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**Skill Enhancement Techniques -  
The Necessary Tools for the Indian Management Students**

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**Curriculum Change in the Air!**

Internationally, the B Schools are talking about evolving a curriculum that would hopefully produce a new breed of management trainees who are not only good managers but good leaders as well. The management *gurus* are nurturing an idea of not just managerial effectiveness but also leadership effectiveness too. There is a feeling among the top B Schools of the world that there has to be a paradigm shift from theoretical knowhow to practical skills that would help the management trainees to transform themselves into effective leaders who have a pragmatic edge to their talents. The industry also seems to be ready to accept and demand this ideology.

**Envisioning Requirements for Becoming an Effective Manager**

There are specific requirements of becoming an effective manager. The first in the list is the variety of general skills, specific subject skills and mass subject skill. As a management trainee, one is required to write assignments, give presentations and, perhaps, take examinations at the end of the program. But the poignant question still remains: is cognitive knowledge enough for a young brain? Or is there something more required than just acquisition of domain knowledge in a span of two years.

## **Concept of Skills - Definition**

The definition of skill as ‘**Ability to do Something Well**’ establishes the essential nature of any skill. The possession of ability is fundamental to anyone who must do, rather than just talk about to be effective in our personal, professional life. We need to do things practically well- that is called to be skilled.

Skills can be of many forms; some are task-oriented (reading of map); some are behavioral in nature (calming someone down); some take care of hand to eye coordination (typing, playing sports).

The skills thus can be classified into two categories - **Hard skills** and **Soft skills**.

1. Hard skills are technical in nature. Solving mathematical calculation, using PowerPoint and servicing a car can be classified in this category
2. Soft skills are people-oriented. Persuasion, discussion and leadership come under this category. The management gurus are nowadays advocates a lot about ethic enhancement programs which cover this category.

## **The Connection between Skills and Knowledge**

As a young learner no one will expect you to be skilled; on the contrary skill can only be acquired knowledge and then one learns to use that knowledge effectively; in due course of time one is not required to consult or learn because one becomes expert in doing his job. In other words, he has become ‘skilled’

## **Role of Competence in Skill Enhancement**

Competence means ability to do something and gradually become skilled. Competence can be termed as a stepping stone in one’s way to attain perfection. In due course of time, with further experience and willingness to learn from our mistakes, we enrich ourselves. However we cannot forget we need opportunity and motivation to improve. Reflecting upon one’s performance and then analyzing one’s performance and making appropriate changes for future events form the basis for this approach.

Learning process happens when you memorize, experience, practice and reflect. There is a list of skills that is important for the Indian management trainee. It includes –

1. Basic skill
2. Communication skill
3. Computer or I.T. skill
4. Creativity
5. Presentation skills

6. Analytic skill
7. Commercial Awareness

## **Multiple Intelligence and Skill Development**

Howard Gardner wrote in his book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligence* (1993), ‘an intelligence is the ability to solve problems, or create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings’. Through this approach, the think-tanks of major B schools got ideas for their R&D programs. There was a revolutionary change when both the elements, **hard skills** and **soft skills** were given equal weight. This concoction was called Multiple Intelligence. The curriculums for the B Schools were modeled on this ideology.

Indian Institutes of Management are no exception. There was recognition given to the English teachers because they were the right choice for enhancing the linguistic competencies.

The basic model of Gardner advocates the following skills

1. Linguistic Intelligence
2. Logical Intelligence
3. Spatial Intelligence
4. Musical Intelligence
5. Kinesthetic Intelligence
6. Interpersonal Intelligence
7. Intrapersonal Intelligence

**Linguistic Intelligence** relates to the ability to use language effectively in spoken and written forms. The research conducted by Mintzberg in 1973 revealed that up to 80 % time of a management professional is devoted to communication, either verbally or in written format. Therefore, linguistic intelligence is paramount and is of considerable importance.

**Logical Intelligence** relates to one’s ability to reason, and to problem-solving ability by using rationale and by using numeral based concepts effectively. They are essential for Strategic Management, Operations Management and Finance. Most of the personality development plans incorporate these ‘Hard Skills’ too.

**Spatial Intelligence** relates to the ability to visualize objects in two or three dimensions. Professionals such as architects should have this ability.

**Musical Intelligence** covers the ability to recognize musical notes and to create song and music, to read and write in musical notations. Music can be a powerful means to invoke your emotions or simply reflect them. It can add to our ability to communicate to others; it is even effective in memory enhancement.

**Kinesthetic Intelligence** is related to balancing our body. It is termed “motor skill,” for example, the fine movements involved in typing or playing keys of a musical instrument or surgery skills. Hand-to-eye coordination is a classic example of Kinesthetic intelligence; a state of becoming so perfect that one does not need to see the keyboard to type.

**Intrapersonal Intelligence** is looking inwards. It means understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the self. It is our own understanding of our self; what motivates us; why do we behave in a particular manner and our ability to reflect upon our performance.

**Interpersonal Intelligence** relates to the necessary skills of communication among the individuals in the workplace and in personal life as well. It deals with our ability to ‘connect’ with other people; it also deals with communication effectiveness, both with groups and individuals. Indian Management students are required to be well versed in this since they are supposed to interact with the domestic as well as international players.

**Naturalistic Intelligence** relates to working in close proximity with nature. Nature also serves as a great connection and today’s world is ‘going back to nature’ (to use Wordsworth’s expression). The Indian Corporate very strongly endorses Ecological Awareness. SAVE TIGER project is one such instance.

### **Relevance of Emotional Intelligence and Skill Development**

In his book *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman talks about the ability to motivate oneself in adversity; ability to control impulse and delay gratification; ability to regulate one’s mood and keep distress from dampening one’s ability to think; to empathize and never leave hope.

Goleman advocates the essential usage of **EI (Emotional Intelligence)** for technical skills and cognitive skills that essentially rely on more traditional intelligence like I.Q. tests. Anne McKae and Richard Boyatzis wrote in their book titled *The New Leaders* that the distinction between the average and the outstanding leader is the emotional intelligence, to be precise, factors like multi-intelligence, controlling one’s emotions in a given odd situation, ability to empathize with the subordinates and customers.

There are two parallels between the theory of Gardner and that of Goleman. Gardner has laid more stress on interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, whereas Goleman believes in focusing on emotions. His study shows that the people who scored highly in various EI factors have proved to be more effective in their managerial and leadership roles, when compared to their counterparts who are well verse in technical and cognitive skills. His theory says that first we need to understand our own emotions and know how it has impact on our daily professional life. It also includes getting better understanding of how our emotions affect other people.

Goleman has underlined four categories of EI for the business leader- Self awareness, Self management, Social Awareness, Relationship management.

**Self Awareness** is related to our emotional awareness that talks about the strengths and weaknesses.

**Emotional Awareness** is the inner voice that becomes our guiding light in our times of trouble and also otherwise. It also becomes our guiding value that gives us intuitive powers to choose the best course of action. Emotionally steady leaders can be candid and authentic, able to speak openly about their emotions. Typical emotional strengths and weaknesses include

- Keeping calm versus getting in panic
- Keeping going versus giving up
- Seeing the bright side of things versus becoming sad
- Controlling your anger versus losing your temper
- Feeling confident versus feeling afraid
- Empathizing
- Motivating oneself and others

### **Managing Your Emotions**

It is paramount for the management students to control their emotions because if the emotions are given out without any control, the chances are the broader perspective of the problem may be lost and the power to take decisions in right earnest may be hampered. Goleman explains this by showing that activity in the part of our brain which controls our feelings, emotions, and intuition swamps that part of our brain which we use for reasoning.

### **Can We Improve Our Emotional Response?**

The big question then comes to our mind is, can we alter our responses, or are we doomed forever? The answer is maybe, definitely. Our responses will take time to get tamed and there will be need for repetition of actions. Goleman thinks that EI can take place but that the emotional part of our brain may take weeks or months to establish new neural linkages, and learning is implicit – of which we will not know directly.

### **Setting of Emotional Goals**

Emotional Intelligence cannot be learnt in the conventional class room situation. The reading part can just get one started. It is the actions themselves and their repetitions which form your new emotional response. So, for instance, to gain confidence one needs to practice. In this pursuit, one should keep giving one's self a series of tasks. Goleman insists that whatever your age, you develop new neural pathways but that will take time and a good deal

of motivation. The message that is clear set is manageable, but challenging tasks try to put self in situations where one can feel the challenges and be determined to stick to them.

### **Learning to Learn**

This skill has the maximum longevity because one will keep learning long after our academic studies are over. This learning will remain even when one is in job, or in career move. It is unlikely to have complete knowledge to perform solitary tasks; you will be required to have links to others in social or learning networking. George Siemens reflects that learning in 'digital age' means that 'know-how' and know how are supplemented with know where.

### **Integrated Approach Required for the Indian B Schools**

The skill enhancement experts in India have categorically advocated an integral approach towards finding leadership effectiveness in the B schools. There is a necessity of giving more weightage to soft skills and, especially, ethics. The experts also feel the need to introduce the humanities' point of view to the B schools which will give a diverse outlook to the students. Indian academia had led the world in terms of knowledge in the past; it is gearing up to do so again by not just producing students that are well versed in cognitive and technical knowledge, but also producing leaders who can show new path to the world by means of superior ethical codes and also by means of higher emotional intelligence.

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