

THE BUSINESS OF HR IN BUSINESS SCHOOLS

V.R.K. Prasad (2011). Viva Books Private Limited, New Delhi Price Rs.695; Pages193, ISBN:9788130917344.

* Book Review by :- Dr. Arif Shaikh

Introduction to the Author :

Dr. V.R.K. Prasad did his Masters degrees in Business Administration and environmental sciences. Trained as an electronic engineer, he also holds postgraduate qualifications in Personnel Management and Industrial Relations, apart from an M.Phil in Labour Studies. He holds a Ph.D degree in Business Administration from Osmania University. He served in the telecom branch of the Indian Army for 27 years, followed by a stint in the Industry and a long period of academic research. His Publications include more than sixty papers and articles, five edited books and an authored book **"Managerial Imperatives."** Dr. Prasad is the Director of ISHRD, an exclusive HR School; he has also worked as a Dean of ICFAI Business School Hyderabad.

An Overview of the book :

The Industry believes that business schools do not practice what they preach in terms of utilizing best practices. Every organization is composed of people and utilizing their services, developing their skills, motivating them to enhance their level of performance and ensuring that they remain committed to the organization are essential for the accomplishment of organizational objectives. The author of the book emphasis on the importance of B-School human resources (both teaching and Support Staff) in development of good practices and effective implementation of the same for better performance and result. A book of 193 pages, divided scholarly into eleven chapters makes logical presentation.

The author in a very lucid manner describe the management education in India, he highlights the contribution of the then Prime Minister Shri. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in creating centers of academic excellence outside the university system which resulted in setting up of IIT's, IIM's and NIT's and also points out that The Indian Institute of Science {IISc} Bangalore was the first in offering a programme in Industrial Management in the year 1948 and the Andhra University at Visakhapatnam was the first to start a full time postgraduate management programme in 1957. The book also brings out the biggest strength of Indian Management Education that is the Cost involved in turning out a graduate which is a fraction of what are costs outside India and the biggest challenge is the scarcity of faculty.

Review :

The Author very precisely describes a Management teacher "Is the one who apart from imparting subject knowledge teaches the basics of application of the knowledge so imparted, making a concerted effort to make a manager and a good human being out of an ordinary and simple individual." In the management education field there is shortage of talented and qualified faculty, and the critical need to take up proper planning and resorting to various methods of attracting and selecting most suitable ones as against the most eligible. The faculty needs a set of competencies both at base level and those that can further be developed, According Prasad a faculty is basically expected to undertake the following activities to sharpen his skill

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- Continuous updating of subject knowledge
- Research and Publication
- Executive training, consultancy and projects
- Industry interface and institution building
- Soft skills

The author suggests the following selection methods:

- Preliminary Screening
- Demo Lecture
- Interviews
- Psychometric Tests and
- Reference Check

Dr. Prasad suggests that academic faculty needs to familiarize themselves with the application techniques of the theoretical concepts by taking up case discussion, case writings, projects and consultancy assignments, etc. To that extent an academic faculty could even be considered to stay with the companies during the projects or internship of the students.

According to V R K Prasad the b- school culture must promote harmony, freedom of thought, expression and action at the same time result oriented and must ensure rewards and recognition to the human resource who contributes their best. He brings out a very important issue that the focus of b-school must be on the student and his learning and not on the teacher and his teaching and he also states that “a good teacher turn out good students” who in turn do good to the society and the cycle continues.

About research at b- School author is of the opinion that a research culture has to be ingrained into the core culture of the institute. A support system in terms of adequate library resource both on and offline, sufficient funds, reduce teaching loads and incentives etc. need to be created in every b-school. The author remarks that the research done by the b-school faculty does not reaches the practicing manager and does not enter the teaching curriculum. The research culture can be ingrained in b-schools by-

- Start in house ‘newsletters’ and encourage faculty to write
- Constitute a ‘research committee’
- Encourages Post –Doctoral Research across discipline
- Reward and recognize those excelling in research and publications
- Rope in industrial houses to sponsor research.

Consultancy is another grey area b-schools must encourage their faculty to undertake consultancy projects which leads to their professional development and complements their research efforts.

Author also draws the attention towards the performance appraisal of faculty in b-school, he suggests that it should be linked to the promotion policy, he states in the book that a performance standard must be set in advance and communicate the same to the faculty members so that they are aware about the bases on which their performance is evaluated a format is also suggested at the end as an annexure.

Regarding compensation of management faculty the author put forward that it is necessary to first identify the objectives of the b-schools in terms of quality students output, their absorption in the quality jobs and subsequently, their quality performance on the job. A faculty or a group of faculty who can ensure the above objectives can have their compensation linked accordingly. In addition to his he propose that various incentive plans like pay for performance, additional course handled by the faculty can be compensated separately, exemplary student feedback makes him eligible for 'best teacher' award.

The author of the book very specifically classifies the b- school faculty as 'talented workforce'. He says it is this 'talent' that is put to use to transform a simple student into a highly productive managerial asset to any organization, therefore retention of talented knowledge workers, i.e. faculty is very much essential which can be done through identifying retention problems, conducting exit interviews for those who are leaving to ascertain the reasons for their departure is an effective retention tool. Similarly a faculty who stayed the longest should also be requested to give his/her reasons that contributed to his long stay; another retention tool is the mentoring for junior faculty.

At the end the writer also suggest actions that are likely to help the head of b-school in his/her intellectual or transformational leadership roles are: Transparency in all dealings, Mutual trust, regular interactions with staff, faculty and students, encourage research culture through self – participation, ability to take and carry the team along, eye on the budget and the costs, disciplining students, exhibit and expect innovation and creativity in running the institution and tap the intellectual talents, cultivate the art of listening and excellent PR skills.

Overall impact of the book :

The book is unquestionably a treasure of knowledge and model for Management Members, Directors, Deans, Heads of Departments, Faculty members and all other stake holders of b-schools. The book dwells on a number of relevant aspects such as overview of management education in India, HRM Practices in b-schools.

The flow of contents in the book, the examples quoted and the various formats ensures that it can be understood by public in general and stake holders on b- school in particular, it focuses on various aspects of HR in b-school like recruitment & selection, training & development, research & consultancy, performance management, compensation, motivation, retention ,leadership and governance. A need for this book is necessary because there are very few books which focus on HR of b-school.

