

# The Changing Face Of Business School Students-Welcome Gen Y



They prefer to ping each other rather than communicate verbally: e-mails, sms's, twitter and face book. They are not easily influenced by authority and take time to respond to them. Their peer group is very important to them as is always being connected to friends. They are more visual and kinesthetic learners-they would like to avoid information overload (especially print). They are a mosaic of expectations-all parts of their lives are woven and their values and self esteem requirements need to be met in the workplace and in their learning.



If these qualities best describe Gen Y, it is but natural that Business Schools in our country cannot be far behind, in attempting to respond to these qualities of Gen Y. B-Schools may not be planning specifically for the new Generation, yet consciously or unconsciously, there are genuine attempts being made to meet these requirements.

This article endeavors to share how educational institutes, especially management schools have made changes in their curriculum, teaching pedagogy, courses, etc., to ensure greater impact of education on Gen Y and a stronger connect. It draws from the good practices from some well known business schools across India.

### Changing Canvas For Business Schools

A typical classroom in a B School today comprises students who are freshers and laterals [i.e. more than 24 months of work experience prior to MBA]. While students from both these categories belong to Gen Y, students with prior work experience and diverse backgrounds (B.A., B.com, C.A qualified architects and even MBBS students) add interesting dimensions in classroom interactions and make peer learning an interesting experience.

Business Schools have three main internal components-knowledge or content, delivery of programs and the student community. Externally, the corporate sector is an important stakeholder and

changes they experience have a direct impact on the way education is imparted. Many business organizations have shifted focus from being 'cost-effective' to 'innovation/design centric', adding a new dimension to their talent requirement. Business Schools who have read the corporate pulse well have actively incorporated this in their agenda. They have kept 'Innovation' at the center stage. This is seen in their content creation and teaching-learning practices.

### Innovation-At The Center In Today's Business Schools

Gen Y is a highly sought after consumer segment by the industry. Daring and design-conscious, Gen Y, has poised challenges to marketers by demanding innovation in products and services. In turn, the industry has gone tizzy looking for managers who are innovation-driven. This insight was addressed by successfully designing and launching a management program in Business Design and Innovation at Welingkars. The program offers holistic learning and is contributing back to industry and society by grooming future thought leaders. Similarly, other B-Schools have also focused on innovation, and ways and means to educate and deal with Gen Y.

### “Gen Y In The Classroom”- Learning Contracts

On the teaching-learning front, faculty members have to consciously avoid the 'monologue' kind of methodology and bring in interactive and engaging formats. The faculty has to have a two-way dialogue with students.



Prof. Anuradha Mahesh

### About the Author...

Prof. Anuradha Mahesh has been with Welingkar Institute, Bangalore campus since 2003. She is Associate Professor - Retail & Head - Career Management Cell. She has visited prestigious Harvard Business School to attend program on executive education.

She has over 15 years of industrial experience in sectors like Media and Retail. She is a member on Advisory Board of CARBON fine jewellery. Last year Prof. Anuradha Mahesh was Hon. Secretary of NHRD Network, Bangalore chapter and is a very passionate worker for HR causes. She has been invited as Speaker on various forums such as FKCCI, ISB-Goldman Sachs Entrepreneurship Forum, Union Bank, etc. She can be contacted at profanuradha@gmail.com



Tools like 'Learning contracts' are being discussed at B-School forums in order to improve teaching-learning interaction. A student creates a learning document to compare current abilities with desired abilities and determine the best strategy for bridging the gap. Such tools help faculty create individual learning, access students in a balanced manner, resulting in a healthy learning atmosphere.

**Key changes taking place in the way management is taught at Business Schools:**

**S**hift in focus from classroom learning to field based learning through a variety of practices like project work, data collection from field, increased number of internship programs etc. Many courses have project work integrated into it. Welingkar Institute introduced projects like D-magic where students study a pain-area in the society/industry and come up with innovative solutions for the same.

**G**reater emphasis on skill development and learning by exposure to the real world through Marketing fairs, HR conclaves, Product exhibitions, Conferences and Seminars. All these put students in touch with a practitioner's world.

**M**ore participation and involvement of students in designing their learning activities. SCMHRD and SCMLD encourage students to

choose executive development programs offered by consulting companies to students at concessional rates. They learn lateral thinking, systems thinking, competency mapping, strategic management, brand management, etc., and they are allowed to choose what they want.

**F**ocus on traditional methods like yoga, meditation, talent management, etc., so that they don't lose sight of the traditional wisdom of India which is gaining popularity in other countries.

**M**ore curricular innovations to meet the requirements of the corporate sector. Aurora Business School, SCMLD and Christ College are exposing their students to areas like competency mapping with practical projects and field work. This is done with the help of consulting companies who provide practical experiences.

**Technologies In The Class Room**

Assessments and evaluations are a critical component of measuring a student's overall growth. Gen Y, particularly being technologically savvy has made B-Schools adopt IT initiatives. Right from selling admission applications to conducting exams, B-Schools are using IT in various administrative functions.

**Some of the new practices are:**

**E**ncouraging use of 'clickers' for students to express their opinion while learning from case-studies was found to be a great value add.

**U**se of online exams. This allows faculty to have multiple question papers and give more attention to students at an individual level.

**E**-Learning as a tool to reach out to students especially in executive management programs. This makes learning simpler and accessible. Although technology adds new dimensions to teaching/learning process, it is best used for complimenting the content or style of the faculty, not as a replacement for a faculty member.

In their efforts to engage with Gen Y, management schools have definitely broadened their horizons.

**Changing Agenda: Beyond Business At Business Schools**

In keeping pace with the global business agenda, many management schools have initiated CSR activities and make efforts to connect their students to various sections of society either through NGOs or their own student communities.



Activities like these will help shape future managers to grow as leaders.

At Welingkar Institute, we are partner to Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative, which is aimed at creating a new generation of globally responsible business leaders and to be a catalyst of changing values and practices.

**The Way Ahead:**

Gen Y is the fastest growing segment of today's workforce and they arrive at the work place with a new attitude-one

that can certainly be considered an asset. As firms compete for talent, employers cannot ignore the needs, desires and attitudes of this dynamic generation. In today's world, who wouldn't want someone who is Tech Savvy, Family Centric, Achievement and Team Oriented? Management can utilize Gen Y youth, experience, knowledge and varying cultural backgrounds as tools to establish better connection with the changing market.

Business Schools have introduced a variety of courses and advanced teaching

methodologies to provide a well-rounded and challenging study environment. There is scope for more systematic effort to build skills and respond to the needs of Gen Y. A lot more research can be done both by the corporate sector, B-Schools and HRD Ministry.

Along with placement focus, efforts made for understanding the youth and creating learning opportunities, are sure to bring in huge dividends for us and our country in the near future.

**Learning By Doing**

Given below are some indications of how business schools are responding to the changing profile and expectations of students:

- ▶ GRIMS Business School at Vapi encourages students to participate in the dummy stock market.
- ▶ At SCMLD, Pune-Once a week is “students' day” for team & shared learning. Another day in a week is for “out of campus” Action Learning & Earning (work, earn & learn). One has to earn at least Rs.300/- on this day. Once a month, there is an out bound aimed at pure relaxation. All these are to develop healthy habits and conscious living. SCMLD also sends its students to Igatpuri for Vipasana and gets them to sweep the streets in their surroundings to make them understand dignity of labour.
- ▶ At IIMA the students are taken on a Shodha Yatra to remote places to interact with villagers, understand and document grassroots level innovations. In one of its courses focusing on management of the Film Industry, students work on making films and documenting NGO experiences. The Indian School of Business has a 360 Degree Feedback profile for all students before they come to the campus.
- ▶ Welingkar started an AAA program and plans to use an Assessment Centre approach to prepare star students for global careers.
- ▶ EMPI Business School in New Delhi organises industry visits for its students.

**References:**

Shodha Yatra:<http://www.coolavenues.com/b-schools/b-school-diaries/shodh-yatra-iim-ahmedabad>  
 SCMLD:[http://www.scml.org/Day\\_at\\_SCMLD.html](http://www.scml.org/Day_at_SCMLD.html)  
 How Business schools are reacting worldwide to gen Y: [http://www.businessweek.com/bschools/content/jan2010/bs20100121\\_624849.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/bschools/content/jan2010/bs20100121_624849.htm).  
 SCMLD:[http://www.scml.org/Day\\_at\\_SCMLD.html](http://www.scml.org/Day_at_SCMLD.html) How Business schools are reacting worldwide to gen Y:[http://www.businessweek.com/bschools/content/jan2010/bs20100121\\_624849.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/bschools/content/jan2010/bs20100121_624849.htm).

Image Source : <http://www.blogcdn.com/www.engadget.com>

