

## REVIEW OF ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT CELLS AT THE MANAGEMENT INSTITUTES FROM MAHARASHTRA

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### ABSTRACT

*Known popularly as the ED Cells, most of the Management Institutes from Maharashtra have constituted an Entrepreneurship Development Cell. These cells aim to encourage students to take up entrepreneurship as their career. These cells try to bridge the gap between industry and academia through various initiatives that promote the interaction of students with the industry. A study was conducted through a focus group discussion to evaluate the effectiveness of such cells that are working at the Management Institutes from Maharashtra. Five senior Directors were invited for the focus group discussion. The group was by and large of the opinion that such cells are ineffective at most of the colleges. The situation, especially in tier-2 and tier-3 city institutes, is of concern. At institutes in such places, the ED cells are generally operating on paper. At the most, they show some activity in the cell, but there is no mechanism to measure the performance of the ED cells.*

**Keywords:** *Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship Development Cell, Management Institutes*

### Introduction

The present Government has put a major impetus on entrepreneurship by initiating flagship programs like Make In India and Start-up India. Entrepreneurship is not only a subject of teaching and learning at the Management Institutes, albeit it is a major thrust area in line with the national policy. Most of the Management Institutes from Maharashtra have constituted an Entrepreneurship Development (ED) Cell. Such cells generally aim at creating awareness, enhancing competencies, and building an attitude towards entrepreneurship amongst students. Usually, these cells are headed by a senior faculty, and students are also encouraged to participate in cell management. Accreditation agencies like the National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) and the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) have assigned points for evaluating these activities as a part of overall quality assessments. This being the case, almost all the MBA colleges have created the ED cells, and they are functional through the conduct of seminars, workshops, conferences, industrial visits, and other such activities. A study was conducted through a focus group discussion to evaluate the effectiveness of such cells that are working at the Management Institutes from Maharashtra. Five senior Directors were invited for the focus group

discussion. Two points were taken up for discussion – a. Are these ED cells effective, b. What can be done to improve their performance?

### Literature Review

Birajdar and Wagh (2016) in a study of ED cells at Engineering Colleges found that the cells are only conducting awareness programs. But there is nothing that is being done to motivate students to actually take-up entrepreneurship. Wagh (2016) in a study of ED cells at the IITs in the countries find that apart from undertaking developmental activities these cells are actually helping students in converting ideas into businesses. Doshi et al. (2015) write that entrepreneurship plays a significant role in the economic development and growth of nation. An entrepreneur is a crucial factor in the economic development and an integral part of the social and economic transformation. Raveendra et al. (2015) state that colleges must promote entrepreneurship to support the Governments mission like Start Up India, Make In India, Stand Up India, Skill India, and Digital India. Pravin and Ravindra (2015) have urged colleges to promote entrepreneurship clubs in colleges. These clubs, the authors believe would create the required awareness for entrepreneurship development. Kavitha and Sai (2013) believe that entrepreneurship education

at higher educational institutions in India has a major role to play in promoting entrepreneurship amongst Indian students. Seth and Bhatt (2015) have urged higher educational institutions to play a significant role in shaping-up the entrepreneurial aspirations of the Indian students. Bhasker (2006) has written that entrepreneurship should be next education wave in the Indian higher education system. Author has highlighted the fact that 50% of the country's population is under the age group of 20-21 and hence it is important to inculcate a liking for entrepreneurship amongst the students through the education system. Mohan (2015) analyzing challenges and issues faced by management education in India has highlighted that one of the major issue is of developing entrepreneurial orientation amongst the students. The Indian management education system has to motivate its students to take-up entrepreneurship in large numbers.

### **Methodology**

The technique of Focus Group Discussion was selected for the study. Focus group technique involves organized discussion with a selected group of individuals to get information about their opinion and experiences on a topic. Focus group discussion is especially suited for getting various perspectives on a given topic (Gibbs 1997). Powell and Single (1996) have stated that focus groups have advantages over other qualitative methods like in-depth interview and nominal group technique. For the purpose of this study the focus group was formed by inviting five senior Directors of reputed Management Institutes from Maharashtra. Two issues were to be examined – are the ED cells at the Management Institutes effective and what can be done to improve their performance. The discussion took place for about 45 minutes and both the issues were discussed in some depth.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The group was unanimous that the ED cells, by and large, are highly ineffective. The Institutions and the ED cells came for some serious criticism from the focus group. The group firmly opined that these cells are paper cells, and they are not genuine. Rather, they are

more of presentable objects to accreditation agencies like the NAAC and NBA to secure marks. This is done by documenting activities that, at times, do not take place at all but are recorded for evidence. A major complaint was that these ED cells believe that their role is to conduct a few seminars or arrange a few lectures on entrepreneurship every year. The ED cells do not have any vision beyond the seminars and lectures. The group felt that such programs could be arranged otherwise also, and there was no need for separate and specialized ED cells to conduct a few seminars here and there. There is much more for an ED cell to do other than the ritualistic seminars, which they are not doing and are ineffective. Their main aim is to teach an attitude for entrepreneurship amongst the students and impart necessary skills to these students to enable them to take up entrepreneurship in real life. There is no measurement whatsoever of the students' entrepreneurial attitude and entrepreneurial skills to find out if the few seminars have had any impact. The group pointed out that in management, measurement of performance is important. If that itself goes missing, then there is no question of effectiveness. No attempt is seen on the part of the institutions to measure the outcomes in terms of change in attitude and levels of entrepreneurial skills. How many students became entrepreneurs and whether they were successful or not is monitored at all.

The performance measurement for the ED cell is in terms of only inputs, that is, the number of seminars held. The focus group stated a couple of things that should be done on priority by the Management Institutions to improve the performance of their ED cells. One is that the performance measurement metrics of the ED cell should include measurement of change in the attitude of the students and improvement in entrepreneurial skills. Surveys should be devised to measure such changes on a 5-point Likert scale. Another suggestion was to develop tie-ups with agencies like the District Industries Centres (DICs) to identify and actualize entrepreneurial projects. The group emphasized the need for closer interaction of the students with the practical world of entrepreneurship by the students. Another suggestion was that the ED cell identifies few

students every year based on entrepreneurial aptitude and orientation and grooms them with special training.

### Conclusion

While there is consensus on the fact that India needs entrepreneurs, how they will come remains unclear. Some action at the Government level like the Make In India, Start-up India, and other initiatives has given some momentum to entrepreneurial development at the macro level. At the micro-level, we have things like the ED cells in the Management Institutes that motivate students to take up entrepreneurship and launch successful ventures. However, these ED cells are not very

effective since their only mission, it seems, is to organize a few lectures and seminars on entrepreneurship every year. But what happens because of lectures and seminars is not known. Is there an attitudinal change in the students is not known. There is no attempt to measure the levels of entrepreneurial skill improvement amongst students. All these eventually make the ED cells more of show-pieces and score fetching units for accreditation. The Management Institutes should put in some life in these cells by making them more accountable for changes in the entrepreneurial attitude and skills of the students.

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