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DESIGN THINKING: AN APPROACH FOR BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND ACADEMICS**SUDHIR SALUNKHE****DEAN****INSTITUTE FOR FUTURE EDUCATION ENTREPRENEURSHIP & LEADERSHIP
KARLA****SURESH KADAM****ASST. PROFESSOR****INSTITUTE FOR FUTURE EDUCATION ENTREPRENEURSHIP & LEADERSHIP
KARLA****ABSTRACT**

An academic institution conceptualizes many approaches or mechanism for making the teaching-learning process application based. Some of the popular approaches are case studies, industry visits, internships, projects or dissertation exercises. The results of these exercises have been limited for fresher as it is observed that when they join the industry, they start from the basics. Therefore, there is a need for abridging the gap between industry and classroom teaching for management students of all the domains, like marketing, finance, operations and human resource management. The present study is based on application of design thinking as an approach for all the 4 domains of management studies and developing an innovative mechanism for students to learn the application of class room concepts. The study suggests a model based on industry projects by applying Design thinking for the academic institute and industry. The model proposed in this study is tested in a management institute, where faculties and industry mentors were facilitators and teams of 8-10 students in each group worked on live projects for a period of 5-6 months. Students were given one day per week for doing fieldwork being in campus. Students worked on the observations, interviews, stakeholders mapping, secondary research, identifying problems, generating alternative solutions and developing prototype of the given opportunity spaces. The impact of the project was assessed among students and the industry mentors before and after the projects through qualitative interviews. The result suggests that the solution and prototype developed by students were adopted by companies and the students felt themselves very much part of the company. They were able to have insights about the product/service and company for which they worked through the process. This model in-coordination with faculty and industry mentors can bridge the gap between Industry and academics.

KEYWORDS

creativity, design thinking, industry, prototype, teaching.

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M19

BACKGROUND

The role of Management education is very important to develop a comprehensive system of imparting knowledge and training as per the industry. [Aggarwal, 2002] [Mangaonkar, 2010] The knowledge and training should be inclusive of operational perspectives of corporate and the societal obligations of the corporate. An academic institution conceptualizes many approaches or mechanism for making the teaching-learning process application based.

The basics of management studies are attributes to Pre-independence, where colleges at Mumbai and Delhi during 1910-1920 were teaching the basics of commerce, banking, transport, and accounting. However, the first official MBA program was launched in 1950 by the Department of Commerce of the Andhra University in India and first Business School in India was Indian Institute of Social Welfare and Business Management (ISWBM), Kolkata. Further, this course became popular among career aspirants. Many private business houses also started their own business schools later. Students too have different expectations and goals that they want to fulfill [Goodman, 1993]. Students of management courses prefer those institutes, where they can learn specialized skills, expertise and unique experiences, which can make them ready for industrial opportunities.

The management education in India is attracting lot of attention because of two reasons: the changing economic status of the country and the corporate requirement reciprocating to the situation. The corporate is looking for young minds to join the industry, who not only can understand the need of the hour but also visionary and dynamic leaders and team player. They understand that the corporate ecosystem is no more about performing time based duties but to add value at work-place. Corporates are also looking for young minds seeing the trend of global entrepreneurs, professionals and consultants, who are very young. Their innovative approaches have resonated well in keeping pace with existing and emerging global business scenario. The young minds compared to regular workforce in the company can really generate innovative results in many cases.

INTRODUCTION

The corporate representatives are visiting the campuses to hire those individuals, who have not only excelled in the academics but the one who can match to the competencies set for the profile. These competencies vary with respect to domain (Marketing, Operation, Human Resource Management and Finance). Whereas the pedagogy of management studies involves common teaching-learning methodologies like class room teaching, case studies, industry visits etc. The practical exposure and domain specific knowledge comes during 2 months internship for each student during first year and at the end of third semester only. However, industry still considers management graduates as fresh candidate because these exercises are routine based and the trend from industry shows that management students are usually given field based topics like customers' analysis, satisfaction survey or assessing the impact of newly launched/existing product. Neither industry considers internship as business placement nor management institute meet their objectives.

Therefore, it is required that industry gets those young minds, which can add value and management students prove their merit for those opportunities. To identify the tools, which can make the management students industry ready; we took interview of 90 students of first semester of a private management college and asked following question:

In the management studies, which is the best way for making students industry ready?

The responses were categorized in following four parameters:

TABLE 1: RESPONSE OF MANAGEMENT STUDENTS ABOUT EXPOSURE TO INDUSTRY

Sr. No.	Practice	Activities	% of response
1	Industry Based	Industry Visits, Industrial Projects, Guest speakers from Industry, Industry Research	81.11 %
2	Classroom Based	Presentation Skills, Case Studies, Management Games, Personality Development, Public Speaking, Communication, Competitions, Practices, Preparation, Confidence building, Grooming	13.33 %
3	Resources Based	Assignments, Best faculties, Books	5.56%

Therefore, based on the feedback (Table 1), we arrived at a confidence that industrial exposure play the most important role. This can be either Industrial projects or visits also.

There are many conferences and workshops to brainstorm by elite minds of industry and education sector to bridge the gap between industry and education of management studies. However, industry placement and possibilities of getting desired profile is one of the leading causes of stress among management students. In a study, it is found that facing the placement interview is the leading stress factor i.e. about 90 % followed by stress of getting job location with 50% and third preference stressor for about 30% among the students. [Nandamuri, 2014]

Management degrees currently are ranging from Undergraduate, Postgraduate Diploma, Post-Graduate till Ph.D. and the objectives promulgated as a comprehensive management education, which makes individual ready for corporate. The teaching –learning methodologies are based on globally recognized best practices. [Balamurugan, 2017] So, the questions that can be asked based on these inputs are:

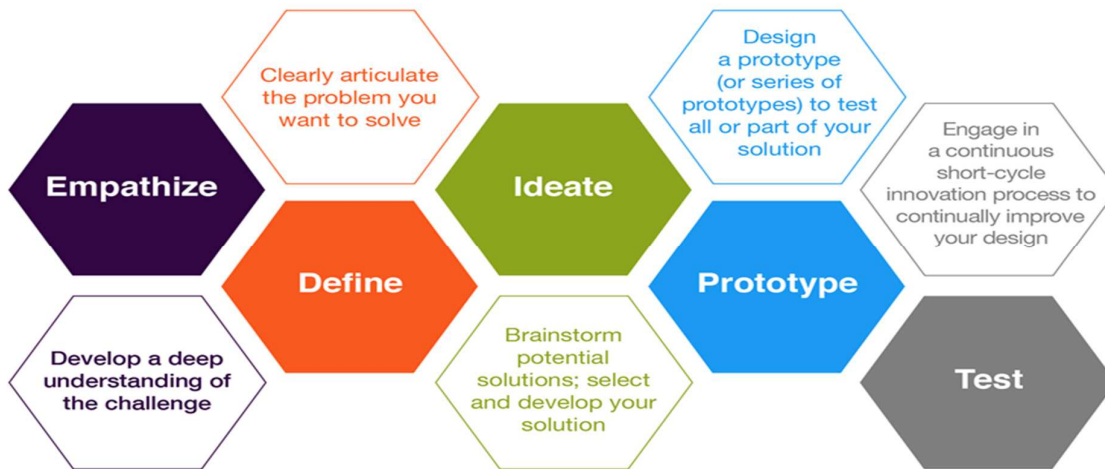
- If, the system follows the basics and advance learning system with virtual industry experience in the management education then why the attrition rate is increasing over the years?
- Secondly, why placement is one of the leading stress factors among the management students?
- Last but not the least, why our management institutes could not get the world ranking even being part of one of the largest education system in the world?

These questions are actually showing the gaps, which are yet unanswered. In our management education to build and nurture the visionary business professionals in the campus itself, there is need for an analysis. This thought leads us to further investigate about companies and their requirements.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Companies are hiring consultants to work for their pain areas or a dynamic solution for their growth rather than relying on their own employees in many cases. The concept of Design thinking is being adopted by many corporate houses e.g. Apple, IBM, Nike, Whirlpool etc. A concept of decision making based on the observations, stakeholders’ mapping, solutions and prototype. [Mishra, 2018] Design thinking is based on the principle that “show, don’t tell”. Design thinking works on democratic process of decision model because team members are promoted to use paste-it notes to write their ideas. No idea is a bad idea and each idea is given equal weightage. [Sarah Gibbons, 2016] There are 5 pillars of design thinking as shown in picture 1 [Illinois, 2018].

PICTURE 1: FIVE PILLARS OF DESIGN THINKING



1. **Empathize:** It is a process of setting the passion among the participants to understand the given situation through empathy. It is the foundation of design thinking to engage and connect the participants to the given problem or subject.
2. **Define:** The given subject should be defined through stakeholders’ point of view. The problem clearly defined can lead to the actual solution and success of the process.
3. **Ideate:** It is process of collecting maximum ideas in the beginning through Paste-it Notes as shown in picture 2. Design thinking promotes the concept of “No idea is a bad idea”. So, each participant is expected to paste his/her idea collectively.

PICTURE 2: PASTE-IT NOTES FOR IDEA MAKING PROCESS IN DESIGN THINKING



4. **Prototype:** Prototype is defined as “the first example of something, such as a machine or other industrial product, from which all later forms are developed”. [Cambridge; 2018] The prototype can be solution or the service model for the given problem as shown in picture 3.

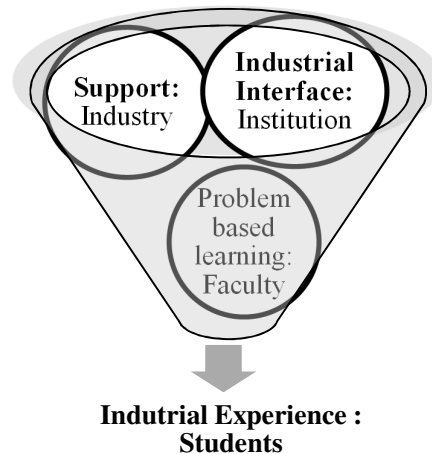
PICTURE 3 & 4: PROTOTYPE MODELS DEVELOPED DURING DESIGN THINKING SESSION (FLAGMODELMAKING, 2018)



5. **Test:** Once the prototype is made, it is the time for testing the same. The test of the prototype is to be done on the sample of population, for which the solution is being suggested.

Steve Jobs has defined design thinking as: *“Design is a really loaded word. I don’t know what it means. So we don’t talk a lot about design around here, we just talk about how things work. Most people think it’s about how they look, but it’s about how they work”*

CHART 1



RATIONALE

The present study is about exploring the options of making these budding professionals actually understand and live a real life of a corporate professional by demonstrating the skill sets in the campus. Enabling campus as an experimental laboratory, where these students are as experimental models. The error exhibited in campus can be corrected and the learning should be with them throughout.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To develop a model for industry exposure for engaging students and building effective relations with industry.
2. To include the proposed industrial exposure model within the given syllabus with respect to time and credits.
3. To develop an effective evaluation system for assessment.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive research, where 4 groups comprised of 10 students each have been formed. Each group was given one project in consultation of 4 different industries. These groups were under direct supervision of 4 faculty members and 4 industry mentors respectively to facilitate the assigned projects. The projects were given the time-line as follows:

GANTT CHART

CHART 2

Activities	Oct'14	Nov'14	Dec'14	Jan'15	Feb'15	March'15
Opportunity Space given						
Training Module for self-awareness for team						
Cognitive skills training						
Life Journey Mapping						
Team Charter						
Trend, Audience and Domain						
Observation						
Stakeholder mapping and Field observation exercises						
Hero's Journey and Visioning						
Learning Curve						
Insights and Reflections						
Empathy in the action						
Opportunity statement						
Solution and prototype						
Testing Prototype						

Opportunity Space: The teams were given Opportunity Spaces by leading companies in Retail and Healthcare industry. The mentors from the company explained the projects to the students and defined the expectations at the end of the project.

APPLICATION OF DESIGN THINKING

TABLE 2

S. N.	Pro-cesses	Design Thinking Tools and Activities
1	Empa-thize	<p>Self-awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Identity Maps (Given, Chosen, Core) to understand the self • Mental models (Growth mindset and Close mindsets) • Emotional intelligence and Mindfulness • Life Journey Mapping • Mission, Vision, Forming and Norms of the team • Hero's Journey and Visioning <p>Cognitive skills training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 360-Degree approach: Learning through orange activity • Understanding the learning Curve and relation with Life Journey • Asking 5 Whys to take intensive observation • Difference in Sympathy and Empathy. Why Empathy, Demonstration in action
2	Define	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each team defined their Trend, Audience and Domain (TAD) at this stage. • They conducted secondary research to define the subject based on the available knowledge and research through internet and books. • Students contacted their stakeholders' as per TAD analysis and designed the interview questionnaire. • Each team visited these stakeholders or contacted them through telephone to do stakeholder mapping. • The secondary and primary research data was analyzed to arrive at 3 opportunity statements in the beginning. • Throughout this 3 months' time students were guided by respective faculty mentors for the academic inputs and by industry mentors for application of the facts found during the stakeholders' mapping.
3	Ideate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tools "traffic signal" is taken here for promoting participants to generate as much ideas as much they can. • Green light phase for all the ideas to transfer to the paste it, • Yellow light phase is to transfer only feasible ideas above the line and • Red light phase is to vote of best 3 -5 ideas among all the selected ones during yellow light. • Further the idea chosen can be discussed for build, between beyond to make it practical and applicable for the given problem. • The idea emerged out of the above activities is the solution of the given problem by the industry.
4	Proto-type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each team is taught about the types of prototypes and mediums to present the prototype in this stage. • The students collectively defined two mediums to display their prototypes. One through story boarding and other through role play during the session. • Later each team was asked to make posters, 90 seconds' video and one 5 minutes timed presentation to be presented in front of external judges (leading industry persons invited by the college as guests).
5	Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last but not the least is about testing of prototype in the representative sample population to test the feasibility and practical aspect of solution found for the given problem. • After confirmation from the industry mentor now in this stage team present the poster, video and presentation to the jury members. • The best team is rewarded based on pre-defined parameters by the college, which includes the team work, solution proposed, video, posters, and feedback of the industry and judges.

After the whole project students, faculties and industry mentor were asked for their feedback to check the result of the model.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Project 1	Project 2	Project 3	Project 4
Opportunity spaces			
To design the employee engagement to improve the employees' retention	To design a health care institute based on the needs of Mumbai's residents by identifying the improvement in the procedure and expectation from employees in the proposed hospital.	Opportunities to improve the Brand image position in the market by employee engagement	Providing Bonding Solutions to deep Rural areas through Self Sustaining Channels of two way information exchange.
Trend, Audience and Domain			
Trend: 75% of the employees leave their jobs due to Seniors Audience: Retails stores, employees, customers, suppliers, vendors, Regulatory bodies etc. Domain: Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Pune	Trend: Costly services, Indifference of Hospital Employees. Audience: Hospitals, employees, Patients, suppliers, vendors, Regulatory bodies etc. Domain: Mumbai and Navi Mumbai	Trend: Heavy traffic in Mumbai, Critical patients to be transported to hospital Audience: Hospitals, Ambulance drivers, Patients, suppliers, vendors, Regulatory bodies etc. Domain: Mumbai and Navi Mumbai	Trend: Awareness about product is low Audience: villagers' suppliers, vendors, etc. Domain: 20 villages near Pune
Stakeholder mapping and Field observation exercises			
Interviewed at 15 stores (280) across the city Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Pune	Interviewed Hospital staff, patients, family, vendors, suppliers at Mumbai and Navi Mumbai	76 Ambulance drivers, 35 cab drivers, 20 auto drivers, doctors, patients, families	20 villages, 180 interviews, 561 observation, 154 unique observation
Insights and Reflections			
Lack of leadership qualities in managers, Communication gap among employees and managers.	Waiting time, Self-medication, influenced by family friends while choosing healthcare, Lack of awareness	92 % cases cardiac arrest patients die on the way to hospital The heavy traffic and unprofessional staff at ambulance to carry patients	Shopkeepers suggest only when customer asks. Customers buy from other customers' feedback. People don't see many problems as a problem. Retailers keep only fast moving products.
Opportunity statement			
Enhance leadership at workplace	How to reduce waiting time in care plan of a proposed hospital	Opportunities to improve the Brand image position in the market by engaging employees	To find an innovative and interactive medium which can educate consumers about different usage of products.
Solution and prototype			
X Model of engagement	5S model	Basic Life Support training to the Ambulance Drivers	Identify and set up a representative from the village who acts as the bridge between company and the consumers.
Testing Prototype			
Selection of 3 leaders and their team. Phase 1: Case discussion, Phase 2: Games, Phase 3; gathering feedbacks, phase 4: Transformation of perception.	5S (sort, straighten, shine, standardize and sustain) model was found to reduce 90 mins waiting to 55 mins during testing.	The prototype was tested by training one ambulance driver for BLS and checked his feedback	Respectable Local person / Retail shop person was identified and given responsibility to spread the awareness about the product.
Feedback of Industry Mentor			
This was an engaging activity as working with young mind and zeal requires focus and dedication.	The solution based on the work done by the students was considered by the hospital for their operational activities.	The experience was remarkable.	The academic inputs received during the projects are really helpful.
Feedback of Faculty			
The project gave exposure to students about the stakeholders and their influence to the business.	This experience is unique which made the students sensitive about team, leadership, empathy, observation skills etc.	It engages students and faculties throughout and very interesting.	The design thinking makes students think from 360 degree and they evolve as mature and balance individual.
Feedback of students			
The processes of Design thinking are interesting. It helped us to work closely with Industry for 6 months.	It is a comprehensive project, different than class room lecture and internship. It made us confident and engaged throughout.	The association with the industry during this period gave us also a feel of working in industry issues directly.	The 6 months' journey of Design Thinking is remarkable and will help us for placement. We felt happy to work on live project.

CONCLUSION

Studies show that Design thinking is a flexible approach and promotes participative management. The working team in this study comprised of a group with heterogenic aptitude and background because the project requires multidimensional ideas. Also the project on which design team is working can be given a flexible date and time to arrive at a logical conclusion. The solutions proposed by all these 4 teams are successfully launched by the respective companies and also students. This approach can make students learn about industrial practices by virtue of given opportunity spaces. On the other hand, the industrial exposure during the campus studies spread over a 5-6 months' time as live projects is very interesting for them. Therefore, the proposed model where students can be first given a comprehensive training about design-thinking followed by project work which can be assigned by corporate with flexibility to arrive on some optimal solution in this period can certainly bridge the gap between industry and academics. Students can work on challenge statements assigned by corporate through 360-degree stakeholders mapping and develop respective prototype and test it for its applicability and optimization.

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