



Evolving management studies

Management professionals, fully trained by management schools, have contributed to India's corporate sectors' success, and it is not a secret that demand for management professionals for the secondary and tertiary sectors of India continues to be high. **V Mukunda Das** writes about rural management courses as a discipline in b-schools of the country

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India's rural areas have been showing a different picture compared to India's urban areas on the dimensions such as growth, equality, quality of life and all other development related quantitative and qualitative indices. Why this has happened the way it happened is an area for serious thinking and analysis. A time has come for us to look at the total outcome of development activities, as it exists today in rural India, due to lack of appropriate managerial approach.

Management professionals, fully trained by management schools, have contributed to India's corporate sectors' success, and it is not a secret that "demand" for management professionals for the secondary and tertiary sectors of India continues to be high. This is also truly reflecting the increasing sectoral share (secondary and tertiary) in GDP even today. There is no specific research into the critical role of management professionals in contributing to rural development in India. However, there are





observations and perceptions which state that there is a critical role for management professionals in India's rural development.

LINKING THE TALENTS

The present attempt is to highlight the "policy lapses" which have affected rural development, seen through this angle. It is surmised that India's rural development efforts could have been much more successful if policy makers took enough pain to involve high quality

management professionals for planning, strategizing and operationalizing these national and state level projects which have ramification for overall quality of life in rural areas for all segments of rural people. This lack of "demand", from relevant sources, for management professionals to work for rural development projects has brought in the low demand for rural management as a discipline. Further, this phenomenon acted as a factor for not having sufficient number of management schools

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with rural management focus, as a discipline. Therefore, a re-thinking on the interface between the critical role of rural management professionals, at all levels, for rural development programs needs to be done. The present attempt is to highlight the need for streamlining micro management of rural projects in a better way so that the outcomes are closer to planned targets, in qualitative and quantitative terms. What is attempted here is based on the learning gathered as a result of studying dozens of rural projects in India.

TAKING A SCIENTIFIC ROUTE

If we look at rural planning for development related activities, in the past, one can see that the planning formats were not scientific. More so, the central government schemes / projects and rolled out in rural locations. There are many projects which the government of India, over the years, planned and implemented. In Arunachal Pradesh the sun sets much early and people go to sleep early compared to the western part of India. There was no customization of the project to suite local rural situations. As a result, the rural management of the project got affected seriously. This could





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have been avoided if the strategic planning and the operational planning, in a managerial sense, was appropriately undertaken. Another dimension of this 'managerial lapse' emerges from the lack of quality managerial professionals at the grass root level. The most important limitation, as observed, is their lack of capability on micro management of rural development activities / schemes / projects. This has affected, and is likely to affect, naturally, the success of many rural programs, even in future.

INCORPORATING PROFESSIONALS

If we look at management education in India since independence, it can be seen that 90 per cent of the focus was on urban / industry based, and with a corporate orientation. If we look at the content of management education, of such variety, one can see that, on an average, 80-90 per cent of the concepts, analyses and formats were borrowed from western countries. In a way it was almost like a 'parasitic academic evolution'. This is because of the obvious, and to some extent, blind borrowing of western paradigms of management. The assumptions about the internal organizational environment,



the work values and the market environment outside, of western management theories and concepts were, or, are not matching with Indian managerial reality landscape. Very few Indian management thinkers have put in efforts to solve this gap in teaching management concepts for Indian students in Indian Business Schools.

A project for development, in rural areas, for enhancing livelihood and quality of life also involves investment of a huge size running into crores, since independence. But commensurate with this, the number of managerial professionals going to rural areas have not been significant because of lack of 'motivational' factors or lack of professional orientation to manage such projects.

EFFECTUAL CURRICULUMS

The modus operandi for developing Rural Management discipline in Institutes could be to have a series of Training Need Assessment from management angle, on grass root level personnel managing programs and projects in rural India. Every district has to be identified as unique entities when it comes to micro management, as the geographical, demographic and social dimensions of each district varies from other districts in India. Subsequently, focus has to be on the managerial expertise for efficient operational management of micro projects or micro unit of national projects, in each district. Further, the management curriculum and training for micro rural managers have to be compatible with the 'required' level of social change in each district. Concurrent research will involve target group responses on each micro project and revising or improving micro management systems from a short term and long term perspective.

What follows from the above observations and analysis, based on past learning, is that rural managers have to be created for successful projects implementation focusing on micro management. Every rupee invested in suitably training such professionals will find rewards in higher level of success in India's future rural development activities / projects. ▽

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