Does the current model of management education adequately prepare students for an uncertain business environment? What changes are needed?

Management education needs adaptation, not reinvention. Beyond technical tools, curricula must emphasise fundamental principles, critical thinking and the practical application of knowledge to real-world challenges.

B-schools must embed uncertainty-driven learning and ethics across their programmes, equipping students to challenge assumptions and make decisions with incomplete information. This will help them connect classroom concepts with complex professional situations.



"BUSINESS EDUCATION NEEDS ADAPTATION, NOT TOTAL REINVENTION"

SPJIMR Dean VARUN NAGARAJ talks to Rajika Manbansh on integrating AI, reforming curricula and advancing ethical leadership and research to align management education with industry and society

How should B-schools balance analytical training with human capabilities such as judgement, negotiation, and ethical decision-making?

Analytical skills must develop alongside critical thinking, sound judgement and the ability to evaluate different perspectives. Hands-on exercises can help students question assumptions, weigh alternatives, and understand the consequences of decisions.

Simulations and projects can build decision-making skills in ethics, negotiation and leadership. Combined with continuous learning and systems thinking, these experiences prepare graduates to interpret data thoughtfully, exercise judgement, navigate people and uncertainty.

How should B-schools respond to changing industry requirements, and should they rethink internships, case studies and placement figures as measures of workplace readiness?

B-schools need agile curricula that respond to evolving industry needs. Flexible, bite-sized courses and certifications in AI, digital fluency and sustainability can help students acquire emerging skills. Industry partnerships should inform curriculum design and identify priority capabilities.

Workplace readiness must extend beyond placements to long-term professional development through mentorship, live projects, and industry co-designed skill programmes.

How should institutions measure the value of a management degree beyond salary packages?

Salaries alone cannot capture the value of management education. Outcomes should include leadership effectiveness, entrepreneurial ventures, career progression and contributions to society, reflecting graduates' technical, social and environmental awareness.

Tracking alumni careers, startup success and impact-driven roles would offer a fuller picture. Transparent reporting would help prospective students make informed choices and reinforce SPJIMR's mission of value-based growth.

What limits Indian B-schools' academic influence globally, and how can they strengthen research and international collaboration?

Indian B-schools prepare graduates well for industry but face constraints in research and international collaboration, including a shortage of PhD-qualified faculty, limited research funding, and complex regulations. Greater investment in research and faculty development by government and industry is essential.

"Business schools must embed uncertainty-driven learning and ethics across their programmes"

Research must move beyond publication counts and citations to address real-world challenges. Strengthening doctoral education, funding and industry and international partnerships can help Indian B-schools build global influence through research that benefits business and society.

How can B-schools embed ethics, social responsibility and sustainability into managerial decision-making while giving greater importance to entrepreneurship alongside conventional corporate careers?

Ethics and social responsibility must be woven into every decision-making rather than remain isolated in subjects. At SPJIMR, we champion "wise innovation", an innovative programme that seeks to balance economic gains with social and environmental impact, embedding ethics, sustainability and governance across the curriculum.

Entrepreneurship deserves greater emphasis because building ventures teaches future leaders to consider stakeholder interests beyond profit. Through its Centre for Family Business and Entrepreneurship and Wise Innovation Studio for Emerging Technologies (WISE Tech), SPJIMR gives the importance to start-up creation alongside corporate internships, encouraging students to build businesses that do well and do good.

What are SPJIMR's key priorities for the future, and how will the institute measure progress?

SPJIMR's key priorities include integrating AI, digital and sustainability themes across the curriculum, expanding flexible programme formats, and transforming its research culture. We refuse to treat research as a number of game chasing citations; publication is a byproduct of solving problems, not the goal. The institute is investing in hiring faculties with industry-relevant skills and expanding its Office for Research and Innovation to support practice-focused projects. Our investment in research has increased by 34%, with a focus on faculty-initiated projects and research technology.

Regulatory delays and a limited PhD talent pool remain obstacles. Success will be measured through alumni leadership and entrepreneurial impact, alongside tangible evidence that SPJIMR research influences real-world decisions rather than merely improving rankings. BW

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