

# Teaching & Learning Method in a B-School: A Case of XIMB

Amar KJR Nayak<sup>1</sup>

Abhishek, a fresh graduate from IIT Madras was totally lost after attending the first class of the MBA programme, 2007-09 in XIMB. He had heard of the well known Professor of Economics whose class he had just attended. While Abhishek was very pleased to be in the class of this Professor, he was perplexed with what had happened in the class. After the short introduction to a story of a company, there were moments of chaos when everybody in the class wanted to speak, and there were also long periods of silence to some of the questions raised by the Professor. Instead of giving answers to the questions raised by the students, the Professor rather raised more questions to the questions asked. Abhishek wondered whether he had come to the right place to learn. Abhishek had an offer for a PhD on Robotics with partial scholarship in a US university and he wondered whether he should reconsider this offer.

Abhishek experienced similar feelings of chaos and disorder with little answers from the other professors in marketing, finance, decision sciences, and general management courses. To add to this, every professor had given a bunch of reading materials for every session. For every class, there would be a descriptive story; what they called as a Case and then one or two associated readings. Abhishek, like most other students felt that the associated readings though tough, explained important theories and principles but the stories; the so called cases were easy to read but had little substance. What was the big thing about a Case?

Except for a few sessions in several courses, where the professors explained some concepts and theories, most of the sessions were case based discussions. The professors often raised questions and left the class to find answers. The professors expected the students to talk more than themselves in the class. This was quite contrary to what Abhishek and the others in his class had experienced in their previous undergraduate and post graduate studies. How would we learn if the professor explained so little in the class and let the students discuss it out? Some students even remarked *“If we were to discuss among ourselves then why should we come to a class; we*

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<sup>1</sup> © Dr. Amar KJR Nayak, Associate Professor, Strategic Management, Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar, India. Email: amar@ximb.ac.in

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*could as well do that in our hostels or elsewhere.”* Some students were further critical on whether the professors deserved the high salaries for simply raising questions in the class? Was this technique employed by the professors who were ill prepared for the class or those who had other engaging consultancy and training programmes and had no time to prepare for the classes? *“Preparing and updating the lectures for each session would obviously take more time”* said a class representative of the class wisely.

XIMB had a very good library with a large collection of books, journals, magazines and other classics in the field of management studies (see Exhibit 1). However, most professors did not provide or follow any textbooks in particular. They rather distributed bunches of photocopied materials (see Exhibit 2). *What a waste of valuable paper!*, some students commented Others thought, instead of the photocopies, students could be given more than one text book for each subject. The air conditioned library operated between 8.00 A.M. and 10.00 P.M. everyday and at times, it operated round the clock. While most were happy and proud about the infrastructure and facility, some thought it was a useless expenditure incurred.

The classrooms were also different from what the students were accustomed to in the undergraduate colleges of engineering, science, arts, or commerce prior to getting into XIMB. The classes were like an amphitheatre and some classes even had swivel chairs. The classrooms were equipped with the all the modern teaching aids: lap tops, internet connection, LCD projector, OHP projector, public address system, screens for projection, large board, etc. (see Exhibit 3). However, most of the time, the professors used the large boards that covered the entire length of the front wall.

While some students enjoyed seeing the professor working hard to write in every part of the board, some wondered why the professor did not use the technology available in the classroom. A student remarked *“The notes could be written in power point slides and then projected onto the board using the LCD that is already set-up in the classroom. Instead of spending time writing in the board, the professor could answer a few questions in the class. The professors usually took time to write most of the key points discussed by the class. Sometimes the professor echoed strongly some comments or statements made by the students.”*

Most students were used to being evaluated through a single university examination at the end of the academic year or at the end of a semester, i.e. every six months. Evaluation through practicals or dissertation was very limited. In XIMB, the evaluation & grading was different

too. Evaluation was continuous and consisted of many components with a lot of emphasis on class participation, class discussions, assignments and group projects (see Exhibit 4). Certain components appeared to be too subjective. The weightage given to class participation seemed to be disproportionately high. In courses with major emphasis on group work and case discussions; the weightage on class participation was even higher. It seemed that those who could be verbose were rewarded more marks. Why was talking in the class given so much importance? Some students in an effort to speak more actually wasted class time with their undeveloped thoughts. How did the professor evaluate such kind of participation?

Students were not used to the grading system; the so called relative grading. Although Abhishek was used to relative grading in IIT Madras, most others in his batch were used to the percentage system. He tried to figure out, how would the professor grade the students if the whole class decided to perform poorly on a particular course? Would there be some basic minimum pass mark?

As MBA aspirants do, Abhishek's batchmates too had read about MBA education and life in a MBA school from various sources like the internet, blogs, pagalguy.com, and also heard from people in the coaching centres. A XIMBian had written about life in XIMB and had posted it in pagalguy.com (see Exhibit 5). For many who had read this; life at XIMB seemed hectic but actually was relaxed like in a youth camp cramped with activities. It did not suggest much on learning outcomes and hence did not match either the claims of the coaching centres or their own experience in the first term of the MBA programme 2007-09 in XIMB. What then had changed?

Abhishek's batch mates were reluctantly falling in line with the weird teaching and learning practices in XIMB. Most of them were willing to go through whatever it takes with the hope that they will get employed in multinational companies with big fat salaries within 20 months of joining XIMB. They enthusiastically looked forward to the announcements of the Placement Office, the Placement Coordinator and counted their days to leave the XIMB campus. By the end of first Term, though Abhishek began to discover and learn many things on his own and was also among the top 10 of the class, he still wondered if the weird teaching and learning method adopted by the professors in XIMB was just a business with hype or it had some strong logic and philosophy.

## Questions for Discussion

1. What dilemmas did Abhishek face as he began his journey of education in XIMB?
2. What do you think has been the learning style of Abhishek?
3. What are the issues about professors that troubles Abhishek in XIMB?
4. What are the teacher(s) trying to achieve in the class discussions?
5. What are the concrete issues with reading materials and class room discussion?
6. What are the issues in evaluation and grading that the classmates of Abhishek are confused about?
7. Is Abhishek finding any difference between popular opinions and descriptions about the learning environment in XIMB (as depicted in the internet, coaching centres, etc) and the actual experience?
8. How much should Abhishek and his fellow students rely on the suggestions and orientation of their seniors in XIMB?
9. How does the learning environment in XIMB add value to the students' thinking abilities?
10. On what basis do the companies that recruit students from XIMB and other institutes of management justify high salaries?

## Exhibit 1: Library Facilities



Exhibit 2: Photocopies of Reading Materials





Exhibit 3: Class Room with latest Teaching Aids



## Exhibit 4: Evaluation Components of a few Courses

### Strategic Management:

Class Preparedness & Discussions:	20%
Quiz / Mid Term Exam:	10%
Group Term Project:	30%
End Term (Closed & Open Book Exam):	40 %

### Financial Institution and Market

Quizzes (2):	20%
Case Study Presentation:	20%
Mid Term:	25%
End term:	35%

### Consumer Behaviour

Case (4 full-length cases):	20%
CB Exercise:	10%
Class participation:	10%
Group Project:	30%
End Semester:	30%

### Indian Multinational Strategy

Class Preparedness & Discussions:	10 %
Mid Term Assignment:	20 %
Term Case Study:	30 %
End Term Examination (Open book):	40 %

### Firms, Markets and Global Dynamics

Assignment 1:	10%
Presentation 1:	5%
Presentation 2:	5%
Class Participation:	15%
Assignment 2:	25%
End Term:	40%



## Exhibit 5: Life @ XIM, Bhubaneswar - 20-08-2006, 02:17 AM

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XST: XIM Standard Time

*Normal daily routine of a guy at XIMB*

8:45 XST: Wake up time...the alarm goes off....  
8:48 XST: The alarm which you conveniently ignored earlier ...goes off again  
8:50 XST: You finally wake up  
8:51 XST: A quick trip to the loo  
8:55 XST: You wake up ppl...who'r still in a slumber  
8:58 XST: You dash to the class.  
9:00 XST: If you are lucky you make it to class, JIT (just in time)  
9:02 XST: The ones who are not so lucky, make an entry into class, some would be asked to leave, if you are lucky, you get to attend the class, but no attendance for u, if you are really really lucky. ...the profis late!!!  
9:05 XST: Attendance done...time to doze off in class  
9:10 XST: Man when does this class end  
10:25 XST: Yawn....of the class is coming to an end is it???  
10:30 XST: Damn c'mon prof....you gotta let us go now  
10:31 XST: Hey prof CMON  
10:32 XST: Finally...you're out  
10:35 XST: Breakfast time  
10:59 XST: What time for the next class already...DAMN  
11:00 XST: Class 2...more or less the same as class 1  
12:30 XST: Time for lunch..or is it time for another nap...  
12:45 XST: Lunch!!!  
  
13:15 XST: Do i have to bathe today???  
13:20 XST: Do i really need to bathe...  
13:30 XST: ok guess its been days since i last bathed...  
13:50 XST: Damn another class....what about my nap...  
14:00 XST: Class 3..... read what happens in class1  
15:30 XST: Class ends....time for a coffee...  
15:35 XST: You sip coffee peacefully.....  
15:45 XST: Class 4, what a quiz...a surprise quiz....how come the other section gets to give it in the next class...how come no "surprise"for them....  
15:46 XST: Damn was this ever discussed in class...i can't seem to recall anything  
15:59 XST: Thank god its over...lets hope..everybody got it wrong..that way..it really doesn't matter..  
16:00 XST: Time to sleep again  
17:15 XST: Yawwnnnn...oh the class got over is it..  
17:16 XST: Snacks time.....  
  
17:30 XST: Time for football...time for tennis...time for badminton....  
18:15 XST: Can't i bunk the next class...how about a proxy...  
18:36 XST: You make it class...a whole 6 mins late...  
19:15 XST: You need to be excused....you take a loo break...you walk out..  
19:16 XST: You change your mind ...you don't wanna go back.....plus ...its time you've been to sandy square...this is the time..when all the pretty faces turn up ..there..you head to CCD..  
19:20 XST: You get an SMS from a frnd in class "Dude ...why aren't you back yet, prof just announced a surprise quiz.....he's bolted the door"aaarrrrrrrrggggghhhh..you just lost 15% of your weightage....damn damn .... damn  
20:14 XST: You just realise ...thats its a 6 class day....and today's the day..  
20:15 XST: What another class....when does all this end..  
20:30 XST: You turn up 15 mins late...  
21:00 XST: Sir, can we end ...the class now...its been a long day...  
21:01 XST: Just a few more mins..son...i promise to end the class 5 mins earlier...(thats still 40 mins away)  
21:30 XST: Sir can we end now puhlllllllease....sure sure....just a few more mins  
21:45 XST: You start getting up to leave...its times the class ended..  
21:46 XST: Just a min son, i know i promised ...we'd end early...but I gotta explain this....mon..we'd can start something...new next class  
21:50 XST: Finally it ends..  
  
21:51 XST: Thank god the day is over....well is it...  
21:52 XST: There's a commotion in the porch area...  
21:53 XST: What the hell's happening.....WHAT ..... assignment.....MC assignment and it NEEDS TO BE SUBMITTED BY 11:59 tonite.....when was that announced.....there was nuthing on the notice board...when you chkd at 8pm...it just got announced.....  
21:54 XST: WHAT ABOUT THE DINNER THAT WE HAD PLANNED OUTSIDE...

21:55 XST: You rush to the mess...and finish off dinner.....  
 22:00 XST: What did i have for dinner anyway.....well does it really matter  
 22:10 XST: You try and understand what the assignment is all about..  
 22:15 XST: You ping your grp mates....(thank god...they invented instant messengers )...Guys get your ass down to my room ASAP..  
 22:40 XST: Your first grp mate arrives..."Man i buzzed you 20 mins back..."Sorry man...i just got your ms"... "What about others".... "Well who elses there in our grp"  
 22:41 XST: Oh yeah good question...let me chk..  
 22:45 XST: Hey class rep....who all did you put in my grp...  
 22:46 XST: Class reps no where to be found....  
 23:00 XST: Class reps finally found...hey who all in my grp.....the reply "Chk grp listing on the intranet - The grps were made by prof"  
 23:05 XST: Damn why didn't i think of that...  
 23:15 XST: Distress call...you send a msg on the LAN mssngr "My grp mates...whoever you are....please come to my Room ASAP...with regards to the MC assign...please please please come..."  
 23:20 XST: Whats the point...the msngr seems to be flooder with similar msgs....  
 23:25 XST: You decide to deal with the assignment ...with just the 3 of your grp mates..who decided to turn up...hell with the rest...  
 23:30 XST: Google.com.... you copy paste...the question as mentioned in the assign.....you do manage to get some results.....download some relevant stuff  
 23:40 XST: You start copy pasting.....your doc seems to building up... hey not bad...i think we can finish it off...Hey Hey add thenames...add the names of the grp member..ok done..  
 23:55 XST: You are pleased with your work..... man time to upload...you gotta hurry....deadline 11:59 sharp...else the intranet won't accept it.  
 23:58 XST: You login to the ..intranet//  
 23:58 XST: Where do i upload...wheres the damn link.....oh yeah found..  
 23:58:52 XST: NOTICE ON SOME SCREENS ..... UPLOAD COMPLETE....UPLOADED BY USER U104082 at time 23:58:52..  
 0000 XST: Notice on some screens "DEADLINE HAS EXPIRED" You cannot upload .... please contact the course instructor...  
  
 0001 XST: What the f..... i did upload ...i upload well before the deadline....you finally come to realise that your system clock is not synchronized with the server lock.....DAAAAAAMMMMMMMMMNNNNNNNNN...thats another 15% lost..  
 0200 XST: You while away time..... happy at completing the assignment (or cribbing over failing to upload ...in some cases)....you get a buzz...  
 0201 XST: You read the msg "Hey....we got a presentation ...at 9 in the morning....i forgot all about it.....didn't realise it was our grps turn...so what say ...we do that now???? "  
 0202 XST: what again.....you are too dumbstruck to even think...you reply...."ok sure....i'd be in your room in a few mins.....inform the girls as well...make sure everybody's there"  
 0215 XST: You walk into your frnds room...everybodys there... except for one girl...where the hell is ...she...  
 0220 XST: After some frantic calls to girl2, girl1 says..shes taking the ximb walk...with...you know who... You scream....."She better be here...or else...shes thrown out of the grp"  
 0230 XST: Girl 2 finally shows up "Sorry yaar...was just discussing ...today's quiz with....." yeah whatever...  
 0345 XST: Presentation..doesn't seem to be making sense....2 of your grp members have dozed off....  
 0400 XST: Two members leave.....  
 0415 XST: the three of you who are left.....finish off....the presentation....pleased with ur work...at least thats what you think  
 0430 XTS: Its been a horrid day...time to crash..  
  
 0845 XTS: Man ..i gotta dress up for the presentation.. man i need to shave....  
 0905 XTS: You arrive in class..clean shaven, your clothes are unironed though....never mind...  
 0910 XTS: The class is waiting for u to start..with your presentation..oh you've forgotten the pen drive...well never mind...take it off.. your comp on the network...damn i forgot to share the folder.....ok ok ...never mind..you can map your drive....don't worry...oh yeah...i can .....but it wouldn't access.....DAMN i had turned my comp off.....

Source: Kartikeya Mishra, 2004-06 batch..., PaGaLGuY.com