

## **“B-schools Will Remain Relevant If They Are Adaptable”**

*Rishiksha T. Krishnan, Director, IIM Bangalore, and Mukta Kulkarni, Dean of Academics, describe the key pillars of innovations at the institute that align them with the present-day industry and societal needs*

As the global economy undergoes rapid transformation, and as every sector witnesses flux and job roles get redefined, questions are being raised about the future of management and management education. How will B-school passouts steer the industry, will their roles increase, decrease or significantly get reshaped – questions that every B-school aspirant wants answers to. After all, getting into a premier B-school in India and then paying for the course is anything but easy.

Rishiksha T. Krishnan, Director, IIM Bangalore, assuages these concerns and says, “Management education in India has a good future as long as it’s adaptable. Although things are changing rapidly, there is still a demand for managerial capability. Skills and knowledge of future include digital, data, AI, elements, which we do teach. As long as we can identify elements that are changing, and include them in our curriculum, management education will continue to be relevant.”

### **Building Skills**

Describing the innovative approach at the institute, Mukta Kulkarni, Dean of Academics, IIM Bangalore, says three things are central to robustness of a management programme in the present economic milieu -- real world experiential learning, focus on sustainability and global mindset.

And IIM Bangalore, offering diverse “bite-size” modules like credit courses and workshops allows diverse experiential learning opportunities. This includes even activities like a Legos playshop where students got to understand team dynamics, and a Himalaya Workshop for learning about behaviour and leadership aspects.

The institute is also at the forefront of enhancing students’ technological skills, at a time when AI has radically transformed the industry. As Kulkarni says, “AI has impacted not just students but faculty. It has helped foster a very entrepreneurial mindset. Students are using these tools very creatively whether to understand a company or to collect data very

differently from the way they used to. And Faculty members also incorporating that in classroom.”

Director Krishnan emphasises, “Premium on creativity and original thinking has gone up. A typical Gen AI tool good at collecting data and looking at sources one never dreamt of. But it doesn’t really add that wow element which you can thanks to your creativity. If the project has to make a differential impact, the student has to put in his own thoughts. Otherwise the Gen AI submissions read very similar.”

Having said that, the institute is providing a fulltime two-year MBA in Business Analytics and offers a range of programmes on AI and Data Analytics through Executive Education and IIMBx.

A major plank at IIM Bangalore is sustainability and the institute involves students to take up projects related to sustainability and decarbonisation across industries.

Sensitising students to governance issues and developing their expertise in this area. From talks on geopolitics to greening of supply chain operations of organisations, the ambit of discussions and action points at the institute is vast. And The Centre for Corporate Governance, with its multiple speaker series providing exposure to students to what’s happening across the globe.

The institute also has several community outreach programmes. Under the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan, it works very closely with a set of villages in Tumkur and does a lot of integrated development work in those villages. As Krishnan informs, “Education being our core area, we have started by working with schools. Now, we are looking into biodiversity, environmental protection. And we are also working with local authorities. For example, during Covid we had helped the local public health centre. And there is an active student club wherein they they run initiatives like blood donation.”

And under the Contemporary Concerns Studies, students can also work the whole term with a faculty on a specific community impact initiative, like how to make education accessible for those with visual impairment.

IIM Bangalore also has a chair of the Jal Jivan Mission of the Government of India. While most of the chairs have been set up at technical institutes to look into technical aspects, Krishnan informs that the chair at IIM Bangalore has been set up to look at the

organisational and managerial aspects of the mission. “We are working closely with the government to make the mission very efficient,” he says.

Krishnan adds, “It doesn’t make much sense to preach sustainability if you are not following it at the institution level. We have a very strong initiative with the Sustainability Task Force. The senior professor leading this initiative is focusing on multiple dimensions including water recycling, waste recycling and reaching out to communities around us.”

So from classrooms to field visits, live projects and expert talks, there’s an entire gamut of opportunities for exposure that students get on ESG issues.

Similarly, to inculcate a global mindset too, the institute provides myriad opportunities, like a week-long immersion programme with a partner school, an entire term that a student can spend with international partner students and the biggest possibility – dual degree – one year with IIM Bangalore’s partner institute. IIMB has partnerships with leading B-schools across the globe, numbering over 30.

### **Building Resilience**

Krishnan emphasises that IIMB wants its students to develop resilience for the corporate world. The institute helps students focus on real world challenges. With this in mind, the institute has reduced the credits in programmes and time required in classrooms, without compromising on the rigour and content of the programmes so that students can spend more time on what suits their career objectives, and participate in a number of activities as part of clubs. These clubs that they run are as intense as the curriculum.

Kulkarni adds, “We also help them build social capital by way of building the social networks, both with faculty and peers. The peers are going to be next movers and shakers and that will be very helpful in dealing with stress in the corporate world.”

### **Placements In Perspective**

Last few years have seen concerns over placements in B-schools. But Krishnan says that the country’s goal of becoming Viksit Bharat by 2047 requires the economy to grow at 8 to 9 per cent. And that growth will come from existing organisations, by enhancing the size or scope of their business, or by way of creating new firms. In both the cases, the country will need good managers to make this happen. “I am convinced that if we will head towards Viksit Bharat, there will not be, at the aggregate level, a challenge in finding good jobs.” Having

said that, he adds, “What I do see is greater volatility from year to year. This will reflect the ups and downs in Indian as well as global economy. So the institute also has to put in place resilient processes for placements and career progress.”

IIMB has realised the need for expanding the diversity of recruiters rather than focusing on a few sectors. Opportunities need to be identified in new industries, Krishnan says.

IIMB concluded the recent summer internship process with impressive result and was able to place all the 600-plus students.