

## **Life-impacting experience of Management education in India: A case-study<sup>1</sup>.**

### **Background**

My name is Manav<sup>2</sup>. I belong to a village in Kerala, India. My father is employed as a secretary in a Cooperative bank in Kerala. My mother is a housewife. When I was young, we stayed in an ancestral house (“Taravaadu”). Because of some personal problems, we had to leave the house and build another, a little distance away. We borrowed from banks and other individuals to buy land and build the new house. This put a strain on the family finances.

Though poor, my family really encouraged (compelled!) me to study. My parents didn’t have opportunities to study/grow; however, they did not want their children to be similarly deprived of opportunities. So their expectations from us were high. They were ready to spend any amount for my education by cutting down their personal needs or by borrowing money. They willingly cut back on their medical expenses to provide opportunities for my younger brother and me.

I attended a Malayalam-medium high school near my home. The school teachers were affectionate towards me. They helped me a lot in my studies. The pressure to study and perform was very high but despite that, I really enjoyed my school education. I took additional tuitions for English, Maths, Science and Hindi to ensure that I scored high marks in the tenth. My tuition teacher and a group of close friends supported me.

On completing school, I enrolled for a three-year undergraduate course in Computer Science at School of Technology and Applied Sciences, Kottayam, Kerala. The college was small and located about 65 km from home. The official language of instruction was English. To meet the fees and other requirements of the school, my father took loan from his Provident Fund account. However, the college experience was not good. There were very few lectures. The teachers were not supportive of students. The general environment in the college was not suitable for learning anything. I failed the course. My parents did not react, but I could feel their pain. I was upset

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about this failure and scared. My mother especially helped me recover from this setback.

I lost one year due to this failure. During this year, I taught in a small computer institute while preparing for my supplementary exams. It was a critical period for me. Above all, it taught me the importance of learning and education. At that time, my under-graduate classmates joined a Masters degree program in Computer Applications. While I could not join the degree program with them, I really desired to finish a post-graduate program with them. Not only that, I wanted to do better than them. Initially I planned to apply for the Masters program in Computer Applications. But my friend advised to try the MBA instead. He was also applying for the course. I made my own enquiries and felt that the MBA could be a good option. I therefore decided to try for the MBA course. Getting past the entrance test required knowledge of English, in which I was a little weak. I therefore watched a number of English movies. It not only helped me learn a little English but also really improved my listening skills.

### **Management education**

I got admission into a business school located in Kerala, about 70 Kms from my home. It was a new college with English as the medium of instruction. From the beginning, my challenge was expressing my ideas to others in writing and in presentations. I had a limited vocabulary in English. I tried my level best to prepare for the classes and do well but it was difficult. I decided to make presentations during classes to improve my English and presentation skills. In the two years of MBA, I continued making presentations and gained in confidence. My English also improved. However, I was always tense...I did not want a recurrence of my undergraduate performance. The memory of what I went through in that period was unpleasant. Prayers were one means of reducing my tension. I wasn't praying *for* something (I'm against doing this). It was just to keep my hope and confidence alive.

Financial constraints continued. Through the good offices of my father, I was able to get a bank loan that fully met all my expenses. The school helped me access the textbooks and other learning materials through the book bank scheme at college. According to this scheme we could borrow the learning materials against a caution deposit and return it at the end of the semester. This helped reduce some expenses. However, the loan only increased the financial burden of my parents. In addition to my college

expenses, my parents had to meet the expenses of my brother's education, the daily minimal requirements of the family and repay the still outstanding loans.

As a new management school, we faced some unique situations. We saw our teachers as really partial towards our seniors, who were the first batch of students admitted. We felt neglected with respect to many institute activities including Placement. I'm not hiding from our responsibilities, but explaining what we felt. This resentment towards our seniors expressed itself in several problems while relating to them. I observed that many of my classmates reacted emotionally to these situations. They just jumped into action without thinking twice about the possible consequences. This contributed to a worsening of the relations between the batches. I think I deal with the situations more practically, not emotionally.

Despite these difficulties, I received encouragement from some people. We had opportunities to interact with some teachers even after classes and discuss some academic as well as personal matters with them. They were very encouraging. I used to particularly admire the boldness and systematic approach of a few of our teachers, seniors and batch mates...it stood out against the behavior of the majority of my batch mates. Many of my batch mates were helpful to me. I was also able to help them because I was one of the few students who understood computers. I developed some good friends among the batch. After school, the course that I enjoyed very much was the MBA course.

Like many MBA students I wanted a job in the IT field which provided me with work satisfaction and a reasonably good salary of say Rs. 10000- 15000 per month. IT was my dream field. I was hopeful that IT companies would come for Placement at our campus. So I set about preparing myself by updating my general knowledge and domain knowledge in the IT area. Above all, I focused on my communication in the English language. My teachers and friends shared their knowledge with me, and conducted mock group discussions, presentations and interviews to help me prepare for the placement.

Despite the preparation, campus placements for IT were not good that year. The number of students opting for a core IT job was limited; so no IT companies visited the campus for placements. Given my strong desire to take up a job in the IT sector alone, I decided to attend a job fair at Cochin,

Kerala. Here I managed to get a job in the IT sector with a salary of Rs 10000 /month. I also received offers in the non-IT field but chose the former. Recently I switched my job and am currently working abroad.

As I look back on my MBA education, I believe that it improved my communication skills (in English) and thus helped increase my confidence. It also helped me go beyond technology-- to evaluate technology in terms of its financial and managerial benefits; something my undergraduate program did not prepare me for. My current job demands this competency and I feel prepared to meet the requirements. I am planning to take Ph.D in IT Management after about six years. Later I would like to settle down in Kerala and work as a CIO (Chief Information Officer) in a reputed company.

On the personal front, I have almost paid off my loans now. My parents' financial condition is improving as I have taken the responsibility to repay my loans. My brother is inspired by what I have achieved. He wants to stand on his own feet, like I have done.