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EMPLOYABILITY AMONG MANAGEMENT GRADUATES; A COMPETENCY BASED APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Management education in India is almost six decades old and has come a long way. The discontentment with the outcome of the program has been a continuous worry of all the stake holders including academicians, corporate houses, policy makers in government and students. Management program aspirants are eying at the program as an assured ticket to a high flying professional career, growth, higher salaries, perks and a comfortable life ahead. At the same time the industry is seeking to build human capital as its competitive advantage. Academia has a vital and crucial role to play by producing job ready graduates, which possess the desired skill sets and can give the leverage to the company that they are hired for. Thereby laying a lot of stress on the competencies that are desired by the industry, and working out the curriculum and pedagogy around it. Any professional course is deemed to provide adequate education and training for the person to be able to deliver and perform as soon as he recruited. This saves time and money that has to be invested in training the employees once they are on-board. This paper is an attempt to review time tested approaches and models of competencies and skills required by management graduates. The twin objective of this study is to look at the corporate expectations in terms of competencies and the competencies that need to be included in training management graduates. The study attempts to bring the essence of all the models in a single frame thereby making it convenient to suggest interventions in management curriculum and enhance the effectiveness of the learning process.

KEYWORDS: Management education, Competency, Competency Approaches, Competency based Management education, Employability skills

INTRODUCTION

The word competency has its origins in the Latin word 'Competencia' meaning authorized to judge as well as 'has the right to speak. It was originally used in the field of education to describe trainee – teacher behaviours. In became widely known in the field of management through extensive research. Management theorists applied a functional analysis to define how organizational goals were to be best achieved through improved individual performance.

Competency is the potential that contributes to the achievement of specified (desired) performance. It means an individual's deep and enduring characteristic that is reflected in effective and/or superior behaviours and performance in a job. Competency is an ability of a person, an employee or entrepreneur, to fulfil or surpass the requirements of a job position in order to achieve the expected quality level given the internal and external limitations of a given organisation.

Competing in today's global economy provides additional challenges to management educators in ensuring that management graduates are capable of meeting the industry expectations. The business environment globally is traversing through a rough patch of waters with high speed technological developments, short shelf lives for products and technologies. Information Technology (IT) has increased accessibility, visibility and connection. Customers have become increasingly segmented and demanding. Owners have become more concerned about not only financial results, but also intangibles. Nowadays organizations seek greater creativity and productivity from people. On the other hand management education particularly in countries like India has to gear up to meet the challenges of the change by producing highly competent management graduates. B schools most of the time are engaged in teaching theories and concepts in class rooms and it is high time that the B schools need to take a

fresh look at the current teaching and learning processes. It is important to enhance the managerial competencies among students to enable them to perform their jobs in the most effective way. Keeping this in view in this paper an attempt has been made to present a framework of competency based management education.

Keeping this in view an attempt has been made in this paper to review selected time tested models of competency development and after a thorough study of these models the researchers have brought out a comprehensive competency based management education model.

MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN INDIA

Management education in India has witnessed an unprecedented growth in two decades spanning between 1990 and 2010. During this growth phase several issues related to quality, objectivity and needs of industry were not addressed to desirable levels. The development was just in terms of quantity ie number of Schools. This has resulted in creation of several thousands of unemployable management graduates leading to higher levels of unemployment and underemployment.

A deep dip study reveals that most the MBA program are similar in nature, courses are dominated with teaching theories and concepts in chalk and talk mode. Management teaching pedagogies and tools like case studies, management games, role plays etc are not being used by a majority of B schools in their programs. The evaluation processes are also not tuned to test the students' competencies as future managers.

The researchers attempted to present the management education scenario during the last five years which is remarkably characterised by closing of B Schools in India

year after year. While this is a good sign that the B Schools which are not able to survive in the market are getting closed. It is extremely important for the B Schools to change the navigation of the journey from a tranquil waters of concepts to building competencies among students by adapting new competency development oriented teaching learning processes.

CURRENT SCENARIO OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN INDIA

Management education in India is passing through a critical phase which is witnessing a constant downfall in terms of number of institutes being closed down and decreasing number of new institutions started year on year basis since 2012-13. In fact India needs more management graduates and more number of institutes when we look at growth of the economy and several new companies are being set up.

It is also evident that companies are hiring non-management graduates for various management jobs. The data base of the apex regulator for technical education - All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) reveals the following facts and figure. The number of management institutes has fallen by 632 institutes from 3865 in 2012-13 to 3233 in 2017-18. Total enrolment has slipped from 443282 to 393043 in the same period indicating a down fall of 50000+enrolments.

An interesting comparison of intake and placement figures indicates that in all the years shown in the Table the admission and placement ratio is nearly 4:1 that means 1 student out of 4 admitted is getting placed or 25% of MBA students are getting placement.(Table 1)

Table 1 - Data of AICTE approved Business schools in the country offering Post Graduation in Management

YEAR	Total Institutions	New Institutions	Closed Institutions	Total Intake	Girl's Enrolment	Boy's Enrolment	Faculties	Placement
2012-13	3865	97	42	443282	90641	146356	38737	95191
2013-14	3740	19	62	450866	80306	154025	49757	103178
2014-15	3587	45	42	455097	87819	160443	57477	104431
2015-16	3450	23	65	431578	93032	156862	55434	101776
2016-17	3334	39	79	411826	92114	142207	53888	106022
2017-18	3233	47	35	393043	96224	141665	53605	98327

Source: https://www.aicte-india.org/

The present scenario of management education raises serious questions about various stages in the management education value chain comprising of admissions- teaching learning processes- projects and internships and evaluation which are considered to be the key factors that determine quality of management education.

According to The future jobs report 2018 by World Economic Forum Emerging job roles in India would be in the areas of marketing & sales, channel management, business analysts, operations, human resources specialists, financial analysts and investment advisers. Hence it is important for business educators to focus on developing right kind of intellectual infrastructure who can contribute in building and

enhancing competencies in these emerging areas among management graduates.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Management education in India is perceived to me the most promising career option with attractive financial packages and perks. Expected outcome of this education is to provide industry ready managers with work knowledge. However as the statistics reveal there is a significant gap in the expected outcome and the real one. Thereby giving rise to a lot of discontentment and debate over the issue of competencies skill gap in the management students. In response to this problem our study proposes to investigate several time tested competency models, compare them and arrive at suggestions

for better inclusion of the desired competencies in the curriculum of management programs.

APPROACH FOLLOWED IN THE PAPER

The researchers have carefully studied five time tested models / approaches to derive at an exhaustive list of competencies required by a management graduate. There after they are segregated in seven clusters which will make it convenient to be addressed through training and development interventions. The clusters will also put forth the logical setting of the competencies in the learning process and will act as foundation for development of competency based management education laying stress on mapping competencies to course content and teaching learning processes.

Employability Skills:

All students in higher education need to develop their employability skills. These skills are frequently specified by employers in the job advertisements that they publish to recruit new employees from colleges and universities.

Employability' is the ability to secure, sustain and to progress within the employment. Employability skills are skills that are basic and generic in nature, but very valuable in assisting every person entering the workforce. Some people refer to employability skills as "core skills," "key skills," transferable skills," "general skills," "non-technical skills," and/or "soft skills" (Hofstrand, 1996).

McQuaid & Lindsay, (2005) discuss a holistic perspective to attributes translating to individual's employability. Individual factors, personal circumstances and demand factors are the three components discussed by them.

Competency, Competency Approach & Competency Profiling:

Competence is the ability of an individual to do a job properly. Competency is a set of defined behaviours that provide a structured guide enabling the identification, evaluation and development of the behaviours in individual employees. IBSTPI defines competency as "a knowledge, skill, or attitude that enables one to effectively perform the activities of a given occupation or function to the standards expected in employment" International Board of Standards for Training and Performance Instruction, (2005). Harvard Dictionary of Competencies refer it as "things" that an individual must demonstrate to be effective in a job, role, function, task, or duty. These "things" include job-relevant behaviour (what a person says or does that results in good or poor performance), motivation (how a person feels about a job, organization, or geographic location), and technical knowledge/skills (what a person knows/demonstrates regarding facts, technologies, a profession, procedures, a job, an organization, etc.). A competency includes both means and an end.

The term became quite popular when in 1973 David McClelland a Harvard University psychologist published "Testing for Competence Rather than for Intelligence" in predicting job performance. Boyatzis (1982) in his book on competency model developments propagated the idea of competency being underlying characteristics of a person which have a direct bearing on the effectiveness of the performance.

Figure 1 shows the four-step conceptual learning model adopted by the NCES that illustrates necessary elements and processes for being able to acquire and demonstrate competencies. It is important to note three aspects of the NCES model: (a) the competencies are built upon the foundation of the person's traits and characteristics through selective and collective learning experiences; (b) the assumption is made that each level shown in the model is measurable; and (c) the ultimate goal is to be able to demonstrate the outcomes of learned competencies

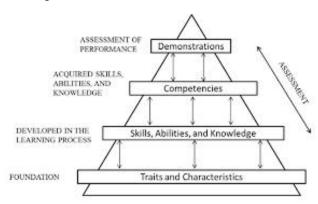


Figure 1: A hierarchy of postsecondary outcomes. From Defining and Assessing Learning: Exploring Competency-Based Initiatives, by the National Center for Education Statistics, 2002, http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002159.pdf, p. 8.

Job-related competencies implicitly refer to a combination of relevant behaviours and qualities necessary to perform a specific job, rather than a set of individual segmented behaviours, which may or may not be closely aligned with the job specifications or requirements. A competency is also learner- or performer-oriented rather than instructor- or manager-oriented.

Harvard University Competency Dictionary gives an overview of competencies that an individual must demonstrate to be effective in a job, role, function, task, or duty. A comprehensive study of roles and jobs has identified 42 competencies. According to the dictionary the

competencies can be clubbed in three subgroups i.e. jobrelevant behaviour, motivation level, and technical knowledge. The dictionary also discusses competencies and performance development/management.

Workplace Basics: The Essential Skills Employers Want. ASTD Best Practices Series: Training for a Changing Work Force, this work identifies and provides an in-depth understanding of the 16 skills that employers believe is workplace basics. These skills are segregated in 7 skill groups.

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Model Curriculum for Management Program (MBA & PGDM)- AICTE (All India Council of Technical Education - India), after consulting various stakeholders has laid down the most essential learning outcomes of MBA/ PGDM programs. However they may slightly vary as per the mission of the department/ institute. There are six learning outcomes that are been recommended, they ascertain the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that the students are expected to possess during the program.

Managerial Competencies by AMA/McBer and Company: Joint project of McBer a consulting firm and AMA (American Management Association) stressed that competencies not necessarily cause effective performance in job, however effectiveness in job is the outcome of competencies. The model segregates the competencies in five clusters i.e. goal and action management cluster, leadership cluster, human recourse management cluster, directing subordinates cluster and focus on others clusters.

AACSB Approach to Competencies: A major accreditation agency for college and university business schools in the US - The American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) highlights that the educational outcomes can be grouped into two categories: (1) content and (2) skills and personal characteristics. Content category has seven knowledge areas offered in the core courses of management program.

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE MODELS / APPROACHES

In this research paper an attempt has been made to make a comparative study of the selected five competency models/ approach/ documents etc., namely Harvard University Competency Dictionary, Workplace Basics: The Essential

Skills Employers Want. ASTD Best Practices Series: Training for a Changing Work Force, Model Curriculum for Management Program (MBA & PGDM) - AICTE (All India Council of Technical Education - India), Managerial Competencies by AMA/McBer & Company and AACSB Approach to Competencies. Upon a careful study the researchers have found that that several essential competencies can be brought under seven clusters ie Personality traits, Interpersonal skills, Communication skills, Team dynamics, Leadership skills, Technical and professional knowledge & skills and Process oriented skills. Twin objective of this study is to look at the corporate expectations in terms of competencies and the competencies that need to be included in training management graduates. The clusters bring the essence of all the models in a single frame thereby making it convenient to suggest interventions in management curriculum. The clusters have a chain relationship as they are arranged in the sequence, as they should be in accordance with the learning process. The clusters enable better and effective learning by suggesting logical transition, tailor-made approach, targeted methods and methodology for the same. The discussion below narrates each of the seven clusters in a systematic manner.

Cluster 1: Personality traits

This cluster addresses the key elements which are foundation of one's individual behaviour. Personality is the sum total of ways in which an individual behaves and interacts with others (Robbins 2006). The first level that shapes the personality of the learner comprises of self-esteem, self-confidence, self-assessment, self-objective and self-control. Tenacity, ethics, living by the values and vision form the second level of this cluster. The third level which is more tangible comprises of energy, positive regard, spontaneous, adaptable, proactive and tolerance for stress. (Table 2)

1	2	3	4	5
	Se f Esteem		Self-confidence	
,			Accurate Self-assessment	Self objectivity
			Self-control	
Leading Living The Vision And Values		Ethics		
Tenacity	T T			
Adaptability	i i		Adaptability	
nitiating Action (Initiative)			Orientation Proactivity	
Energy	**		Spontane ity	
	- 0	i i	Positive Regard	
			Stamina	
Stress Tolerance	1		3 200000000	1

Table 2 - Competencies featuring in Cluster 1: Personality traits

Note: 1 – Harvard University Competency Dictionary, 2- ASTD skill sets, 3- AICTE Learning Outcomes, 4- AMA/McBER Company clusters and 5 – AACSB educational outcomes.

Cluster 2: Interpersonal skills

Interpersonal skills is yet another important cluster which deals with the competencies and skills required for dealing with people. They are basically a set of abilities that enable a person to interact positively and work effectively with others, both individually and in groups. People with strong interpersonal skills can do more than collaborate effectively. They're able to vary how they act and what they contribute. They notice the strengths and weaknesses of

others in their group, and they adapt (https://www.gse.harvard.edu). Leaving an impact on people by understanding and valuing diversity, building trust, concern for close relationships to fostering partnership are the prominent competencies that feature in the cluster. Strong Interpersonal skills translate into effective conflict management skills. Table 3

Table 3 - Competencies featuring in Cluster 2: Interpersonal skills

Cluster 2. Interpersonal Skills						
1	2	3	4	5		
Impact	3.000		Concern with Impact			
Valuing Diversity		Cross-Cultural Understanding	550			
Building Trust	Į		Harana Anna Carana Carana Carana			
(100 may 20 may	The second second		Concern with Close Relationships			
Building Partnerships	3					
Sales Ability			Use of Unilateral Power			
Persua sivene ss		- (
	Interpersonal skills		Use of Socialised Power			
Managing Conflict						

Note: 1 – Harvard University Competency Dictionary, 2- ASTD skill sets, 3- AICTE Learning Outcomes, 4- AMA/McBER Company clusters and 5 – AACSB educational outcomes.

Cluster 3: Effective communication skills

All the five models/approaches emphasise on the importance of effective communication skills. Research indicates that poor communication is probably the most frequently cited reason of interpersonal conflicts and failures **Thomas et al (1976).**

DeVito and Joseph A. (2017) in his book The interpersonal communication, stresses on the importance of communication and interpersonal communication thereby linking the two clusters i.e. interpersonal skills and effective communication skills. Oral communication, written communication, reading skills, listening skills and formal presentations skills feature in this cluster. Table 4

Table 4 - Competencies featuring in Cluster 3: Communication skills

Cluster 3. Effective Communication Skills						
1	2	3	4	5		
Communication	Communication	Effective Communication				
	Oral communication			Oral Communication		
	Writing			Written Communication		
	Reading					
		Listening				
Formal Presentation			Use of Oral Presentations	Presentation Skills		

Note: 1 – Harvard University Competency Dictionary, 2- ASTD skill sets, 3- AICTE Learning Outcomes, 4- AMA/McBER Company clusters and 5 – AACSB educational outcomes.

Cluster 4 : Team Dynamics

Team as suggested by **Stephen P Robbins** is a group whose individual efforts result in a performance that is greater than the sum of the individual inputs. **(Glassop 2002)** suggests that teams typically outperform individuals when the tasks been done require multiple skills, judgement and experience. **Hornsby (2018)** observed that employers feel like they can immediately reap the benefits of synergistic teamwork right

after employees have been assigned to teams. Hackman (2002) advised that ensuring team success by creating conditions only translates to high performance team work. While O'Neill (2007) suggest a relationship between team performance and innovation which is vital for long term profitability. Teamwork which includes building positive work relationships, collaborating and contributing towards team success and thereby managing group processes to build a successful team feature in this cluster. Table 5

Table 5 - Competencies featuring in Cluster 4: Team Dynamics

			Cluster 4. Team Dynamics					
2	3	4	5					
Teamwork	Teamwork							
	Ž.	9111						
		Managing Group Process						
	Teanswork	Feartwork Teartwork						

Note: 1 – Harvard University Competency Dictionary, 2- ASTD skill sets, 3- AICTE Learning Outcomes, 4- AMA/McBER Company clusters and 5 – AACSB educational outcomes.

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Cluster 5: Leadership skills

A strong leadership is a must for optimal effectiveness of the organization. According to Stephen P Robbins leadership is the ability to influence a group towards the achievement of goals. Lee & Ko (2019) in their study also found that the performance of the team is directly affected by the leadership skills. Schoemaker1 et al (2018) examined how strategic leadership intertwine business model innovations

and dynamic capabilities to help organizations thrive in VUCA worlds (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity).

Being a leader and meeting the expectations of Leadership by gaining commitment (of the team), ensuring participation (meeting participation), motivating, developing and delegation to others feature in this cluster. Table 6

Table 6 - Competencies featuring in Cluster 5: Leadership Skills

Cluster 5. Leadership Skills					
1	2	3	4	5	
Meeting Leadership	Leadership	Leadership	Leadership Chater	Leadership	
Gaining Commitment					
Meeting Participation					
	Motivation				
Developing Others			Developing Others		
Delegation				Delegation	

Note: 1 – Harvard University Competency Dictionary, 2- ASTD skill sets, 3- AICTE Learning Outcomes, 4- AMA/McBER Company clusters and 5 – AACSB educational outcomes.

It been observed that all the above mentioned five clusters are interdependent. The competencies listed in each of the cluster have a spill over effect on each other.

Cluster 6 : Technical & Professional knowledge and skills

This knowledge and skill encompasses the ability to apply specialized knowledge or expertise (Stephen P Robbins). As observed by (Pegg et al., 2012), there is a pressing need to ensure that the higher education produces graduates that have the capability to contribute towards the economic growth of a nation through their skills, knowledge and creativity. In the CBI's (2012) Education and SkillsSurvey of 542 employers – 70 % of the employers consider degree subject knowledge as the most important factors when recruiting graduates.

Knowledge of specific domain (human resources, finance, marketing, accounting, operations management, operations research, organization theory, production management and quantitative analysis) feature in this cluster. Technical skills like computation and management of information technology also appear in this cluster. Another important skill of this cluster in data management, which comprises of information gathering, monitoring and Management of Information Systems. The skill and knowledge areas mentioned this cluster are majorly acquired by the professional courses and certified programs. These skills are further developed while on the job. Table 7

Table 7 - Competencies featuring in Cluster 6: Technical and Professional Knowledge & Skills

1	2	3	4	5
echnica I K nowledge and Skills	Compustation			
rofessional Knowledge and Skills		Doma in Knowledge		Human Resources
				Finance
				Marketing
				Accounting
				Operations Managemen
				Operations Research
				Organization theory
				Production Managemen
				Quantitative analysis
	Employability- Career Development			
		Data Management		
				Information gathering

Note: 1 – Harvard University Competency Dictionary, 2- ASTD skill sets, 3- AICTE Learning Outcomes, 4- AMA/McBER Company clusters and 5 – AACSB educational outcomes.

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Cluster 7: Process oriented skills

The competencies and skills in this cluster can be further grouped under four subheads ie Managerial skills, Organizational skills, Strategic decision making and Customer centric approach. Table 8

Managerial skills: Manager is the person responsible for accomplishing the organization's goals, they do so by managing (ie by planning, organizing, controlling etc) the efforts of the organization's workforce Dessler & Varkkey (2016). This sub group covers managing work by planning, organizing, controlling and goal setting, thereby aligning performance for success. Negotiation skills, time management, risk taking and facilitating change also feature in this subhead. Skill of follow – up and coaching also feature in this subhead.

Organizational skills: To facilitate a sound base of operations a clear understanding and analysis of business environment, social responsiveness, organization effectiveness

and global exposure is vital. An approach of continuous and applied learning paves way for creative thinking and creative solutions. Attention to details and quality ensures work standards.

Strategic Decision making: McClelland et al (1969) decision making occurs as a reaction to a problem and often involves the choices made from among two or more alternatives (Stepehen P Robbins). This subgroup have skills like perceptual objectivity, conceptualization, logical and critical thinking, problem analysis facilitate in the process of decision making as well as strategic decision making.

Customer centric approach: The relevance of customer centricity for the firms has been discussed widely for many years (**Shah et al. 2006**). There is an attempt to create a customer responsive culture as its been realised that it is the only way to customer loyalty and long – term profitability (**Stephen P Robbins**). This subgroup focuses on customer and building customer loyalty.

Table 8 - Competencies featuring in Cluster 7: Process Oriented Skills Cluster 7. Process Oriented Skills 2 A. Managerial Skills Planning Goal setting Planning Organizing Organizing Efficiency control Managing Work (Includes Time Management) Risk Taking Negotiation Negotiation Aligning Performance for Success Coaching Facilitating Change Follow-Up B. Organizational Skills Business Analysis Business Strategy Business Environment Business Environment Social Responsiveness Global Exposure Organization effectiveness Continuous Learning Learning to Learn Applied Learning Inovative Solutions Innovation Creative thinking Work Standards Quality Orientation Attention to Detail Safety Awareness C. Strategic Decision Making Skills Perceptual Objectivity Conceptualisation Diagnostic Use of Concepts Critical thinking Logical Thought Problem solving Problem Solving Problem analysis Decision Making Strategic Decision Making D. Customer Centric Approach Customer Focus Building Customer Loyalty

Note: 1 – Harvard University Competency Dictionary, 2- ASTD skill sets, 3- AICTE Learning Outcomes, 4- AMA/ McBER Company clusters and 5 – AACSB educational outcomes

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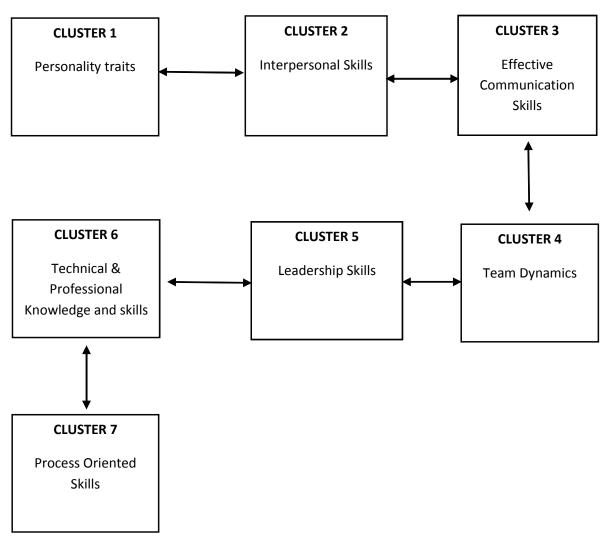


Figure 2: Clusters arranged in the sequence, as they should be in accordance with the learning process.

CONCLUSION

In this study various competencies have been grouped into different clusters keeping in view the learner requirement curricula and training needs. The key purpose of this grouping or regrouping of competencies is to enhance the effectiveness of competency based learning. The researchers have strong belief that the seven clusters discussed above would enable the mapping of competencies with the course outcomes of management programs and thereby drive the teaching learning processes closer to industry expectations. Once this is achieved the issues related to quality of management education and employability would also be addressed appropriately.

In this direction there is an imperative need to bring in better understanding about competency based management education among all the stake holders including industry, Professional bodies like AIMA, education administrators, academicians and students. Management institutes need to create discussion forums, organise seminars, workshops and conferences highlighting the need and importance of bringing the desirable change. Premier management institutions, Universities and Policy making bodies within higher education like Governing bodies, Academic Councils and Board of Studies need to drive competency based management education towards the goal of making Indian management education reaching global benchmarks.

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