprises internships, live projects, and joint classes with industry experts. We also keep track of outcomes such as job offers and skill development. Our objective is that students should gain practical experience and receive better career opportunities.

Q You've said that physical location no longer restricts access to quality education, yet non-metro students often lack exposure and preparedness; what specific steps is BIT Mesra taking to bridge this gap and ensure students from smaller cities can compete at national and global levels?

Students from smaller towns often require additional support to match global standards. At BIT Mesra, we have special programs to enhance communication, confidence, and technical skills. These programs furnish a comprehensive understanding to students about how businesses work and prepare them for interviews. We offer a course on professional English to all students. We encourage all students to take an active interest in sports and other extracurricular activities. We run 30 plus student activity clubs with an annual budget of about Rs 2 crore.

Q With rising focus on AI, analytics, and emerging tech, how is BIT Mesra balancing technological advancement with the equally critical need for ethics, sustainability, and human-centered decision-making in management education?

While technology is important, equally important is its responsible usage. At BIT Mesra, we teach AI and analytics along with ethics and sustainability. Students learn about bias, privacy, and the environmental impact of their projects. For instance, if they design an AI model, they must ensure the prevention of misuse of data. We also teach students to make decisions that balance business growth with the betterment of society.

Q Choice-Based Credit Systems offer flexibility but often risk diluting academic rigor; what safeguards has BIT Mesra built to ensure multidisciplinary freedom strengthens, rather than weakens, depth and seriousness in management learning?

As per NEP 2020, we offer major, minor, and dual degree provisions, including lateral entry and exit for selected courses and programmes. We encourage students to carry out projects across the departments with multiple guides.

Q BIT Mesra is strengthening its research ecosystem, but how do you ensure this focus does not overshadow



high-quality teaching and industry relevance in management programs, especially for students who may not pursue research careers?

BIT promotes entrepreneurship through the Institute Innovation Council (IIC) and encourages students to compete in various national-level contests.

Q Given the socio-economic diversity of Jharkhand and the surrounding region, how is BIT Mesra addressing equity and inclusion so that students from rural or underprivileged backgrounds receive adequate academic support, mentorship, and integration into the institution?

We believe in the concept of quality and uniform education for all. BIT Mesra offers scholarships and mentoring for students from rural or underprivileged backgrounds. Our faculty and senior students offer 360-degree support, guiding them through academics and career planning. We also run projects in rural areas so students can apply their skills and feel connected to their communities.

Q Beyond placement figures, which often dominate management education narrative, what long-term indicators or KPIs do you use to evaluate the real quality and impact of BIT Mesra's management programs, and how transparent are these metrics to stakeholders?

While placements are important, they are not the only benchmark of success. This is why at BIT Mesra, we track long-term progress like promotions, entrepreneurship, and social impact projects. We also look at alumni achievements and their overall contribution to society. Our programs nurture industry leaders and change agents, not just employees.

Q Reforming a legacy institution inevitably faces internal resistance; what have been your most significant challenges in driving institutional change at BIT Mesra, and how have you navigated cultural or structural pushback?

We set realistic and attractive targets, define the roadmap and intermediate milestones, and encourage stakeholders to participate. We make them own the challenge and lead, not just participate. We also acknowledge that change demands trust and consistent dialogue and involves faculty, alumni, and students in decision-making to ensure that reforms are co-created and not imposed.

Q With the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 in mind, what is your long-term roadmap for BIT Mesra's management ecosystem to produce not only employable graduates but leaders capable of contributing to regional growth, national priorities, and global competitiveness?

In the digital era, led by disruptive technologies, our vision is to nurture graduates who can lead from the front and are socially responsible. We focus on innovation, sustainability, and global competitiveness to contribute to the ambitious vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047. Additionally, in the coming years, we will continue to emphasise global best practices, international collaborations, and cutting-edge research. EP

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MANAGEMENT EDUCATION MUST SHAPE ADAPTABLE, ETHICAL LEADERS,
NOT JUST INDUSTRY-READY SKILL HOLDERS

Prof. Sudhir Chandra Das
Professor, Faculty of Commerce, Banaras Hindu University

With over twenty-five years of academic experience at Banaras Hindu University, **Prof. Sudhir Chandra Das,** Professor in the Faculty of Commerce, offers a deeply grounded perspective on the changing contours of management and commerce education in India. In this interview, he reflects on the transition from theory-driven curricula to application-oriented, interdisciplinary learning, highlighting the growing emphasis on technology, analytics, sustainability, and entrepreneurship. Prof. Das underscores how pedagogy has evolved towards case methods, simulations, and experiential learning, with faculty increasingly acting as mentors rather than mere transmitters of knowledge. He also candidly discusses gaps between curriculum and industry realities, particularly in areas such as the gig economy, digital leadership, employee well-being, and ethical decision-making. Drawing from his extensive research and doctoral supervision across sectors, he argues for deeper research integrity, reflective pedagogy, and stronger industry–academia engagement. The interview, conducted by Education Post's **Prabhav Anand,** captures his vision of future-ready, socially responsible management education rooted in public university values.

Q Over the last two decades, management education in India — including in traditional institutions like BHU — has undergone significant shifts. From your vantage as a long-serving faculty member (joined BHU 1997, professor for over 25 years), how would you characterise the evolution of management education in India — in terms of curriculum design, pedagogy, and student expectations? What major changes have you observed during your tenure?

BHU is an inclusive university, not traditional. Over the past two decades, business education in India has shifted from theory curricula to more application-oriented and interdisciplinary designs. Pedagogy has evolved from chalk-and-talk to case methods, simulations, and projects. Emphasis on analytics, technology, entrepreneurship, and sustainability than earlier. Students today are more tech-savvy, industry-aware and demand skill outcomes. Exposure to global perspectives and industry interaction has increased significantly. Overall, the role of faculty has moved from knowledge transmitter to mentor and facilitator of learning.

Q Given your specialisation in Organizational Behaviour & HRM, and given rapid changes in industry (digital transformation, gig economy, ESG, sustainability, remote work) — how well do current management / commerce curricula (for example at BHU) align with these emerging demands? What gaps do you see, and how should institutions adapt?

OB and HRM are being taught in the commerce, management and psychology department at BHU. Now I have started engaging students with themes like digital transformation, ESG, and sustainability, but the integration is still uneven. Many of these topics appear as elective or supplementary components rather than being embedded within core HRM and OB courses. The realities of the gig economy, remote work, and virtual teams have outpaced curriculum updates, creating a gap between what is taught and what the industry now practices. There is limited emphasis on HR analytics, digital leadership, and managing employee well-being in technology-mediated workplaces. Pedagogically, stronger industry interaction and gamification learning are needed to translate concepts into capability. Institutions must adopt more flexible and frequently revised curricula, supported by continuous faculty upskilling.

Q In your research you have studied work-life balance, employee engagement, HR practices in banking, insurance, manufacturing, etc. From your perspective, how effectively are management graduates trained to handle real-world organisational challenges (especially human-centred issues like employee well-being, culture, ethical leadership)? What more can academia do to sensitize students to such soft but vital aspects?

Commerce and Management graduates today are reasonably strong in conceptual understanding, but often underprepared to handle complex human-centred challenges in real organizational settings. Issues like employee well-being, culture, and ethical leadership are discussed academically, yet not experienced deeply enough by students. The gap lies in translating theory into empathetic managerial behaviour and ethical judgment under pressure.



Academia needs to use more reflective pedagogy—such as role plays, ethical dilemma cases, and narratives from practitioners.

Q You have guided many Ph.D/ dissertation students across sectors (insurance, banking, mining, public-sector undertakings, etc.). In your opinion, how healthy is research culture within Indian business schools / management faculties today? Are students encouraged to pursue deep, original inquiry rather than "publication for numbers"? What systemic changes would strengthen research integrity and relevance?

Research culture in Indian business schools has improved in visibility and output, but depth and originality remain uneven. There is growing pressure on students and faculty to publish for numerical targets, which can dilute meaningful inquiry. While some institutions encourage rigorous, context-specific research, many still prioritise quantity over contribution. Strengthening research culture requires valuing quality, replication, and long-term projects rather than short publication cycles. Better doctoral training, methodological rigor, and ethical research mentoring are essential. Most importantly, institutional reward systems must align with socially and managerially relevant research outcomes.

Q With globalisation, digitisation, and newer educational policies (including autonomous courses, industry collaborations, online/distance learning), how do you see the future of commerce and management education? Do you expect significant structural changes — e.g. in course design, pedagogy, evaluation — in the next 5–10 years?

The future of commerce and management education will be globally connected. Course design will increasingly move towards interdisciplinary, skill-based, and industry-co-created curricula. Pedagogy is likely to shift further toward blended learning, simulations, and problem-based education supported by digital platforms. Evaluation systems will emphasise portfolios and real-world project outcomes over traditional examinations. Overall, the next decade will bring structural changes that prioritise adaptability, employability, and learning agility.

Q You have previously undertaken research on work-life balance (WLB) in insurance, HR practices in banks / manufacturing, corporate social responsibility in mining, etc. Considering current contexts (post-pandemic, hybrid work, economic stress) — do your earlier conclusions still hold? Would you frame those studies differently today?

Many of the core conclusions from my earlier research—such as the importance of supportive HR practices, fair policies, and organisational culture, fairness—remain valid even today. However, the context has changed significantly, especially with hybrid work, digital monitoring, and heightened economic uncertainty. I am preferably interested greater emphasis on mental health, boundary management, and technology-induced stress. I would also focus on leadership empathy, trust, and flexibility as central variables.

Q As a long-standing professor guiding many postgraduate and doctoral students, how have student expectations changed over time — especially regarding career opportunities, employability skills, and research orientation? From your work (e.g. study on self-perceived "employability skills" among commerce undergraduates) — what key skills should modern commerce/management graduates cultivate beyond textbook knowledge?

Student expectations have shifted from long-term careers to demanding rapid employability, mobility, and visible career returns from education. There is a greater focus on skills, certifications, and placements, while research orientation among most students has become more instrumental than exploratory. My work on self-perceived employability skills shows that communication, adaptability, and problem-solving matter more than domain knowledge alone. Digital literacy, data interpretation, and the ability to work in diverse teams are now essential.

Q What is your vision for institutions like BHU's Faculty of Commerce in shaping future Indian managers and business leaders? If you had to propose three major reforms (in curriculum, pedagogy, industry-academia interface), what would they be — and why?

My vision for institutions like BHU's Faculty of Commerce is to combine their strong public-university ethos with future-ready, socially responsible business education. First, curriculum reform should embed technology, sustainability, and ethics across all core courses rather than treating them as electives. Second, pedagogy must shift toward experiential learning through live projects and problem-based teaching. Third, the industry–academia interface should be institutionalised via long-term partnerships, practitioner-led courses, and joint research. These reforms would enhance relevance without compromising academic depth. EP

WHY HUMAN INTELLIGENCE STILL WINS AGAINST ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN CLASSROOMS



Prof. (Dr.) Tapan Kumar Nayak
Director, Jaipuria School of Business, Ghaziabad

In the last few years, artificial intelligence (AI) has made a lot of impact in various domains, especially on education sector. Classrooms across the world are witnessing significant changes, thanks to technological integration. Some examples are AI-powered tutoring systems, adaptive learning platforms, automated grading tools, and smart content production. Even with these changes, human intellect still has a distinct and irreplaceable advantage in the classroom, when it comes to teaching and learning enhancement. Human intelligence is more emotionally aware, can understand context, is more flexible, can make moral judgments, and helps with overall teaching learning process and hence facilitates robust and ethical career growth.

Understanding and Emotional Connection with the Students

One of the most critical aspects about successful teaching-learning is making an emotional connection with the students. Teachers can detect how a student is feeling—whether they are excited, perplexed, frustrated, or anxious—without even having to ask. Then they answer in a way that makes the learner want to learn and be involved. This kind of response is vital for creating a helpful learning space. On the other hand AI systems are getting better at spotting patterns and copying some kinds of emotional intelligence, but they can't respond with the emotion appeal and empathy that a human teacher can express. Teachers who are human can pick up on and respond to small signs, like a pause or a spark of curiosity, that go beyond data and algorithms.

Understanding culture and context

A classroom usually has students from various cultures, ethnicities, and social groupings, thereby creating an environment for learning interpersonal skills. This level of diversity is good for human intelligence. Teachers make learning more relevant and effective by thinking about their students' cultural backgrounds, personal experiences, language barriers, and how the classroom functions. Artificial intelligence (AI), on the other hand, depends a lot on data and programmed algorithms that might not be able to deal with cultural differences or certain scenarios in the classroom. Humans can read between the lines and adjust how they educate or talk to students from diverse backgrounds so that it genuinely means something to them.

The ability to alter and be spontaneous

Humans are quite excellent at going with the flow and making choices on the spot. It's not always easy to foresee what will happen in class. There are questions that need to be answered immediately, misconceptions that need to be cleared up, and things that happen that aren't anticipated, like interruptions or technological problems. Whereas AI can quickly analyse information and alter based on rules that have been programmed into it or learned from experience, but it can't come up with new ideas or respond with real intuition because of how it was made.

Making moral choices and choices about what is important

Classrooms are not just places to study new things, they are also places to learn how to be a good human being, learn about ethics and morality, and learn how to get along with others. Moral reasoning, ethical discernment, and value-based judgments are all ways that teachers use. Teachers assist students in learning how to be honest, fair, respectful, and kind, which helps them become responsible individuals. On the other hand, AI is highly smart, yet it doesn't know right from wrong. AI follows rules and optimum paths to attain goals, but it can't grasp or advocate ethical ideas on its own unless someone tells it to. Teachers are incredibly important because they show students how to behave morally and construct classrooms that are friendly and polite in ways that AI might take time to learn and practice.

Helping individuals be creative and think critically

A good teacher inspires students want to learn more, think critically, and try out new ideas. All of these are vital abilities for the complicated and fast-paced environment students live in. Teachers who are human help students learn by getting to know their unique points of view and challenges and altering the prompts and discussions to match their changing requirements. AI on the other side can offer you a lot of information and look for trends in data, but it can't help you come up with fresh ideas or think deeply about topics like humans do. AI technologies are helpful, but they may not take the place of the intellectual advice and creative inspiration that teachers give.

Aspect of Holistic Development

Education is not just about learning new things; it's also about becoming a better person in every way, including your social skills, emotional intelligence, physical health, and moral maturity. Humans assist students gain resilience, teamwork, empathy, and self-awareness by linking what they learn in class to real-life challenges. AI is still largely employed for jobs that require thinking. It doesn't talk about all the varied facets of human development, notably the more subtle social and emotional growth nuances that happen when individuals interact with each other.

Matter of Trust and Learning pattern

When students develop strong ties with their teachers, they are more likely to be motivated because they trust and respect them. Teachers may really connect with their students, show them how hard they work, and celebrate their achievement in ways that make them want to do better. AI systems are incredibly reliable and work well, but they can't really connect with people. Motivation derived only from interactions with AI may become extrinsic or mechanistic, lacking the profound support provided by a valued mentor or role model.

Finally, the above arguments don't mean that AI isn't doing great things for education. AI makes learning more personal by looking at student data to figure out what they need, grading automatically, and giving students access to a variety of digital resources. It can aid teachers a lot by giving them more time and letting them educate in new ways. AI is not a substitute for the intricate human intelligence necessary for effective instruction; rather, it serves as an enabler to do things faster. The finest classrooms employ AI's skills coupled with human qualities like empathy, adaptability, creativity, and moral direction to make learning experiences that are deep and meaningful. Humans are still smarter than machines in the classroom because learning is about people and connections. It depends on emotional connection, comprehending the situation, being able to adjust fast, moral reasoning, and mentorship, not simply facts. AI can aid education by automating activities and making learning more personal. However, it can't replace the depth of human intelligence that inspires, encourages, and cares for the whole learner. The future of education will be a partnership between humans and machines that evolves with time.



BUILDING AND MANAGING A 100% WOMEN WORKFORCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Raj Singhal
CEO and co-founder of Footprints Childcare

The Importance of a Women's Workforce in Early Childhood Education

The early years of a child's education are an important period in developing their overall being. It is during the earliest stages of education that children begin to develop their emotional responses to situations, as well as the way they learn to relate and interact with others. The primary providers of the workforce in the early childhood education industry, in every part of the world, are women. This conclusion has been supported by the evidence showing that women possess innate characteristics that make them more suited to appropriately teach, raise, and nurture children than men. Based on this belief, many organizations have chosen to build a 100% female workforce because they believe that women will provide a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment for the children in their care.

In this article, we will explore how an all-female workforce operates effectively in the early childhood educational sector, the challenges they face as a female workforce, and suggestions on how to professionally develop, empower, and manage an all-female workforce.

Strengths of a Women-Only Workforce in the Early Childhood Sector

Women tend to be nurturing, caring, and patient and allow for better alignment with the developmental needs of young children by providing them with emotional and physical support while engaging in their daily activities. The communication style of women encourages feelings of safety and security for children because of their gentle and understanding manner with them.

In addition, most mothers prefer to contact female teachers when seeking guidance regarding their children's progress because of a greater level of comfort. This enables mothers and female teachers to build trust-based relationships, leading to open lines of communication about their children's development. Additionally, having a female-only workforce provides women with opportunities to be empowered through employment, leadership development, and economic independence.

Challenges Faced When Managing a 100% Women Workforce

For many women, finding a balance between family responsibilities (children, elderly parents) and work responsibilities (a full-time job) is one of the greatest challenges created by being employed in a female-dominated profession. An increasing number of women who are employed full-time with a childcare service will also have to take care of their children or elderly family members, which creates significant difficulties for those women in working extended hours or working extra shifts without prior warning.

If women do not have sufficient resources or assistance to help them manage the high levels of effort required to care for young children consistently, they may eventually become exhausted and unable to continue working.

Recruitment and Training Practices for Building a Strong Female Workforce

The first step to developing an excellent female workforce is to recruit with purpose and provide training that supports those efforts. Recruiting women from diverse backgrounds, experiences, and ages provides a combination of learning modalities and offers new perspectives on how to teach. In addition to recruiting female employees, an organization should develop specific job descriptions to ensure prospective employees understand what they will do, their work schedule, and what they can expect from their employer.

In addition to providing regular workshops that cover topics ranging from classroom management to activity planning to child development, such workshops provide a vehicle for teachers to develop their skills.

Creating a Supportive and Positive Work Environment for Women.

To create an environment in which women can be productive members of the workforce, leadership must create a cultural atmosphere that provides a positive working environment. Creating an environment where employees feel free to express themselves openly and honestly will result in increased levels of trust among them. Providing opportunities for employees to share their thoughts, provide feedback, and create a forum for employees to provide feedback is vital in helping them to develop a feeling of belonging within the workplace.

Wellness programs and other forms of emotional support will help support the emotional well-being of early childhood professionals after experiencing difficult working conditions. Establishing a strong support network among early childhood professionals provides opportunities for them to support one another through sharing experiences, providing and sharing problem-solving techniques, and promoting emotional growth.

Flexible Work Policies to Support female Employees

Understanding the qualities of an all-female workforce is crucial in providing optimal support for their unique personal obligations. Many women will have families and they will be required to meet the demands of family life. One means of assisting working mothers is to implement policies that provide for flexible work hours. Providing a flexible schedule or the option to work part-time allows women to manage both their home responsibilities and their job-related responsibilities.

When organizations provide paid maternity leave, sick leave, and emergency leave, employees tend to feel more confident about their job and experience less stress when faced with stressful times. When organizations provide women with a feeling of being valued by including the needs of the employee in the decisions made regarding employment, loyalty is created among employees.

Ensuring Safety and Security for Women Staff

One of the most important functions of a female workforce manager is to provide a secure environment for females, whether they are at work or travelling to/from work. Employers should provide safe transportation options (or travel reimbursement) for females who work early/late so that they do not have to worry about becoming a victim of a crime while travelling during those hours. Employers should also provide secure entry points for all employees (using door locks and lighting and CCTV surveillance) and have clear visitor procedures to protect employees and children who enter the organization.

In addition to providing a safe work environment for their employees, organizations need to maintain a zero-tolerance policy against harassment, as well as to implement an open, professional reporting procedure for female employees to report harassment without fear of retaliation.

Building Leadership and Confidence Among Women Employees

Women form a complete workforce, and by providing them with leadership development opportunities, we can create and develop a pathway for them to become leaders. Preparing women for leadership by assigning them roles such as event planner, workshop leader, team manager, etc., and giving them the experience of filling these roles will increase their confidence and assist them in reaching their goals of becoming leaders.

Employers should promote employees based on their skills, talent, and ability to advance in their careers, not on their length of service. When employees receive recognition for every accomplishment (even small ones), it encourages women to strive for more success and promotes their continued growth.

In addition to these soft skills, there are many more qualities that women possess, such as warmth, empathy, organization, effective communication, and a nurturing environment. As such, these skills allow children to develop an emotional bond with their female caregivers. These qualities are crucial in early childhood education; however, to fully benefit from the unique strengths that women possess, organizations must also provide solutions to problems such as work-life balance, employee burnout, unsafe work conditions, and limited career advancement opportunities for women.

INCULCATING MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS IN CHILDREN SINCE AN EARLY AGE



Anamika Dasgupta
Director, The Wonder School, Pune

We don't usually link global crisis to childhood. But perhaps we should.

After all, it takes years of careful conditioning to produce leaders who can deliver reckless policymaking, break institutions with confidence and erode public trust while smiling on television. None of this happens overnight. This kind of leadership failure is an acquired skill, honed steadily through an upbringing that rewards compliance and punishes curiosity.

And yet, history proves that when leadership is done well, the world remembers. Nelson Mandela rebuilt the moral architecture of a nation. Jacinda Ardern set a global benchmark for humane governance. Verghese Kurien transformed rural India with the audacity of cooperative thinking. Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam demonstrated the rare combination of brilliance and humility. These individuals were not manufactured in adult-training factories. Their leadership began long before adulthood, stitched consistently into their childhoods.

Across eras and continents, one simple truth holds: **leadership is not an adult skill; it is a childhood trajectory.** By the time we encounter someone as a young professional, most of their leadership foundation has already set. Which is why the question we should be asking is no longer "How do we teach leadership?" but: **"How on earth do we raise it?"**

Where the Schooling System Breaks Leadership Before It Even Starts

If leadership grows naturally, schooling ought to help it along. Unfortunately, mainstream schooling in India often does the reverse with impressive efficiency. When obedience is rewarded over initiative and memorisation over understanding, children very quickly learn that their job is not to think, but to follow instructions without making a fuss. Mistakes become disasters, competition becomes war and collaboration becomes copying — which is, of course, a punishable offence.

Gradually, curiosity packs its bags, confidence slips out the back door and the instinct to explore is replaced by the urge to comply.

And then, with a straight face, we expect 22-year-olds to suddenly "learn leadership." It's charming, really — in the same way that expecting a fish to climb a tree is charming.

India's Older Wisdom: Leadership Begins With Leading Yourself

Western management theory loves beginning with "leading others" — motivating teams, influencing people, managing relationships. It's ambitious, if nothing else. Indian thought, however, has always taken a more realistic (and frankly, more efficient) approach: **you start by leading yourself.** A leader who cannot govern their own mind, emotions and impulses is unlikely to inspire others, unless, of course, fear counts as inspiration.

A child who learns to regulate emotions, think independently, evaluate choices and act with integrity is already on the path to leadership. Everything else — teamwork, decision-making, strategy — grows out of this inner governance.

This is not mystical poetry. It is simple behavioural science with better storytelling.

The AI Era: Why Learning How to Learn Is the Real Leadership Superpower

There is widespread panic that AI will take away our jobs. Let's be honest: if the job involves blind memorisation and unquestioned obedience, AI absolutely will take it and probably do it with better manners.

But leadership? No chance.

AI cannot imitate empathy, discernment, ethical judgment or the ability to lead humans through uncertainty. Which is why the Indian idea of *pradnyāguṇaḥ* — the art of learning how to learn and asking the right questions — suddenly feels more futuristic than any Silicon Valley keynote.

In modern terms, *pradnyāguṇaḥ* is essentially the original form of prompt engineering.
AI is only as intelligent as the human framing the question. And the leaders of tomorrow are the ones who can define problems clearly, challenge assumptions, evaluate information intelligently and integrate technology with human judgment.

AI amplifies a thinker; it does not create one. Children who develop *pradnyāguṇaḥ* won't compete with machines. They'll command them.

Rebuilding the Leadership Environment

If leadership is shaped by childhood, then the environment around children becomes the real curriculum. Historically, India understood this well. Children grew inside ecosystems where elders, artisans, mentors, families and peers shaped their worldview. Leadership wasn't taught, it was *absorbed* - through participation, responsibility and community life.

In our own educational movement, we have attempted a contemporary reconstruction of this civilisational rhythm — an intergenerational ecosystem model we call **Ekatram** - a framework we created to bring back the natural interdependence between generations so children grow up watching leadership in action, not in PowerPoint.

In such ecosystems, seniors offer stability and wisdom, youth bring creativity and courage, children contribute curiosity and responsibility and adults hold the fabric together by nurturing *arthasampada* — self-sustained social, emotional and economic prosperity.

Nothing about it is flashy. Everything about it works.

Which brings us to the practical question: **How do we build environments like this in everyday life?**



Practical Solutions Schools and Parents Can Use Tomorrow

Let's be blunt: leadership develops through experience, not sermons. And thankfully, it doesn't need elaborate infrastructure.

It begins the moment children stop being treated as passengers and start being treated as participants. When their ideas matter, their ownership grows — and responsibility follows without external lectures.

It deepens when they learn *how* to learn — when they question, reflect and evaluate instead of memorising. *Pradnyāguṇaḥ* becomes a daily practice, whether they are examining a book, a conversation or an AI output.

It strengthens when children grow within richer social architecture. Our Ekatram model shows what happens when elders share wisdom, artisans demonstrate mastery and community members model real decision-making — children understand leadership as a lived practice rather than a motivational poster.

It grows when responsibility replaces praise. A child trusted to lead a task or guide a peer learns more about leadership in ten minutes than through a dozen certificates of "Outstanding Participation."

It accelerates when children take healthy risks — not the reckless kind, but the kind that require judgment, adaptability and courage. A world protected from all risk produces children unprepared for all reality.

It consolidates when children face real problems, not imaginary worksheets. Ethical dilemmas, community issues, practical conflicts — these forge judgment, the one skill AI cannot imitate.

And it matures when emotional governance is modelled by adults. Not emotional suppression, not emotional indulgence, but Governance. Leaders who understand their own emotions don't need to lead others through fear.

Individually, these ideas may seem familiar. Together, they form a radically different childhood — one where leadership grows naturally, almost inevitably.

A Future Built on Self-Governed, Purpose-Driven Young Leaders

Let me leave you with two big ideas: First, that leadership is shaped in childhood and our schooling system actively suppresses it. Second, that leadership grows inside ecosystems and rebuilding intergenerational, autonomy-rich ecosystems like Ekatram is essential if we want leaders who can handle the world that's coming.

So here we are. Two ideas. Both obvious. Both ignored. And both determining the future of our country. If we still manage to get leadership wrong after this, we will have no one left to blame but ourselves - and perhaps the sad little school timetable.





PERSONALIZED LEARNING AT SCALE
AI AS AN EQUALIZER IN INDIAN EDUCATION

VSN Raju
Director and CEO, COEMPT EDUTECK

The Need for Change in India's Learning Landscape

For decades, the Indian education system has struggled with issues of access, equity, and quality. With over 250 million school-going children - the largest student population in the world; the pressure on teachers, classrooms, and institutions is enormous. The system, built on standardized learning and exam-driven outcomes, has left little room for personalized attention, especially in overcrowded classrooms where a single teacher handles 40–60 students. Children learn at different paces and possess different strengths, but instruction remains uniform. This gap between the needs of learners and the structure of the classroom has contributed to widening learning disparities, particularly between rural and urban students, and between those with access to educational support and those without it. The result is a cycle of learning loss, low confidence, and high dropout rates that continues to impact millions.

AI as a Transformational Equalizer

For the first time, India has an opportunity to use technology not merely as an add-on but as an equalizer one that can deliver personalized learning at scale, independent of geography or economic background. AI is uniquely suited to support the Indian learning ecosystem because it adapts to each learner's needs, offers real-time feedback, and provides alternative ways of understanding concepts. It does not tire, does not judge, and can support students around the clock. Where individual tutoring was once considered a luxury accessible only to privileged children, AI now brings similar benefits to millions of learners across the country.

One platform demonstrating this transformation is COEMPT, which is reshaping how examinations are conducted and evaluated. By using AI and machine learning to minimize human intervention in paper setting, evaluation, and invigilation, COEMPT is making exam processes more transparent, efficient, and error-free. What makes its approach significant is not just automation but standardization; ensuring that students across institutions are assessed fairly and objectively. In a system where inconsistencies in marking and resource constraints often disadvantage learners, COEMPT's model shows how AI can strengthen trust, streamline academic operations, and reduce bias, ultimately supporting a more equitable learning environment.

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Personalization That Reaches Every Child

AI-powered platforms can diagnose learning gaps instantly, adjust difficulty levels based on performance, break complex topics into simpler explanations, and present them through visual, auditory, or interactive formats. For a student in a Tier-4 village, this means access to the same quality of academic assistance as a student in a top private school. This democratization of learning support is one of the biggest shifts in India's education landscape. AI has the power to rebuild confidence among first-generation learners who may hesitate to ask questions in class or fear being judged for not understanding a concept. With AI, they can learn privately, repeat lessons as many times as needed, and gain mastery at their own pace.

Strengthening Foundational Learning Through Timely Interventions

To understand the real impact of AI, consider a Class 6 student struggling with fractions. In a traditional classroom, syllabus pressure forces teachers to move ahead regardless of whether the student has understood the concept. By the time the child reaches Class 8, this gap makes math feel intimidating, ultimately affecting performance and interest. But an AI-enabled learning system can immediately detect the gap, suggest personalized modules focused on fractions, present the concept through visuals or relatable examples, and continue reinforcing it until the student achieves clarity. This personalized attention, once available only through expensive tuitions, is now accessible to any child with a basic smartphone and internet connection. Such interventions, when scaled across millions of students, have the potential to reimagine India's academic foundation.

Empowering, Not Replacing, India's Teachers

AI is equally transformative for teachers. In India, teachers are overburdened with administrative responsibilities such as grading, tracking student progress, and preparing reports; tasks that take time away from effective classroom instruction. AI tools can automate these routine functions, giving teachers deeper insights into each student's learning patterns. They can identify which children need help, what concepts are causing difficulty, and where early interventions are required. Instead of spending hours correcting tests, teachers can focus on conceptual teaching, classroom discussions, and mentorship. AI essentially turns the teacher into a data-informed educator, supporting them with actionable insights while preserving their central role in shaping students.

Reducing Socio-Economic Barriers to Quality Education

One of the biggest challenges in Indian education has been socio-economic disparity. A child's academic success has often been determined by affordability, geography, and access to resources. AI is helping dismantle this barrier. Today, even low-cost digital devices can host high-quality learning content, adaptive practice modules, doubt-solving tools, and concept videos in multiple languages. This is particularly important for rural and government-school students who may not have access to private coaching or additional academic support. With internet penetration improving steadily and low-cost smartphones becoming more accessible, AI-driven learning is spreading rapidly across the country. The shift is especially meaningful for first-generation learners who may not have academic support at home but can rely on AI-enabled tools to guide them through daily learning challenges.

AI and NEP 2020: A Natural Alignment

AI also aligns closely with the vision outlined in India's National Education Policy (NEP 2020), which emphasizes foundational literacy, competency-based learning, multilingual education, and the integration of technology. By offering vernacular content, adaptive assessments, and tools that focus on conceptual mastery rather than rote learning, AI strengthens the NEP's mission. It also has the capacity to support teacher training, provide early learning interventions, and ensure that students remain engaged in the learning process through interactive tools.

Preparing Students for a Digital Future

Beyond improving current learning outcomes, AI is preparing students for a future where digital literacy will be essential. The workforce of tomorrow will operate alongside intelligent systems, and early exposure to AI-powered platforms naturally builds comfort with technology. Students accustomed to using such tools develop stronger analytical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and self-directed learning habits. These are skills that go beyond exams; they prepare young minds.

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"Ranking and Accreditation are two important tools for a movement towards quality…. The Ranking framework will empower a larger number of Indian Institutions to participate in the global rankings, and create a significant impact internationally too."

Smt SMRITI IRANI
Former Education Minister at the launch of NIRF rankings

India has one of the biggest, multi-faceted and complex higher educational systems in the world with 1000+ universities and 58,000 Higher Educational Institutions (HEI). Indian tertiary education system is the third largest after China and United States of America (USA). However, in terms of number of HEI, India is top. The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) is presently inching towards 30% with various reforms and schemes from the government of India in capacity building like setting up new IIMs, and centrally funded universities as also strengthening and enhancing the existing ones.

Private sector has also played its part, which is evident in the mushrooming of institutions of tertiary learning especially in the professional education space and mainly in the southern states.

Business education has seen a steady growth in the last couple of decades. The numbers spiked after 2000, when there were less than 1000 institutions. It is estimated that at present, there are 5500+ Business schools (B-schools) with the majority of them in the private sector accounting to over 80% of the total count. These include b-schools as part of universities, engineering colleges, autonomous and stand-alone institutions. Of these, NIRF rankings only highlight the top 100. This improbable growth in the number of institutions has brought about its share of issues. These include multifarious issues related to gaps in accreditation, curriculum, faculty, capacity, employability, equity, funding, research, industry engagement, quality, and rankings.

Accreditation and rankings are both needed for B-schools to become globally competitive, financially sustainable and valued in a crowded space. These provide 360 degrees feedback of all aspects of a higher educational institution, be it academics, research, innovation, extension, administration, governance, student engagement, campus facilities & amenities. They influence student choices, employer perceptions, faculty recruitment, and institutional strategy. Accreditations and rankings serve different purposes but are complementary to each with overlap in parameters and methodologies.

In general, accreditation is voluntary and provides a quality mandate and baseline with an external validation instrument It is of two types, institutional like NAAC accreditation which covers all aspects of the institution, including academics, research, extension, infrastructure etc. and programmatic like NBA, which focuses primarily on all aspects of the program curriculum, teaching-learning process, pedagogy, faculty, delivery and outcomes. Accreditation processes typically involve a self-study by the school, submission of documentation, site visits by peer reviewers, and recommendations for improvement. Accreditation is cyclical — schools must reapply periodically and demonstrate continuous improvement.

Benefits of Accreditation

Like it or hate, it one cannot ignore rankings and accreditation. The benefits are described in terms of 4 buckets as follows:

Reputation & Visibility

- Gives B-schools a renewed sense of roadmap and distinctiveness.
- Establishes the brand and reputation
- Provides society and all stakeholders such as parents and students with accurate and dependable data on all aspects of the education offered by the institution

Globalization

- Encourages intra and inter-institutional interactions and cross-border relationships with global and national higher education institutions so as to enable flow and circulation of talent, information, technology, and funding
- Pique the interest of researchers, faculty and students from foreign shores which will enrich campus diversity and internationalization in the community

Research & Academic Development

- Offers research funding organizations accurate and unbiased information for award of grants
- Offers industry employers accurate and unbiased information for recruiting talent
- Attract global universities to collaborate in mutually beneficial business research projects and/or centers of excellence
- Nurture multicultural perspectives of faculty, researchers and students
- Nudge Indian B-schools into pedagogical and curricular improvements in line with the global best practices
- Extend the quality, breadth, and impact of academic programs

Strategic Planning:

- Helps the institution to know its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC) by looking inwards as also perform internal assessment of all aspects.
- Encourages objective decision-making based on performance indicators so as to aid the planning and resource allocation process
- Evolve strategies and policies that can then be aligned with performance metrics to improve quality.
- Benchmark against 'best practice' from global and national peers.

International Accreditation Agencies for Business Schools

AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business)

- AACSB is the global standard-setting body for business education, strengthening the world's business schools through accreditation, thought leadership, and transformative learning
- It is a program accreditation considered as the most prestigious and widely recognized global accreditations for business schools.
- 1055 institutions have secured AACSB accreditation, which is perhaps 5% of the total number of b-schools worldwide. Less than 30



Indian B-schools have secured this accreditation

- Various accreditation parameters which are referred to as standards include:
  - o Strategic Planning & Innovation
  - o Intellectual Contributions, Impact & Alignment
  - o Learner Progression & Success
  - o Curriculum
  - o Assurance of Learning
  - o Faculty Resources
  - o Professional Staff Resources
  - o Engagement & Societal Impact
  - o Academic & Professional Engagement

EQUIS (European Quality Improvement System)

- EQUIS is a prestigious international accreditation system run by EFMD (European Foundation for Management Development).
- It is an institutional accreditation, which evaluates entire business schools (not just programs) with a strong emphasis on internationalization, corporate connections, and ethics & sustainability.
- 230 odd institutions have secured EQUIS accreditation, which is considered exclusive. Less than 10 Indian B-schools have secured this accreditation
- **Various accreditation parameters include:**
  - o Context, Governance & Strategy
  - o Programs
  - o Students
  - o Faculty
  - o Research & Development
  - o Executive Education
  - o Resources & Administration
  - o Internationalization
  - o Corporate Connections
  - o Ethics, Responsibility & Sustainability (ERS)

AMBA (Association of MBAs)

- AMBA is yet another program accreditation from UK focused specifically on post-graduate management education—primarily MBA, DBA, and MBM
- 300 institutions have secured AMBA accreditation, which is considered elite. Less than 15 Indian B-schools have secured this accreditation
- Various accreditation parameters include
  - o Institutional Context & Governance
  - o Program Design & Curriculum
  - o Teaching, Learning & Assessment
  - o Faculty Quality & Engagement
  - o Student Profile, Admissions & Diversity
  - o Student Experience & Support
  - o Employability, Careers & Impact
  - o Ethics, Responsibility & Sustainability
  - o Internationalization
  - o Quality Assurance & Continuous Improvement

Looking at various parameters for International Accreditation, no doubt they significantly influence quality, accountability, and credibility of business schools so that they are on a steep trajectory to enhance educational merit, stakeholder confidence, and societal impact.

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THE SIANG BATTLEGROUND

INSIDE THE NOISE, THE NERVES AND THE NARRATIVE WAR OVER A DAM



The fiercest battles over India's large infrastructure projects are no longer fought only in forests, villages, or courtrooms. They are increasingly fought in public memory, media narratives, and the psychology of consent. The Siang Upper Multipurpose Project in Arunachal Pradesh offers a textbook case. Even before its pre-feasibility report has even seen the light of day, the project has sparked protests, forced governments into cautious postures, and drawn in professional narrative managers tasked with reshaping public opinion. What is unfolding along the Siang is not merely a disagreement over a dam, but a high-stakes struggle over who controls the story… and to what end. Education Post's Managing Editor **Rohit Wadhwaney** delves deeper.

The Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP) is a familiar story: a large hydropower-cum-flood-control proposal in Arunachal Pradesh, expected to generate massive electricity, provide water storage, and buttress India's northeastern frontier with development.

But outside the neat columns of feasibility reports and committee minutes, the story is more complicated. It's messier, louder, and spread across angry protests, quiet negotiations, political anxieties, and a new, carefully constructed narrative campaign that is only just beginning to take shape.

Over the last few months, the question at the center of SUMP has changed. It is no longer simply: about whether a dam should be built here or not. Instead, it has evolved into something politically sharper and socially deeper: Who gets to shape what the people believe about the dam?

And this shift owes much to the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation's decision to bring in one of India's top Public Relations advisory groups, a Mumbai-headquartered strategic communications firm widely known for reputation management campaigns, corporate positioning, and public sentiment engineering.

What emerges is a landscape where trust is fragile, emotions are charged, and every statement – from a protest placard to an official press note – carries the weight of decades of developmental promises and disappointments.

More than just water

For the Adi tribe communities living along the Siang, the river is more than a geographical feature. It is cultural heritage, identity, and in many ways, a living relative. This emotional thread is precisely why hydropower proposals in the Siang basin have always been met with skepticism, and even fear.



The Siang River originates in Tibet (as the Yarlung Tsangpo) and enters India in Arunachal Pradesh before joining the Dibang and Lohit rivers to form the Brahmaputra in Assam.

For many villagers, the anxiety runs deeper than displacement or environmental damage. It is the fear of losing the river itself. In a region where rivers shape livelihoods, memory, and meaning, any attempt to re-engineer the Siang is seen not as a technical intervention, but as an intrusion into the natural order they have lived with for generations.

This deep-rooted sentiment has shaped the resistance. But this time, the resistance has matured, become organized, and grown louder. It is not driven only by cultural anxieties. It is driven by educated youth networks, civil society groups, and environmental researchers who know the language of both local sentiment and global climate concerns.

Protests are intensifying

Protests against the SUMP have taken various forms – rallies, public meetings, student group statements, and petitions. But what stands out is the timing. The strongest resistance has come at the PFR (Pre-Feasibility Report) stage itself.

A PFR is merely a preliminary study that examines whether the project is even worth pursuing. But to the protestors, it represents the first domino. They know from recent experiences in the Northeast that once a PFR is completed and accepted, the project begins to acquire bureaucratic momentum. Clearances, public hearings, detailed project reports (DPRs), and tendering follow. And by the time the people realize what is happening, the project has already crossed the point of no return.

For protestors, blocking the PFR is the only real chance of stopping the project altogether. Their argument is straightforward: "If the project itself is unacceptable, why allow even the first step?"

Geometry of security

The proposed Upper Siang project, a 280–300 meter dam with a planned capacity of around 11 GW (11,000 MW), would be India's largest hydropower installation. Officially, it is framed as a clean-energy milestone. Strategically, however, the dam – declared a National Project by the Indian government in 2008 – serves a deeper purpose: counterbalancing China's upstream control over the Brahmaputra system and strengthening India's long-term water and energy security.

Across the border, China is moving ahead with an even more ambitious plan. Its under-construction mega-dam in Medog county in southeastern Tibet, is projected to generate between 67 and 80 GW to potentially become the largest hydropower project in the world, nearly three times the scale of the Three Gorges Dam. With estimated costs exceeding US$160 billion, Beijing describes the project as central to its green transition. New Delhi, however, sees it through a sharper lens. More than 80% of the



PR tactic: School children in Yingkiong's Simong village watch a video that highlights the benefits of dams and hydropower.



Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein chairs a review meeting on the status of stalled hydropower projects in the state, including the proposed Siang Upper dam.

water that flows into Arunachal Pradesh originates in Tibet, giving China significant upstream leverage.

This concern is not theoretical. Past incidents, including China's withholding of hydrological data prior to the 2000 Yigong Zangbo outburst flood, have entrenched mistrust. In the absence of a formal water-sharing treaty, Indian policymakers worry that river flows could be manipulated, using what strategists describe as "hydro-leverage," to trigger downstream floods or drought-like conditions. Reports and proposals around diverting Tsangpo waters towards Xinjiang have only intensified these anxieties.

It is in this context that Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has described India's hydropower push as a "national security necessity." From New Delhi's perspective, projects like Upper Siang are not merely about electricity generation. They are also a strategic safety valve that ensure India retains some measure of control and resilience should water ever be used as a geopolitical tool upstream.

"China cannot be trusted. No one knows what they will do and when," Khandu said in an interview with PTI, amplifying fears that in case of a conflict, China could very well use its dam upstream as a "water bomb" against India.

Development vs. distrust

The Arunachal Pradesh government, for its part, has maintained a more cautious tone in recent years. But its development push is unmistakable. Hydropower remains one of the state's biggest economic hopes.

Arunachal Pradesh possesses one of the country's largest hydropower reserves, estimated at over 58,000 MW. That's roughly 40% of India's total potential. Yet barely 10% of it has been harnessed so far, leaving the sector largely untapped.

Under its proposed "Decade of Hydropower" (2025–2035), the state is now seeking to unlock this resource by reviving long-stalled projects, reassessing shelved proposals, and fast-tracking new ones that had earlier been delayed by environmental concerns, local opposition, or procedural bottlenecks.

It's an opportunity to reduce dependency on central grants, increase revenue-sharing mechanisms, and create long-term infrastructure in a region where road connectivity itself is still evolving.

This duality defines the state's approach: On one hand, it must respond to local sentiment and ensure transparency. And on the other, it needs to project Arunachal Pradesh as an investment-friendly state that is not paralyzed by local resistance.

Over the last year, the government has attempted to stabilize the discourse. Officials have repeatedly stated that PFR does not equal project approval, and that public concerns will be addressed at every stage. Yet distrust runs deep. People who have watched other hydropower proposals in the region – some stalled, some abandoned -- feel these assurances are not enough.

The government's challenge is not merely logistical or environmental, but psychological. It is fighting not opponents, but memories: memories of unfinished promises, past projects where locals felt sidelined, and a persistent belief that decisions are made far away from those who live next to the river.

Enter PR collective: The narrative engineers

Against this backdrop, NHPC's engagement of the PR firm in August 2025 marks a turning point in the SUMP story.

This PR group is not just a media outreach firm. It is known in the industry as a strategic perception shaping company, one that handles reputation management during crises, restructures public-facing narratives, and builds long-term trust through calibrated information campaigns.

For NHPC, paying top dollar to hire this group signals a recognition that the battle over SUMP will not be won through engineering diagrams or official statements alone. It will be won, or lost, in the arena of public perception.

While neither NHPC nor the PR firm has officially outlined the scope of work, industry observers expect the mandate to include:

1. **Managing the media ecosystem:** Ensuring positive or, at the very least, balanced coverage across regional and national outlets.
2. **Crafting community-engagement narratives:** Packaging the PFR as a harmless technical process that stakeholders should welcome.
3. **Countering misinformation:** Framing protest groups via paid influencers and bot messaging on social media as misinformed or manipulated by "external influences."
4. **Influencer outreach:** Paying local youth leaders, ordinary residents, civil society figures, and content creators to gradually shift public sentiment.
5. **Rebranding NHPC's image:** Presenting the corporation as sensitive, community-friendly, and environmentally conscious.

Essentially, aside from studying the river, NHPC is gearing up to reshape how people feel about that study.



NHPC officials attempting to convince delegations of the Adi Baane Kebang (ABK) and the Siang Indigenous Farmers' Federation (SIFF), both opposed to the construction of the dam, to allow the pre-feasibility study.

Risk of narrative overreach

The introduction of a PR war into an already emotional landscape is double-edged.

On one hand, the power company wants to correct misconceptions and communicate that a PFR is harmless. On the other, communities fear being psychologically nudged into accepting a project they fundamentally oppose.

For many locals, the hiring of a PR agency is not seen as outreach. It is seen as manipulation.

They worry that public sentiment may be shaped artificially, dissenting voices may be painted as unreasonable, and the eventual public hearing may become a formality backed by staged public support.

Whether or not these fears are justified, the perception itself is now a political reality.

The counter narrative

In response, protest leaders have already begun strengthening their messaging by highlighting potential risks to the river's ecology, emphasizing cultural and spiritual bonds with the Siang, pointing out past failures of rehabilitation in other project areas, and questioning the need for an enormous dam in a highly seismic zone.

They have also started using their own tools of persuasion:

1. Social media campaigns narrated in local languages.
2. Youth-driven information sessions in villages.
3. Engagement with environmental activists across India.
4. Partnerships with independent researchers who raise questions about feasibility.

If NHPC has entered with PR professionals, protest groups have entered with lived experience, emotion, and moral legitimacy. And in many public battles, that carries extraordinary weight.

Caught in the middle

A significant number of people, especially educated urban youth, are conflicted. They want development. They want reliable electricity, better connectivity, and economic momentum. But they also want accountability, environmental safeguards, and meaningful consultation.

They are neither pro-dam nor anti-dam. They are pro-information.

This middle group is precisely where PR firm's messaging is likely to be targeted. But this group is also the hardest to influence. They ask questions, demand data, and are aware of greenwashing tactics.

For them, the real test is not PR. It is transparency. And to top it up, they are scared to raise their voices. Just a few months back, a villager in the Siang belt openly declared he wanted the dam to be built. The anti-dam group blocked the canal that carried water to his farms.

"You aren't from here. That's why you think it is easy to openly just say we are pro-dam. We live here and we have to continue living here. The anti-dam group is very powerful and can go to any extent," a villager from the Yingkiong region of Siang told Education Post on condition of anonymity. "I am not going to risk my life for a dam."



Members of the Adi tribe community hold a peaceful protest against the construction of the proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project.

Government's dilemma: Silence or clarity?

The state government now finds itself in a strategically delicate position. If it appears to push the NHPC narrative too aggressively, it risks alienating communities and inflaming protests. If it stays silent, the anti-dam messaging fills the vacuum.

So far, the government's public positioning has been cautious. It has emphasized that the PFR is only a study. It has appealed for calm and patience. It has stated that the project will only proceed with public support.

But protesters argue that history does not support these assurances. They want legal safeguards, written guarantees, and unconditional clarity, not general statements of intent.

This push and pull has created an atmosphere where every word is scrutinized for hidden meaning.

NHPC's pressure points

NHPC is under pressure as well. Hydropower is expensive, slow to build, and vulnerable to public opposition. Delays can push costs up dramatically.

For NHPC, securing social permission early is a financial necessity.

That is why the corporation is attempting a two-layered approach:

1. Technical legitimacy: Asserting that the PFR is essential for any informed decision.
2. Social legitimacy: Convincing communities that studying the river does not mean destroying it.

The second is far more difficult, and this is where the PR group becomes crucial.

Core question ahead

What is unfolding around SUMP is not a debate over hydropower. It is a contest over trust, representation, identity, and the right to define the future of the river. The outcome will depend less on engineering expertise and more on narrative credibility.

If the people believe the process is fair, they may allow the PFR. If they believe they are being psychologically engineered into accepting a project, the backlash could intensify.

For now, both sides are preparing for a long fight, not with weapons, but with stories.

PFR: A document with waves

The Siang Upper Multipurpose Project is far, far away from construction. The PFR, which is the preliminary stage of any dam construction, hasn't even begun yet. No dam is being built tomorrow. But the fight over the PFR reveals something larger: a trust deficit decades in the making.

The river flows as it always has, but the people living beside it find themselves at a crossroads where technical studies collide with emotional realities. Government initiatives promise development, but memories question motives. NHPC hires a PR firm to shape sentiment, and protestors respond with clarity and caution.

In this noisy, complicated landscape, one fact stands out. The future of the Siang will not be decided in an office. It will be decided in the minds of the people.

And right now, those minds are a battleground.

(The name of the PR firm engaged by NHPC has been intentionally withheld, in keeping with editorial integrity. This feature is not intended to question or impede its professional mandate.)

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Prof. (Dr.) Aparna Sharma
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Successful students excel primarily due to their daily habits that intersect with their ability to keep focused, organized, and confident through routine practices rather than cramming before their exams. Top-ranked students maintain their academic progress through ongoing efforts to develop and enhance both their knowledge base and their performance during tests by consistently undertaking purposeful activities daily.

The reason why many of today's top-ranked students earn exemplary marks is their ability to effectively explain and express the information they acquire in a manner that is easily comprehensible. Top-ranked students write with purpose. They express their views clearly and straightforwardly, without burdening unnecessary information. To understand true knowledge as more than simply recalling facts, the method of delivery is just as important as the information, using brief, concise, and structurally sound sentences.

For toppers, every day begins with a clear study plan. They decide what to cover, how much time to spend, and what outcome they expect. This gives direction and prevents confusion. Therefore, instead of jumping randomly between topics, they move with a simple, logical order that helps their mind stay organized.

They also revise daily, even if only for 20–30 minutes. Consistent revision keeps information fresh, therefore reducing exam stress. Toppers understand that forgetting is natural; however, revisiting concepts regularly strengthens memory. This habit allows them to build long-term clarity rather than short-term cramming.

Another habit toppers follow is active learning. This process turns passive reading into active engagement. Toppers also practice writing exactly the way they are expected to write in exams. They start their answers with a direct response in one or two sentences. Then, they place their ideas in a simple and logical order. Using linking phrases like "therefore," "however," and "in addition," they show their reasoning clearly. This flow makes their answers look like explanations rather than disconnected points. Teachers appreciate answers that are easy to read, well organized, and connected smoothly.

Presentation is another daily discipline. Toppers pay close attention to how their work looks. They leave spaces between answers, underline important parts, and use simple diagrams to support the understanding. This neatness reflects clear thinking, therefore helping them score better marks. A well-presented answer often communicates confidence and clarity before the examiner even reads the content.

Toppers also include mock tests in their routine. They solve previous-year papers under timed conditions, which trains them to manage pressure and speed. Regular practice reveals weak areas, therefore allowing them to improve continuously.

They know how to maintain balance; they have short breaks while studying; they also eat nutritious foods, get enough sleep, and maintain a healthy mind. Toppers understand that a calm mind will learn and perform better in any examination as compared to a stressed one.

The best students create a "topper" through developing their daily habits of clarity, discipline, purposeful learning, and so on. Toppers can organize their thoughts clearly and present themselves neatly; therefore, when students consistently use these methods, they not only become high scorers but also become confident and reflective learners.





BROKEN SYSTEM

HOW GOVERNANCE GAPS ARE COSTING INDIAN STUDENTS THEIR FUTURE

Prabhav Anand

In a country where millions of young people clutch their dreams of upward mobility in one hand and admission forms in the other, education is often seen as the great equalizer — a ticket out of poverty, a bridge to a better life. But for many, that ticket is increasingly brittle. Beneath the lofty ideals of access and opportunity lies an education system hollowed out by regulatory confusion, administrative neglect, and chronic under-resourcing. For a vast number of Indian students — especially those from economically weaker backgrounds or small towns — the system is not a stepping-stone, but a trap.

In recent years, reports, audits and on-the-ground realities have exposed how governance gaps in higher education are systematically eroding quality, undermining student welfare, and turning aspirations into uncertainty.

From the sprawling public universities that cannot fill even half their teaching posts to private colleges operating under opaque governance — the problems are deep, structural, and growing. And as policy debates rage over regulatory consolidation or new oversight mechanisms, thousands of students bear the brunt — often silently, sometimes irrevocably.

The Cracks in the Pillars: Regulatory Overlap, Fragmentation & Lack of Accountability

At the heart of India's higher-education woes lies a tangled web of regulatory authorities: bodies such as the University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), along with state governments — each with overlapping or conflicting mandates.

Private colleges offering engineering courses may need approvals from AICTE, recognition from UGC, and affiliation or oversight from their state higher-education department. This duplication of compliance — multiple inspections, contradictory requirements,

layers of paperwork — doesn't streamline quality; it stifles institutional autonomy, drains resources, and often ends up punishing the institution rather than ensuring real quality.

As one analysis puts it: "We are by and large over-regulated and under-resourced."

But governance problems are not only about over-regulation; they also include lack of clarity, weak accountability, and lax enforcement. For instance, in October 2025, UGC sent notices to 54 private universities across India for failing to comply with new public self-disclosure guidelines — rules introduced in June 2024 requiring institutions to post key information (courses offered, faculty strength, infrastructure details, finances) on their websites for public access.

Transparency — the bedrock of accountability — remains a luxury rather than a norm. Without accessible data, prospective students and parents are forced to rely on promises, pamphlets, and hearsay. Many institutions continue to operate under regulatory uncertainty, even as they raise fees, expand seats, or launch new courses — often with little to no infrastructure or qualified faculty.

This regulatory fragmentation has long-term consequences: when no single body is clearly responsible for oversight, when mandates overlap or conflict, when accreditation can be manipulated — then quality becomes negotiable. Students pay the price.

Broken Classrooms, Empty Chairs: Infrastructure and Faculty Shortfalls

Beyond regulation lies another grim reality: many institutions — especially government-run state public universities (SPUs) and lesser-known private colleges — are simply unable to provide the basic conditions necessary for a credible education.

According to a 2025 report by NITI Aayog, SPUs — which enrol approximately 81% of India's higher education students — are facing severe faculty shortages and outdated infrastructure. The report found that over 40% of faculty positions remain vacant, and only around 10% of SPUs have well-equipped research facilities.

In a country with over 1,084 universities and 42,343 colleges (as per AISHE 2020–21 estimates), such shortfalls multiply across thousands of classrooms, labs, libraries and hostels.

What this means on the ground: students attend dark or overcrowded classrooms; laboratories lie bereft of functional equipment; libraries are understaffed or poorly maintained; hostels — if available — are cramped, unhygienic, or under-resourced. For many rural or economically disadvantaged students, such institutions are their only realistic option for higher education — but the education they receive is often a pale shadow of what was promised.

Moreover, the imbalance in investment is glaring. While elite institutions receive greater attention and funding, the majority of colleges struggle to stay afloat, let alone upgrade infrastructure or invest in research.

As a result, whether education becomes an engine of mobility — or a conveyor belt of disappointment — increasingly depends on location, background, and chance.

When Accreditation Becomes a Charade: The Failure of Quality Assurance

Accreditation and quality evaluation, ideally, are safeguards — ways to ensure that institutions meet basic standards in teaching, infrastructure, faculty, and student welfare. But in India, even these safeguards have come under fire.

A 2025 scandal involving fake or manipulated accreditation — where officials from NAAC and university staff were arrested in connection with bribery — starkly exposed the rotten underbelly of peer review. In that case, a university managed to secure a high grade, even while its academic and infrastructural standards were reportedly compromised.

This is not an isolated lapse. Because accreditation and recognition are handled by different bodies (NAAC for quality grading, UGC for recognition, state governments for establishment and governance), an institution might receive a clean bill on paper while being deeply dysfunctional in reality.

For students — especially the first generation in their families to attend college — the consequences are grave. They invest time, effort, and often significant money (in fees, in travel, in using their limited resources). They graduate — or attempt to — with degrees whose value is questionable. When an employer asks for evidence of quality, or looks for skills, many discover that their "accredited" degree offers little beyond nominal legitimacy.

The broken accreditation system transforms credibility into a lottery — one that many underprivileged students cannot afford to lose.



The Silent Erosion of Academic Output, Relevance and Employability

Even when institutions remain formally compliant, regulatory burdens and structural neglect stifle academic vitality. A persistent lack of funds, poor infrastructure, minimal faculty support, and weak research incentives combine to create a stultifying environment where learning becomes rote, curricula remain outdated, and graduates emerge without relevant skills.

A 2025 evaluation of computing courses across leading Indian institutions found that only about 2.2% syllabi included any meaningful content on AI ethics — despite the growing relevance of technology and ethics in today's world. This signals a larger problem: even when institutions offer "modern" courses in fields like computer science, they often lag global standards in content, context, and pedagogical depth.

The disconnect between what students learn and what the job market demands widens. Graduates — many from modest or rural backgrounds — find themselves ill-prepared for real-world challenges. Soft skills, critical thinking, practical exposure, industry-relevant training — all are conspicuously missing in many places.

For a student who enrolls hoping for social mobility, the result can be disillusionment: a degree that opens no doors, a debt that remains a burden, and opportunities that dwindle.

When Governance Fails Student Welfare: Hostels, Health, Grievances

It is not only academic quality that suffers; student welfare — arguably the moral responsibility of any educational institution — is increasingly being neglected. Recent events have laid bare how alarming and widespread this neglect can be.

Just days ago (November 2025), a probe into VIT University, Bhopal — a private institution hosting some 15,000 students (12,000 of them hostellers) — revealed "serial neglect" in addressing student grievances, insufficient medical infrastructure, and a pervasive atmosphere of fear that dissuaded students from speaking out.

The report documented alarming conditions: poor sanitation, sub-par food, insufficient medical arrangements — factors which, in one instance, apparently contributed to a jaundice outbreak among students.

These are not aberrations — they are symptoms of a system where institutional accountability is weak, oversight is patchy, and profit motives often overshadow student welfare. Hostels, health care, grievance redressal mechanisms — facilities that should be basic — end up being luxuries or afterthoughts.

For many students, especially those from small towns or economically weak families, such institutions were meant to offer hope — a path to education and social mobility. Instead, they find themselves trapped in cycles of neglect, financial stress, and institutional apathy.

Financial Stress, Uncertainty — The Hidden Cost for Poor & Marginalised Students

Quality education — even when available — often comes at a cost. Private institutions, fee hikes, hidden charges, coercive admissions — these are realities many underprivileged students face. Without transparent fee structures or clear disclosure of finances, colleges operate in grey zones, exploiting students' desperation to study. (aiu.ac.in)

Meanwhile, many public institutions — the few affordable options for low-income students — suffer from chronic funding shortages. For example, the funding disparities highlighted by NITI Aayog and other reports make it clear that state universities struggle to maintain infrastructure, research support, or faculty quality.

The result: students from poor or marginalised backgrounds often end up with a sub-standard education, or drop out altogether. The promise of upward mobility dwindles. When job prospects are bleak, debts linger, and social mobility stalls, the cycle of inequality persists — sometimes, gets worse.

The Human Faces Behind the Numbers

Behind every data point is a student — often anxious, hopeful, uncertain. A girl from a small town who worked nights to afford college fees;

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a first-generation graduate whose family sacrificed to send her to "a good university"; a hostel-dwelling student away from home for the first time, trusting the institution to care for their health and safety.

When the institution fails — when classes are empty, teachers absent; when labs have no equipment; when medical care is insufficient; when accreditation is suspect — the cost is real. It shows up in dropout rates, in compromised learning, in lost dreams.

In recent times, when audits and reports reveal these failures, the institutions often scramble — issuing statements, promising reforms. But for many affected students, such promises arrive too late. Once a batch passes out, once a degree is delayed or discredited, once trust is broken — the damage is done.

Why This Matters — For the Nation, Not Just Individuals

India is at a critical juncture. With one of the largest young populations in the world, the promise of a demographic dividend rests squarely on education. But quantity alone won't deliver. If students emerge from colleges unprepared, uninspired, poorly skilled — the dividend becomes a liability.

A system riddled with regulatory inconsistencies, weak governance, underfunding, and institutional neglect undermines not just individual futures, but national ambitions. Research output remains dismal, innovation suffers; social mobility stalls; inequality deepens.

Worse, it risks eroding trust in institutions: if accreditation can be bought, transparency skipped, oversight evaded — the very idea of merit-based education loses meaning.

In a democracy, education should be a beacon of fairness, of equal opportunity. But when governance fails — when institutions become opaque, profit-driven, detached from purpose — education ceases to be a ladder. It becomes a maze.

What Must Be Done — More Than Cosmetic Fixes

Fixing this broken system requires more than incremental reforms; it requires structural rethinking. Some necessary steps:

- Unified, transparent regulatory architecture: Fragmentation must end. Whether via a reformed single regulator or tightly coordinated bodies — regulations must be clear, accessible, and accountable. Accreditation, recognition, finances, governance — all must be transparent and open to public scrutiny.
- Adequate public investment — especially for state and rural colleges: Reports like that of NITI Aayog show the need for increased funding. The goal should not simply be access, but quality — infrastructure, faculty recruitment, research support, student welfare.
- Strict enforcement of disclosure norms: Institutions must publish details about courses, faculty strength, finances, infrastructure — easily accessible to students and parents. Non-compliance should have real consequences.
- Focus on welfare, not just academics: Hostels, health facilities, grievance redressal, student support services — must be non-negotiable. Universities should be accountable for student safety and wellbeing, not just for results on paper.
- Reforming accreditation and quality assurance: Peer-review, external audits, transparent evaluation of institutions — need overhaul. Accreditation should reflect ground realities, not just paperwork and pay-offs.
- Bridging academia — industry — community divide: Curricula must be updated, research promoted, industry collaboration encouraged. Education should prepare students for life — not just exams.
- Empowering students and civil society with information: Transparency is not just a regulator's job but a public right. Students, families, communities must be able to access credible information to make informed choices.

For millions of Indian students — especially those from economically weaker backgrounds, small towns, marginalized communities — education is more than aspiration. It is hope. It is the promise of dignity, mobility, a better future.

But when the system meant to deliver that promise is broken — fractured by policy confusion, neglect, corruption and indifference — hope is sapped away, quietly.

As a nation, as policymakers, as citizens, we must ask: when did access become more important than quality? When did expansion trump excellence? When did accountability become optional?

The cracks are visible now. The warnings are loud. The stories of pain, lost potential, wasted years are real. If we do not act — not with bandaids, but with structural reform — the cost will be borne not by institutions, but by youth: a generation betrayed.

Perhaps it is time we stop measuring success by how many seats we create — and start measuring it by how many futures we safeguard.

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FROM GURUKUL TO GLOBAL CLASSROOMS

REIMAGINING INDIA'S ANCIENT TEACHING SYSTEM FOR MODERN EDUCATION

Prabhav Anand

Education is not merely the transmission of information. It is the shaping of character, the nurturing of wisdom, and the preparation of human beings to live deliberately, purposefully, and ethically. In today's world of competitive exams, digital learning tools and standardized tests, one ancient Indian educational model — the Gurukul system — offers lessons that remain not only timely but transformative.

The Roots: What Was the Gurukul System?

Long before modern schools, universities, and hierarchical curricula were conceived, India had an education system that was holistic, rigorous and deeply personal. The Gurukul system was based on residential learning, where students — known as shishyas — lived with their teacher (guru) in an ashram-like environment. Education was not limited to books or classrooms, but emerged from life itself: daily chores, service, contemplation, and direct mentorship.

In this setting, young learners studied a wide range of subjects: from Vedic scriptures, grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy to mathematics, astronomy, medicine, arts, warfare, and governance. Practical training was integrated with intellectual inquiry. As one academic study observes, "education in Gurukuls encompassed the art of living, social responsibilities, moral values, and comprehensive self-development."

Importantly, the guru–shishya relationship was deeply sacred and built on trust and mutual respect. A student's learning did not end with memorization of facts but extended to character formation, discipline, self-restraint and service — dimensions often missing in contemporary schooling.

Pedagogy of the Gurukul: Mentorship, Immersion, and Life Lessons

Gurukul education stressed immersive and experiential learning. Students lived in the same space as their teachers and learned through active participation — serving, observing, questioning, and reflecting — rather than from rote memorization alone.

This model created a mentorship dynamic far more intimate than most modern teacher–student interactions. Today, many educators are rethinking mentorship and personalised learning, recognizing that students learn best when learning is connected to their lives and passions. The Gurukul model anticipated this, embedding learning in every moment of daily living.

Just as project-based and inquiry-driven methods are gaining prominence in modern pedagogy, the Gurukul system used real tasks and problems as learning vehicles. The effect? Students became thinkers, doers, and responsible citizens — qualities that remain essential in the 21st century.

Why Gurukul Ideas Matter Today

Despite modern schooling's remarkable advancements — from digital classrooms to global connectivity — many educators admit that something important is missing: a sense of purpose beyond grades and career placement.

Consider this: according to OECD data, a majority of students across 72 countries report experiencing significant stress related to academic performance and testing anxiety. Many say they feel anxious even when prepared. This underscores a wider flaw — education systems that prioritize exam success over wellbeing and meaning.

Here is where Gurukul limitations (not its curriculum, but its value-centric intent) are instructive. Its focus was on building complete individuals — intellectually agile, morally grounded, emotionally resilient and socially responsible.

A 2025 academic study called the Gurukul system "a perfect example of a holistic learning approach," highlighting principles such as community living, experiential learning, and ethical upbringing that remain profoundly relevant today.

Modern Education: Achievements and Gaps

Today's mainstream education, especially in India, has evolved tremendously. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes foundational literacy and numeracy, holistic multi-disciplinary learning, flexible curricula, and skill development.

Yet, numerous gaps remain. India's schools, spanning rural and urban areas, still struggle with uneven infrastructure, teacher vacancies and learning disparities. According to recent UDISE+ data, India's teaching workforce exceeds 1 crore, but more than 1 million positions remain vacant — with impacts felt especially in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

While modern schooling is great at delivering structured knowledge and preparing students for formal careers, it often neglects moral education, character-building and lifelong values. And this is precisely where the Gurukul philosophy is being rediscovered and recontextualized.

Revival and Relevance: Where Tradition Meets Modernity

Several contemporary initiatives reflect a renewed interest in Gurukul-inspired learning:

- State-level education forums have pointed to the importance of value-based training alongside academic knowledge, advocating blends of modern methods with traditional ethos. In Gujarat, leaders have highlighted how institutions with Gurukul elements aim to offer academic rigor and life values together for young learners.
- A groundbreaking policy shift in 2025 opened India's premier institutions — including IITs — to Gurukul-trained scholars without formal degrees, offering fellowships up to ₹65,000 per month and recognizing their depth of knowledge. This move, backed by the National Education Policy's vision of inclusive education, validates traditional learning paths and integrates them with mainstream research.

Such developments reflect a broader acceptance: that traditional knowledge systems are not obsolete relics but sources of insight for modern educational reform.

How Gurukul Principles Are Finding New Expression

Even outside formal Gurukuls, many educational thinkers and schools are adopting components of this ancient system:

- Happiness and emotional intelligence have become explicit parts of curricula, as seen in programs like Delhi's Happiness Curriculum, which teaches mindfulness, critical thinking, and social-emotional skills.
- Some progressive education models increasingly emphasize project-based learning, ethical

awareness, collaboration and community engagement — elements once central to Gurukul life.

- Residential schools and holistic institutions are integrating meditation, physical training, arts and service learning into their offerings — echoing Gurukul values.

Quotations that Resonate Across Time

The ancient sage Chanakya said, "Education is the ornament of prosperity and the refuge in adversity." Though centuries old, this remains a striking reminder that education should equip individuals not only to earn but to endure, adapt and serve.

Modern educators echo this sentiment. Dr. Anita Desai, a renowned teacher and author, notes, "Curriculum without character is like a vehicle without an engine; it looks good but goes nowhere." It's a fitting reflection of Gurukul emphasis on value alongside knowledge.

In the words of NEP 2020, education should aim for the holistic development of learners — intellectual, ethical, social and emotional — a framework that resonates with ancient educational goals even as it champions future-readiness.

Challenges and Skepticism: What Gurukul Revival Must Address

While there is much to admire, reviving or adapting Gurukul practices in today's context isn't without challenges. Critics point out potential limitations: for instance, how to reconcile traditional spiritual orientations with secular, pluralistic societies? How to ensure equitable access across socio-economic groups? And how can age-old methods integrate with digital technologies?

Moreover, Gurukul life involved strict discipline





and ascetic practices that might be difficult to scale in contemporary mass education settings.

Yet, scholars argue that the core principles — mentorship, experiential learning, community and values — can be adapted rather than simply replicated. It's not about returning to a past model, but rather reinventing its spirit for a new era.

The Future of Education: A Balanced Vision

In a globalized world that increasingly demands skills like creativity, collaboration and ethical leadership, the ancient Gurukul system offers more than nostalgia — it offers direction.

Imagine a future classroom where technology aids learning but does not replace human mentorship. Where students are measured not just by test scores, but by their empathy, resilience and contribution to community. Where education is transformative rather than transactional.

As historian and educator Dr. Ravindra Kumar notes: "The Gurukul system was not just a means of knowledge transmission but a way of life — one that equipped students to engage with the world intelligently and ethically."

This, perhaps, is the lesson modern education most urgently needs.

From its ancient ashrams to contemporary classrooms, education must strive to be more than the sum of textbooks and tests. The Gurukul system's emphases on holistic development, mentorship, lived experience and values stand as a beacon for educators everywhere.

Today's challenge is not to recreate the past, but to reinterpret its wisdom for tomorrow's learners — blending the best of Gurukul values with the innovations of modern pedagogy. By doing so, India — and indeed the world — can draw on a tradition that has long nurtured thought leaders, philosophers and change-makers, and chart an educational path that equips students not just to succeed, but to flourish.

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HUSTLE CULTURE 2.0

THE SILENT PRESSURE RESHAPING MODERN MANAGEMENT AND WORKPLACES

As modern workplaces confront evolving employee expectations, legal limits on working hours, and global reforms, India faces a critical moment in redefining productivity, ambition, and sustainable management for the next decade, finds **Pragya Kumari.**

> ***"Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful."***
>
> ***– Albert Schweitzer*** *(Alsatian-German philosopher)*

For more than a decade, hustle culture shaped the way companies operated and how ambitious professionals defined success. It celebrated the individual who worked late, answered emails at all hours, and treated rest as a luxury.

The formula seemed simple. More work meant more growth, both for individuals and the economy. Over time, it became a marker of seriousness within corporate corridors and startup ecosystems.

Today, that model has taken on a new form. It is more polished, more data-driven, and more socially acceptable. Hustle culture 2.0 has emerged as a sophisticated ideology that rewards constant responsiveness, digital visibility, and relentless optimization.

It thrives in a world where technology, remote work, and performance analytics shape almost every aspect of professional life. While it projects an image of self-improvement and efficiency, it silently enforces a culture of uninterrupted work and personal sacrifice.

Yet across India and much of the world, younger workers are increasingly questioning this paradigm. They want ambition without exhaustion and progress without sacrificing health. The tension between these evolving expectations has placed the future of work at a pivotal moment.

The Spark That Reignited a National Debate

In 2023, Infosys founder NR Narayana Murthy reignited the conversation with a remark that quickly became a flashpoint. He suggested that young Indians should dedicate 70 hours a week to work if the country wished to remain globally competitive.

Supporters saw it as a call for discipline and argued that extraordinary effort had driven India's early IT triumphs. Senior leaders who built their careers during an era of scarcity echoed the sentiment, framing long hours as a necessary ingredient for national progress.

However, the response from younger professionals was swift and forceful. Mental health advocates challenged the practicality and ethics of such expectations. Social commentators highlighted the risks of glorifying unsustainable norms.

Many argued that India needed better productivity systems, not longer days. Social media amplified the divide, revealing two contrasting philosophies. One valued time spent. The other valued results were delivered.

The controversy raised deeper questions. How should ambition be measured? What should the modern workweek look like? How can India remain globally competitive without undermining the well-being of its workforce?

The New Architecture of Hustle Culture 2.0

Hustle culture 2.0 operates differently from the earlier version. Instead of overtly glorifying long hours, it builds pressure through constant accessibility, digital performance cues, and the subtle expectation to continuously optimize oneself.

Several shifts have contributed to this transformation.

First, the rise of remote and hybrid work has erased clear boundaries. Homes have become offices. Phones have become constant portals to the workplace. Responsiveness has become a proxy for commitment.

Second, the explosion of productivity tools has created a belief that every minute can be made efficient. AI assistants, workflow dashboards, collaboration apps, time trackers, and communication platforms all promise to improve output. In practice, they often increase the pace of work rather than reduce the load.

Third, the culture of personal branding has pushed professionals to repeatedly demonstrate their achievements, expertise, and value. Visibility is now intertwined with perceived performance. The pressure to appear productive is sometimes as intense as the pressure to actually produce.

Fourth, leadership behaviors continue to reinforce urgency. Late-evening messages, weekend requests, and rapid-turnaround expectations signal the pace at which employees are expected to operate. When such norms are modeled at the top, they cascade through the organization.

The cumulative effect is a workplace where rest feels like a deviation and pausing feels like a risk.

Why Younger Workers Are Pushing Back

Gen Z and early Millennials are challenging the idea that commitment is measured by hours logged. They grew up witnessing rising mental health challenges, changing global workplace norms, and the rapid evolution of technology. They value autonomy, structured flexibility, and emotionally sustainable careers.

They also see global experiments that prove alternative models can work. Iceland's productivity pilot, which tested shorter workweeks, reported improved well-being and stable or increased output. Several European economies maintain strict limits on after-hours communication.

New Zealand has trialed flexible arrangements with positive results. These practices have influenced expectations among younger Indian workers who want to excel without burning out.

Another dimension is inclusion. The expectation of long hours disproportionately affects women and professionals from marginalized backgrounds who often carry additional caregiving or household responsibilities. Critics argue that extreme work culture inadvertently narrows the talent pipeline.

The pushback is not against ambition but against a framework that equates ambition with unsustainable sacrifice.

The Legal Landscape and Its Gaps

India's legislative framework provides clear rules around working hours, wages, and worker protections. The Factories Act of 1948 sets limits on daily and weekly hours.

State-level Shops and Establishments Acts regulate employment conditions in offices, retail spaces, and service sectors. The Code on Wages, 2019, outlines compensation norms, including provisions for overtime.

Courts have consistently reinforced these protections. In a landmark 2015 decision, the Supreme Court held that denying adequate rest undermines the fundamental right to health and dignity. High Courts have also acted against excessive work demands in sectors such as IT, finance, and manufacturing.

However, workplace culture often operates beyond what the law prescribes. Cultural expectations, peer pressure, and leadership norms frequently exceed legal limits.

The Murthy episode exposed this gap between regulation and practice. Stronger implementation, auditing mechanisms, and reporting channels are needed to translate legal protections into everyday reality.

The Human Cost Behind the Screens

Psychologists warn that the pressure embedded in hustle culture 2.0 carries significant mental and physical risks. Chronic stress disrupts sleep cycles, weakens cognitive functioning, and reduces emotional resilience.

Mental health specialists have observed a rise in burnout, anxiety disorders, and depressive symptoms among young professionals who operate under constant performance pressure.

There are physical consequences as well. Persistent headaches, back and neck pain, vision strain, and elevated blood pressure have become common among workers who spend long hours in front of screens.

Remote work has intensified these symptoms by reducing movement and increasing digital dependence.

Digital overload is another growing concern. Constant notifications, perpetual meetings, and the expectation to respond immediately drain attention, reduce deep-focus capacity, and accelerate fatigue. When boundaries are blurred, recovery time diminishes, and emotional exhaustion sets in faster.

Experts agree on one point. Sustainable performance requires structured rest, predictable work hours, and organizational cultures that respect human limits. Without these safeguards, productivity eventually declines, along with innovation and morale.

How Other Economies Are Responding

Countries around the world have experimented with different approaches to balance productivity with well-being. Germany strictly enforces limits on working hours and discourages after-hours communication.

Japan, once known for extreme overwork, has introduced legislative reforms and corporate guidelines to curb excessive hours. South Korea has implemented caps on weekly working time and promoted flexible schedules.

In the United States, while the pressure to perform remains high, many companies are experimenting with hybrid models, mental health benefits, meeting-free days, and autonomy-based management structures.

These examples highlight an important lesson. Cultural norms change when regulation, leadership behavior, and societal expectations align. Productivity does not need to come at the cost of well-being. When employees are rested and supported, output improves and retention strengthens.

What Corporate India Must Rethink

The Murthy controversy served as a reminder that the relationship between work, ambition, and health is shifting. Clinging to outdated expectations risks alienating talent and weakening performance.

Organizations that embed hustle culture at their core may see short-term gains but often struggle with high attrition, declining creativity, and reduced long-term performance.

Corporate India must move toward methods of evaluation that prioritize outcomes rather than hours. Leaders need to set clear boundaries for communication, reduce unnecessary meetings, and model healthy work behaviors. Decision-making speed should not be confused with continuous availability.

Companies also need to use AI and digital tools to reduce repetitive tasks, not amplify demands. Workflows that prioritize clarity, focus, and strategic thinking often outperform those built on urgency and volume.

Retaining talent will depend on creating environments where employees can grow without sacrificing health. It will also require honest conversations about workload distribution, reward structures, and the cultural signals embedded in leadership practices.

Building a Future Beyond Hustle Culture

The path forward requires collaboration between policymakers, employers, and workers. Clearer laws, transparent reporting systems, and stronger enforcement mechanisms can support healthier work environments.

Organizations must align performance management with long-term employee well-being. Workers must feel empowered to set boundaries and advocate for sustainable expectations.

Technology should be leveraged thoughtfully. AI can automate routine tasks, provide insights, and streamline processes. It should reduce the burden on employees, not intensify it.

Most importantly, India's future competitiveness depends on balancing ambition with human sustainability. A workforce cannot innovate or execute effectively when operating at the edge of exhaustion. The next decade will belong to organizations that value strategic output, creativity, and well-being.

Hustle culture 2.0 may appear modern and efficient. Yet behind the polished tools and optimization promises lies a set of pressures that can quietly erode health and long-term productivity.

As expectations evolve and younger workers demand a more balanced framework, India stands at a defining moment. The future of work will be shaped not by how many hours are spent but by how intelligently those hours are used.

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MONTHLY DIGEST

NCERT Forms AI Textbook Team for Senior Classes



NCERT has constituted a dedicated team to develop Artificial Intelligence textbooks for Classes 11–12, marking a major curriculum reform to integrate AI as a core academic subject.

Digital Libraries in 104 Rural Panchayats



Uttar Pradesh announces digital libraries across 104 gram panchayats to expand rural access to digital educational resources and support competitive exam preparation.

Mangalore University Approves Closure of 22 Colleges

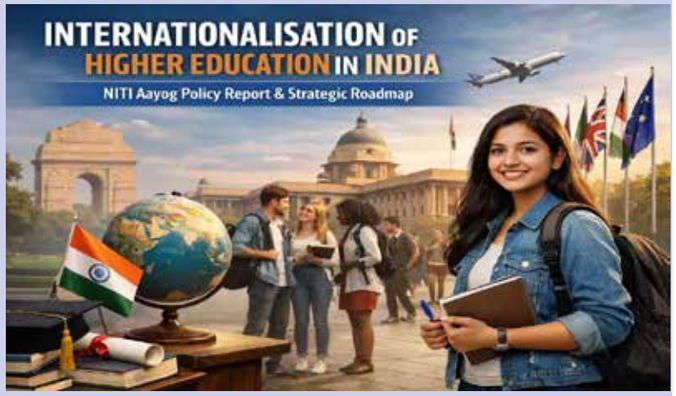
MU's academic council greenlights the voluntary closure of 22 affiliated colleges due to low enrolments, while safeguarding current students' academic progress.

Pariksha Pe Charcha Benefits Highlighted



The national interaction programme focuses on reducing exam stress and promoting holistic learning, now engaging millions of students, parents, and teachers.

NITI Aayog Roadmap to Internationalise Higher Ed



A comprehensive plan proposes "campus within a campus," easing student mobility and encouraging foreign universities to operate inside Indian institutions.

NCERT AI Curriculum Move Signals Early Tech Focus

Government plans include rolling out AI and computational thinking from early school years (from Class 3) across the education system under NEP reforms.

MONTHLY DIGEST

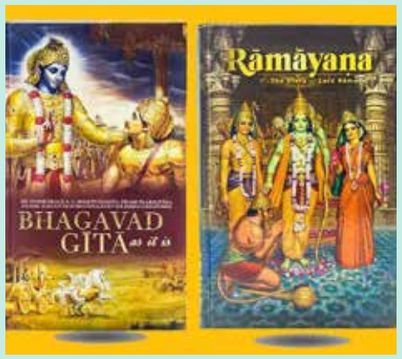
UP Atal Residential Schools to Add Innovation & Tech Labs



Uttar Pradesh announces the creation of innovation labs in Atal schools offering training in drones, robotics, automation, and space science to boost skill education.

Uttarakhand Adds Mythology to School Curriculum

Uttarakhand will include



stories from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* in school syllabi to strengthen cultural learning alongside formal academics.

Focus on Internationalised Higher Education

NITI Aayog's plan promotes foreign higher institutions at Indian campuses and easing exchange, aiming to enhance global academic collaboration.

UNESCO Highlights Mother Tongue & Multilingual Education

UNESCO launches the *Bhasha Matters* report stressing the importance of multilingual and mother tongue instruction across Indian schools.

Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill Introduced



A major reform bill was introduced in Parliament to unify higher education regulation with coordinated standards and autonomy.

Government PAC Review of School Reforms & AI Impact

Parliament Panel reviews key school reforms including coaching centre regulations, AI integration, and infrastructure upgrades under PM SHRI scheme.

Mass Teacher Recruitment in Karnataka

Karnataka plans to recruit 12,000 teachers and expand Karnataka Public Schools, addressing staff shortages and widening access to foundational education.

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Poojya Shri D. Veerendra Heggade
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CMT-2020/69:

Find the value of:

$$\frac{19y^2z^2}{z^{32}-y^{32}}[\{y^{10}+z^{10}+y^2z^2(y^6+z^6)\} \times \{y^{20}+z^{20}+y^4z^4(y^{12}+z^{12})\}] =?$$

if:

1.) $x=\frac{1}{\alpha+\beta+\gamma}+\frac{1}{\alpha-\beta+\gamma}+\frac{1}{\alpha+\beta-\gamma}+\frac{1}{\alpha-\beta-\gamma};$

2.) $y=\frac{1}{\beta+\gamma+\alpha}+\frac{1}{\beta-\gamma+\alpha}+\frac{1}{\beta+\gamma-\alpha}+\frac{1}{\beta-\gamma-\alpha};$

3.) $z=\frac{1}{\gamma+\alpha+\beta}+\frac{1}{\gamma-\alpha+\beta}+\frac{1}{\gamma+\alpha-\beta}+\frac{1}{\gamma-\alpha-\beta};$

4.) $\alpha^4+18\alpha^3-7\alpha^2-1512\alpha-6468=0;$

5.) $\beta^8-244\beta^6+22326\beta^4-907924\beta^2+13845841=0;$

6.) $\left(3\gamma+\sqrt{9\gamma^2-1}\right)\div\left(3\gamma-\sqrt{9\gamma^2-1}\right)$
$+\left(3\gamma-\sqrt{9\gamma^2-1}\right)\div\left(3\gamma+\sqrt{9\gamma^2-1}\right)=826;$

, where $\alpha>0, \beta>0,$ and $\gamma>0$

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Answers:

CMT-2020/67: **51** CMT-2020/68: **2**

Answers will be published in the next issue. You can ask any queries and send your solution to: Email: ganitmath.india@gmail.com, M: +91 8826337312.
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