

International Conference on Improving University Teaching

L.R.S.Mani
lrsmani@gmail.com

Teaching Learning Process Reengineering – With Specific Reference to Management Education

ABSTRACT

More often, the decision makers from the industry are not all that delighted when they visit Management Education Institutes for Placement. The industry, institute and the students can be treated as sides of an equilateral triangle. All three are equally responsible for this kind of scenario.

The author proposes thorough revamp of entire process. It starts with reverse communication from industries to institutes and meaningful participation from industries. The author also proposes more fun and humor filled teaching. The class timings need to undergo a drastic change. A model with emphasis on a strong III is outlined in this paper.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of reengineering has pervaded literally every field and domain. Higher education and specifically Management education is no exception. The amount of opportunities is so immense that there is scope for bringing about drastic changes in the whole teaching learning process. The opportunities can be taken advantage of only if radical changes and breakthrough innovation are brought about in the current scenario of Management education. Reengineering looks into all possible combinations of resources to bring about drastic changes in the utilization of these resources. The basic motivations for reengineering are the three Cs – Customers, Competition and Change.

An attempt is made in this paper to study in detail the various reengineering practices that can be adopted to change the way we look at Management education, especially with respect to the Indian scenario.

TEACHING LEARNING RELATIONSHIP

The relationship of teacher, learner and content varies from one teaching-learning environment to another. The traditional methods and modern technological tools should be optimally combined to fit the learning environment.

A total rethinking of teaching and learning is required which will affect the roles and responsibilities of the students, teachers and administrative staff. Ultimately, it is a question of effective and efficient use of various resources to result in the holistic development of students to readily fit into the industry environment.

The students are both internal customers and final products. They are to be treated as internal customers as they actively participate during the process. Once they are molded to be ready for assuming assignments in corporate organizations, they become the finished products of that particular institution of which they were an integral part for a period of two years.

As we can see from the above, it is all about creation and addition of value at each stage, while ensuring innovation on a continuous basis.

Edward Deming's principles, under the rubric of Total Quality Management, require a business or institution to evaluate processes at each stage in order to achieve maximum efficiency and stakeholders' satisfaction.

RE-ENGINEERING

Reengineering is basically reinvention of the institution right from scratch in the light of the changing environment. It is shedding all old systems, go for a restart and find better ways of doing things.

Reengineering is the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of the various processes with the view to achieve dramatic improvements in critical, contemporary measures of performance such as cost, quality, service and speed.

By fundamental is meant that things should not be taken for granted. Many rules and assumptions embedded in various processes may now be out of place. Hence one needs to look at the fundamental level i.e. right from the beginning.

The concept of radical says that superficial tinkering or cosmetic changes will not work and may not result in great improvements. There is a need to go to the root of the things and have to attempt a total reinvention.

By dramatic is meant that there is a need to go in for quantum jump in performance. Marginal improvements made by fine tuning will not achieve the purpose.

As regards processes, a distinct shift is required from task orientation to process orientation. A business process consists of a series of interrelated and interdependent activities requiring various inputs and creating outputs which provides value to all the stakeholders.

Reengineering, therefore, has to start on a clean slate. It has to do away with time honored assumptions and bid good-bye to conventional ways of doing things.

In the management education scenario, three categories of organizations need to go for reengineering. First, those institutions which are in deep trouble in terms of falling admissions fall in profitability and low stakeholder satisfaction levels. Second are those institutions which foresee trouble in the near future. Third are the institutions now healthy but would like to take proactive measures for improving to a more robust health in future.

The success or failure of reengineering is heavily dependent on top management commitment. Those who embark upon reengineering, with understanding, commitment and a strong desire to implement the same are sure to succeed at their reengineering efforts.

Reengineering requires a leader with a proper vision and the ability to motivate the others in his/her team, a reengineering Czar who supports and coordinates the reengineering activities, a steering committee for deciding the priorities and for resource allocation and finally a reengineering team to implement the reengineering process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stahlke (1997) has brought out the fact that TQM and its variants have brought to universities a new awareness of overall accountability, although such metrics have been applied more often to administrative processes than to academic processes. He also talks about the main difficulty lies in the sense of clear analogs between industry and universities.

Twigg (1992) argues that campus-based lecture mediated education limits the access for education and she foresees replacing the campus-based infrastructure with an infrastructure that is entirely electronic and hence accessible to a larger audience. She also argues that higher education must reengineer in order to improve productivity and to serve broader constituencies.

Vivekananthamoorthy (2009) talks about the role of IT which has enormous potential to improve dramatically the teaching learning process. He also talks about the application of Kaizen, Six Sigma and e-learning. According to him, the emphasis is shifting from instruction paradigm to learning paradigm and a learner centric approach will promote active learning.

TEACHING LEARNING PROCESS REENGINEERING

We need to consider all aspects of management education to decide the scope and area for reengineering. The various areas amenable for reengineering can be summarized as follows:

1. People – involvement of students, teachers and administrators.
2. Government support – separate task force with private partners.
3. Time Orientation
4. Collaboration – with industry.
5. Globalization – Benchmarking the best practices in other countries.
6. Private accreditation bodies
7. Voluntary associations
8. Ethical practices
9. Independent audit
10. Use of IT – Virtual Classrooms

Role of various sections of people

In Services Management, we talk of the extended 3 Ps – People, Process and Physical Evidence. In the education services also, these 3 Ps play a very important and significant role. When we talk of people, the main categories are Students, Teachers, Administrators and Industry Representatives. Unless all these people work in unison and meaningfully participate in the teaching learning process, the effectiveness and efficiency cannot be achieved. It is easily possible for all these people to come together on a common platform with a single minded goal to achieve holistic development of the students ready to start their own enterprise or contribute in the industry where they decide to make their career.

The basic features of service industry are 'Inseparability' 'Simultaneous Production and Consumption' and 'Intangibility'. By 'Simultaneous Production and Consumption' is meant that it is not produced and kept in stock and consumed later. In the Education scenario, both students and faculty need to consciously participate during the process. A genuine effort is required on the part of teacher to reach the minds of majority of the students present.

The students need to reciprocate with their open mind to receive the inputs. Both parties must be able to recognize the point which is inhibiting further movement in the process and be ready to change tracks for a temporary period. Rigidity and bureaucracy will not work. Flexibility is the keyword.

Inseparability signifies that the 'service' and 'Service Provider' cannot be separated. In as much as one opts for the same driver when ordering a taxi from a travel agency or wanting the same person to attend while going to a beauty parlor students are also more comfortable with a particular teacher than another teacher. The teacher and his / her service cannot be separated. It is possible for students and move so for the teachers to identify over a period the factors and parameters that can bend them together. Only when bonding takes place, meaningful and effective interaction occurs.

Intangibility means something which cannot be touched or seen etc. in the case of Education, it can and should be interpreted differently. The various sense organs can be put to effective use. The eyes can be used to ensure effective eye contact which can result in better communication. The ears of the students need to be sharp enough to overcome the barriers to communicatory. The teachers through their genuineness and expertise should be able to touch and penetrate the minds of the students. Although intangibility also implies measuring difficulties or less quantifiability, it is possible to design and implement some measures which will gauge the relative performance of different teacher for the same set of students.

Let us now dwell a bit on TQM. Who says that TQM is applicable only to manufacturing organizations? TQM has basically evolved from 'Inspection' to 'Quality control' to Quality Assurance' to 'Quality Management' to Total Quality Management.' Inspection is more of detection and takes place after the event. Quality control is an activity that happens during the process. Quality Assurance is all about provision of all resources for the process and periodic audit of the same which gives confidence or Assurance to the customers that their requirements will be met. Quality Management is all about managing the entire process in terms of Quality. TQM is all about extending the concept and culture of Quality across all functional processes, all levels and all units of the organization. TQM ultimately is all about TSS-Total Stakeholders Satisfaction.

Let us relate the above to the Education scenario. If there are continuous lecture sessions right through the semester and a final examination at the end to decide Pass/Fail, then it is only 'Inspection' activity taking place. If the students are asked to make presentations about the concepts learnt and periodical Quiz, MCQ tests and other internal tests are conducted, the process can be gauged and monitored and that is 'Quality Control'.

If all facilities such as proper classrooms with ergonomically designed furniture, LCDs, Smart Boards etc are made available, it gives an assurance to the prospective students that they can expect Quality education. This is termed 'Quality Assurance'. If the culture and philosophy of total quality is inculcated across all personnel in the institute, one can say that TQM is being attempted and practiced in that institution.

Government Support

One of the most neglected ministries in the Government of India is the HRD Ministry. Kapil Sibal started off with great enthusiasm in the HRD Ministry but later got totally immersed in the Telecom and hence lost focus. Different political parties have come and gone but Education has not been given due importance.

A strong Private Public Partnership is the need of the hour. A Task Force should be setup immediately involving government officials, educationists, industrialists and philanthropists. The Task Force should study in great detail and come out with a Policy Framework. They should also debate and conclude regarding the entry of foreign universities into India.

Time Orientation

The time of the year for the sessions, examinations and vacations is one aspect. The other aspect is the timing of the lecture sessions during the day. Both these issues need to be addressed too. The timing of the examinations varies from April to June and November to January. It is not uniform right through the country and creates problems in admissions when a child moves from one State to another. April and November are more ideal as June is peak summer in most places and January is peak winter in some places in the country. The productivity is affected during the extreme weather conditions.

The other question is whether the conventional timing of 9 am to 4 pm is really appropriate. 1 pm to 4 pm is perhaps the most non-productive time. Especially for higher education including management education, it is better to start early and finish by 1 pm. The 2 pm to 6pm slot can be effectively utilized for field projects, market research, internships, part time assignments etc. For some periods during the course, the classes could run during the night say 10 pm to 2 am which will prepare the students to face tough situations.

Collaboration with Industry

The professional education institutes such as Engineering Colleges and B Schools can enter into an agreement with few organizations. They can find out their requirements and incorporate the same either in the curriculum or pedagogy or both. A very close co-ordination and interaction is advocated between the Academia and the Industry. A separate function III (Industry Institute Interaction) must be strongly established in all the professional degree colleges. Similarly, a separate function ALI (Academic Linkage Initiatives) should be established in all business organizations. Toyota Kirloskar Motors in Bangalore has a separate team to co-ordinate and organize factory visits for Engineering and Management students.

The faculty members without industry exposure should work in industry for at least 3 months in a year during the non-teaching period. The educational institutions should have industry representatives in their Board of Studies and other Advisory Boards. They should actively participate in the curriculum design as well as delivery methodology. This can result in mutual advantages. The educational institutes can produce industry ready persons and the industries need to spend less time in induction and orientation.

Globalization

A team of experts can visit other countries to study their best practices and benchmark against the same. The education sector should be opened up and FDI should be permitted. Student and faculty exchange programs should be encouraged. Researchers involving students and faculty members across the other borders should be encouraged by the governments of various countries.

Private Accreditation Bodies

ISO Certification has become the basic and common requirement. NAAC and NBA accreditations have their own issues and problems and at best can be used as the starting point. Private accreditation bodies constituted by a team of well-meaning and knowledgeable individuals can do wonders for reforming the education system in the country. CII and IMC in India are trying to do their bit by instituting awards for excellence but need to gear up in a big way.

Independent Audit

All professional educational institutes should mandatorily undergo an audit by a team that consists of people representing all the stakeholders i.e. students, parents, alumni, investors, industry personnel, government officials and social organizations. They should audit all processes including Accounts, Admission process, Placement process etc. The management of the institute should be totally transparent, the record should be clean and all documents should be readily available.

Ethical Practices

While it may not be possible to run the educational institutions as 'Not for Profit' organizations, the Edupreneurs should have a long term vision and not run after short term profits. It is very essential to promote the concept of business ethics right from the initial stages of formation of new ventures.

The Edupreneurs should try and follow simple lifestyle and adopt austere measures right from the beginning. In short, they should Walk the Talk and set the example for the others in the organization to be very ethical, cut down of wastages and set the value system in the organization.

Voluntary Associations

The promotion of voluntary bodies that encourages Edupreneurship will go a long way. NEN – National Entrepreneurship Network in India is an organization doing excellent work by collaborating with professional colleges to create awareness amongst the youngsters. They also encourage and support starting campus companies. They also arrange for mentoring sessions by entrepreneurs. This helps in developing in the students various skills such as risk taking, planning, leadership and communication.

Use of IT

We have seen earlier that Teaching lies almost at the right extreme in the Tangibility Spectrum. It means that lot of intangibility is attached to teaching. The teaching and the teacher cannot be separated. Hence it is just not possible to totally do away with class room teaching by a teacher present there and shift to Virtual Classrooms. But it is definitely feasible to have a proper mix of both. The technology can be leveraged to make available to the students the expertise and knowledge from faraway places. The Administrators should stay updated with the latest developments in technology and try to adopt for the benefit of all concerned stakeholders.

8 POINT PLAN

Based on the points discussed, the author proposes an 8 Point Plan towards reformation.

1. EDP---Set up an Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC) in professional colleges. In the Engineering, Medical and Management colleges, a separate cell should be set up. A senior professor with vast industry and academic experience and having a flair for entrepreneurship should lead this cell. The Head of EDC, besides providing technical support, should also be a mentor and a counselor.
2. FDP—An effective and consistent programme should be designed and implemented for the updation of skills and knowledge of the Faculty members. The effectiveness of the same should be measured at periodic intervals and actions taken based on the same.
3. PTA—it is not a new concept. The Parent Teacher Association has been in existence for long. There is hardly any innovation or change in the format and it is not at all effective. In the higher education scenario, there is no interaction. The parents are too busy and the teachers are not bothered. This needs to be revived and also the latest software available can be put to use which enables the parents to track the progress of their wards.
4. LRC—Learning and Research Center—A full-fledged Research Center is a must in all professional colleges. The faculty members should jointly conduct research with the students and publish their findings in journals and magazines which can reach a wider audience.
5. ECA—for the holistic development of the students, the academic activities need to be reinforced with several extra-curricular activities. The students should be deputed to attend seminars and conferences and also participate in competitions at national and international levels.
6. CDP—Community Development Programs—the students should undertake small projects in the rural areas and educate the society on important issues affecting their daily lives.
7. TSS—the culture of Total Quality Management should be practiced throughout the institution with the single minded purpose of Total Stakeholders Satisfaction. All the stakeholders should learn to work as one single family.
8. PPP—it is not possible to achieve all this either by private institutions or by government institutions acting in isolation. The concept of Private Public Partnership is yet to catch up in the education sector. Both need to come together and on the same platform to achieve reforms.

CONCLUSION

The reengineering of teaching learning process is not just the responsibility of the government or the educationists. Everyone needs to contribute towards the same since the fruits of the reengineering i.e. development of the nation are going to be shared by all citizens of the country. It is indeed the need of the hour. A country's economic growth and wellbeing is very much dependent on the youngsters and a thorough revamp of the Teaching Learning Process has become an absolute necessity.

References

<http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/CEM9649>

<http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/xpl>