

An Evolutionary Study of Professors of Practice And Indian Management Education

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ABSTRACT

Integrating Professors of Practice (PoP) in Indian management education is a transformative initiative aimed at bridging the academia-industry gap and enhancing the employability of graduates. PoP brings industry experience into the classroom, fostering experiential learning, skill development, and real-world application of management concepts. This review examines their role in equipping students with industry-relevant skills while addressing institutional challenges in their implementation. The objective of the study aims to systematically reviews existing literature, (i) to analyze the role of PoP in Indian management education; (ii) to evaluate the effectiveness of PoP in improving graduate employability; and (iii) to identify challenges hindering their full integration, and propose strategies. This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) with an exploratory approach, adhering to PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure methodological rigor, transparency, and replicability., analyzing peer-reviewed journal articles, policy reports, and institutional case studies. Thematic analysis was employed to explore the pedagogical contributions of PoP, institutional challenges, and best practices. Institutions should establish structured accreditation frameworks to maximize impact, foster long-term industry partnerships, and integrate technology-driven pedagogical innovations. Findings suggest that PoP significantly contributes to curriculum enrichment, bridging skill gaps, and enhancing employment outcomes. Conversely, their integration requires policy reforms, institutional support, and faculty development programs to ensure long-term sustainability. Strengthening these efforts will help align management education with industry demands, fostering sustainable career development and enhancing graduate employability in India.

KEYWORDS: Professors of Practice, Management Education, Sustainability, Employability, Industry-Academic Collaboration

1. INTRODUCTION

The changes in management education have indicated the need to close the gap between academic concepts and practical implementation. Many faculty members have strong academic qualifications but no industry experience, which is vital for equipping students to face the business world (Mintzberg, 2004). There has been a growing PoP within business schools to fill this gap. This model allows industry veterans to integrate into schools, providing students with industry insights, practical exposure, and valuable learning opportunities (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005). Traditionally, education in management has been and

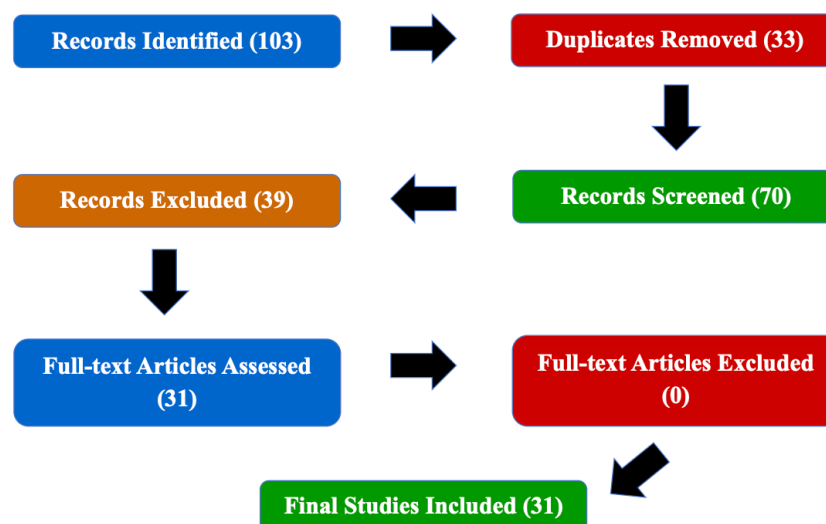
continues to be taught from a theoretical perspective, focusing on case study analysis, strategy, and business theory. Conversely, the growing concern about the complexity of global business calls for a shift towards more practice and collaboration with industry to improve students' employability and enhance sustainable pedagogy (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). PoP connects the two worlds, bringing actual business problems, current issues in the business world, and practical work to the teaching of management (Starkey & Tempest, 2009). Their engagement contributes to integrating business training and industry demands, thereby minimizing the discrepancy between educational institutions' learning outcomes and the businesses' needs (Ghoshal, 2005). Within the Indian scenario, the University Grants Commission (UGC) released PoP appointment guidelines for use in 2022. These guidelines permit non-PhD holders with considerable professional experience to lecture at the tertiary level (UGC, 2022). This is meant to create a more practical, skills-oriented learning environment where graduates are prepared to enter the workforce and have meaningful knowledge. Given India's increasing focus on sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR), applying PoP in management education is anticipated to better prepare students for responsible business, ethical leadership, and value creation in socially responsible management (Shrivastava, 2010).

The study aims to review the existing literature, to work out (i) to analyze the role of PoP in Indian management education; (ii) to evaluate the effectiveness of PoP in improving graduate employability; and (iii) to identify challenges hindering their full integration, and propose strategies.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a systematic literature review (SLR) with an analytical scope following PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) to ensure proper methodology, clarity, and replicability. Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and UGC-CARE listed journals were the data sources, particularly on peer-reviewed articles and policy documents published between 2000 to 2024. Thematic dimensions like experiential learning, industry-academic collaboration, and graduate employability were analyzed using a narrative synthesis approach. The study offers educational and policy recommendations to improve the impact of PoP management education in India.

Figure 1
PRISMA Flow Chart



Source: Computed by Author

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF POP

Early 20th Century: Foundations of Applied Learning

John Dewey's (1938) educational philosophy was one of the leaders in the shift toward experiential learning in the early 20th century. He argued that schooling must be based on students' real-life experiences and that learners should be facilitated to reason and solve problems through active learning. This concept has been adopted into the technical areas of engineering and medicine, where skill acquisition through practical work is necessary (Dewey, 1938). The focus on applied learning laid the foundation for integrating industry professionals into academia, particularly in disciplines requiring direct industry exposure. These ideas later influenced management education, which began recognizing the need for industry-oriented teaching methodologies.

Mid-20th Century: Early Integration in Business Education

By the 1950s and 1970s, business schools started incorporating guest lectures and adjunct faculty members from the industry, bridging the gap between academia and practical business applications. The Harvard Business School case method, introduced in this period, emphasized real-world problem-solving by engaging professionals to share industry insights (Christensen & Carlile, 2009). In the 1980s, Donald Schön's Reflective Practitioner model reinforced the significance of integrating practical expertise into teaching, advocating that professionals develop knowledge through reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983). This perspective was essential in shaping the role of Professors of Practice, as it provided an academic framework for industry experts to contribute meaningfully to higher education.

Late 20th Century: Institutionalization of Industry-Academia Collaboration

Executive education and corporate training grew in the 1990s and early 2000s, and the need for faculty with real-world experience increased. The shift to practitioner-oriented MBA programs brought about the formal incorporation of industry professionals as adjunct faculty in business schools (Pfeffer&Fong,2002). At that time, Ernest Boyer's Model of Scholarship (1990) reformulated academic contributions, and defined scholarship of application as a type that justified the work of practitioners in teaching and research (Boyer, 1990). The Pressed for new approaches in education, universities have developed structured policies on their recruitment of Professors of Practice, acknowledging their disciplines Practitioners as available links to other entities, as well as sources of employability and industrial relevance.

The Rise of Industry-Academia Collaboration (1990s-2000s)

A global 1990s and 2000s drive was to try to inject growth in the teaching higher education collaboration with industry. Similar initiatives were taken in business schools and technical institutions, focusing on learning through internships, guest speaker lectures, and industry-experienced faculty (Perkmann et al., 2013). The academic realm underwent a transformation over the period; The old research-centered model of academia was now yielding to an application-based model of teaching students how to be a part of business. In professional education, universities began formalizing PoP roles (AACSB, 2018) in business, law, and public policy.

Early 21st Century: PoP as a Formal Role

A significant rise in the adoption of Professors of Practice can be observed in the past decade due to the greater sophistication of contemporary industries and the need for universities to graduate career-ready students (Galloway & Jones, 2012). This was accompanied with Stanford, MIT, and Oxford instituting

formal PoP appointments to bring the industrial lens to academia. Aided by practitioner faculty, business schools began offering practice-oriented MBA specializations where industry courses were taught by PoP faculty, thus closing the gap between the classroom and the business world. Their contribution was later recognized by accreditation agencies such as AACSB (2018) and EQUIS, which praised the effect of practitioner faculty as they were vastly changing management education for the better. The transformation allowed students to work in real-life contexts and interact and perform problem-solving, case analysis and applied research with industry professionals. In 2022, the Indian University Grants Commission approved a policy permitting the appointment of PoPs who do not hold teaching degrees but have substantial industry experience, allowing them to lecture at universities (UGC, 2022). This was designed to fill the gap between expectation and reality in higher education, which does not provide students with the necessary industry exposure and knowledge. They were part of India's National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020, which promotes multidisciplinary education and increased collaboration between universities and industries (MHRD, 2020). The UGC had sought to integrate PoP into business schools so as to enhance practical knowledge, and employability to the management students.

3.2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PROFESSORS OF PRACTICE

Experiential learning theories, particularly Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), suggest that direct industry experience enhances cognitive and behavioral learning. PoP integrates theoretical knowledge with real-world applications, fostering students' ability to apply classroom concepts in professional settings. Dewey's (1938) philosophy of education also emphasizes learning by doing, further supporting the necessity of industry engagement in academia.

Dewey's Experiential Learning (1938) and Applied Knowledge

Dewey's experiential learning theory (1938), with its proposition that direct exposure to real-world situations offers better learning opportunities, was defined as a foundation for practice-based education (Dewey, 1938). His work led institutions to introduce problem-based learning (PBL) and experiential education models, eventually influencing business schools' focus on industry-driven faculty hiring. An example of this is PoP, which brings workplace experience into classrooms to create a lively and application-focused learning atmosphere.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984) and Learning by Doing

In 1984, David Kolb expanded Dewey's ideas through Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), which outlines a four-stage learning cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). This framed a cornerstone of applied education and entrenched the value of having professionals as educators to take students through experiential learning cycles. In undergraduate business schools, conversely, Kolb's four-step learning process is often linked to a four-part structure of courses, which ensures that students learn theory and then apply it to projects in the field, guided by professors of practice.

Schön's Reflective Practitioner Model (1983) and Practical Learning

There can be little dispute that Donald Schön's Reflective Practitioner theory (1983) introduced the idea that expertise is developed through reflection-in-action; therefore, practice-based education is fundamental to developing skills (Schön, 1983). Under this theory, business schools introduced mentoring by industry professionals, live projects, and case studies to foster experiential learning in students. PoP implementation coincided with Schön's reflective learning framework, whereby students could receive hands-on experience from industry through mentorship and pedagogical practice.

Boyer's Model of Scholarship (1990) and Industry-Academic Integration

Ernest Boyer's helped establish the legitimacy of practice-based contributions in academia through his model for Scholarship of Application (Boyer, 1990), legitimizing the practice of PoP in research and teaching. Boyer's work, by contrast, moved away from traditional academic hierarchies that focus heavily on the scholarly merits of research faculty, advocating for faculty who could translate theories into actionable information for their students. This framework validated PoP positions as necessary to the role of universities, highlighting the importance of the need for industry and business education engagement.

The Future of PoP in Higher Education

PoP has evolved to parallel the changing landscape of higher education, with industry relevance and employability as dominant concerns. From Dewey's experiential learning to UGC's 2022 policy reforms, integrating industry professionals into academia has been validated theoretically and institutionally and trained on data through October 2023. Also, going forward, universities need to adopt MORE stringent policies in favour of PoP recruitment, training, and industry partnerships to ensure management education keeps pace with global business trends and workforce needs.

3.3 UGC GUIDELINES FOR PoP

The UGC Guidelines for PoP represent major reforms toward enhancing industry-academia consultative mechanisms in India's higher education scope. In consonance with NEP 2020 objectives, the guidelines focus on experiential learning, skills, and exposure to work environments to develop the employability and professionalism of graduates. This initiative enables highly experienced industry personnel to participate in teaching professions without the traditional academic credentials of a PhD or research publications. The guidelines aim to utilize the knowledge of professionals with a minimum of 15 years of senior-level experience to narrow the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application of the concepts taught to ensure that management education is relevant to contemporary business and technological changes. The framework defines three types of engagement: institution-funded, industry-sponsored, and honorary, which allows flexibility in payment and collaboration with the institution. Professors of Practice contribute by designing guest lectures, mentored instruction, skills instruction, and industry-directed student research projects. As with the principle of academic conservatism, current faculty members and active retired graduates cannot fill these positions because the policies expect industry experts to teach and refresh the contemporary perspective on management education. In addition, the limit on the number of PoPs is set at ten percent of the total faculty headcount to ensure a proper balance between theory and practice teaching. Despite the significant potential in raising the employability rate, fostering a more innovative approach towards education, and more interdisciplinary research, some factors are bound to create problems. Some of these are lack of clarity in operational procedures, pushback from older academics and practitioners, limited resources, and possibly loss of rigor. Specific institutional rules, regular monitoring of PoP's input, and effective multidisciplinary industry-academic partnership models are required to minimize those risks. Within this framework, the introduction of Professors of Practice by the UGC is a bold step toward changing the business and management education landscape in India by emphasizing the need for multidisciplinary, industry-supported teaching and learning approaches as well as practice-based curricula to better prepare young business executive for a more competitive international marketplace.

3.4 THE EVOLUTION OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

Early 20th Century: The Birth of Business Education

Management education emerged as a distinct academic discipline in the early 20th century, with the establishment of business schools aimed at training professionals for administrative and managerial roles.

The Wharton School (1881) and Harvard Business School (1908) were among the pioneers in formalizing business education, integrating subjects like finance, accounting, and organizational behavior (Khurana, 2007). Harvard's introduction of the case study method in 1921 revolutionized management pedagogy, emphasizing real-world decision-making over rote memorization (Christensen & Carlile, 2009). Early business schools primarily catered to industrial and corporate needs, laying the groundwork for applied managerial training that combined theoretical and practical elements.

Mid-20th Century: The Rise of Scientific Management and Specialization

By the 1950s and 1970s, management education evolved under the influence of scientific management principles, particularly Frederick Taylor's efficiency studies and Henry Fayol's administrative theories (Taylor, 1911; Fayol, 1949). This period shifted toward a quantitative and analytical approach, with business schools incorporating subjects like operations research, decision sciences, and business analytics (Mintzberg, 2004). The Carnegie and Ford Foundation reports (1959) criticized business schools for lacking rigor and advocated for a more research-driven curriculum, leading to the rise of MBA programs with structured frameworks and case-based learning models (Gordon & Howell, 1959).

Late 20th Century: Globalization and the Expansion of Management Education

During the 1980s and 1990s, management education experienced a global boom driven by the expansion of multinational corporations and liberalized economies. Business schools diversified their curricula to include global strategy, cross-cultural management, and emerging market dynamics (Porter, 1985). The rise of executive MBA (EMBA) programs catered to working professionals, marking a shift toward lifelong learning and industry-driven education (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). At the same time, Boyer's Model of Scholarship (1990) redefined the faculty role, recognizing the importance of applied knowledge and industry expertise in academia (Boyer, 1990). These developments laid the foundation for greater collaboration between academia and industry in business education.

The 21st Century: Digital Transformation and Industry Integration

Technological advancements, globalization, and industry integration have profoundly impacted the 21st century. The emergence of online learning (Datar et al., 2010), MOOCs (massive open online courses), and hybrid MBA courses has disrupted traditional scalability paradigms in business education, providing an even more affordable learning offering in terms of price and time (Keegan et al., 2022). With a stronger emphasis on data-driven decision-making, artificial intelligence, and financial technologies, curricular realignment has followed, notably in business analytics, digital marketing, and technology management (Agarwal & Brem, 2020). Also, accreditation agencies like AACSB and EQUIS have encouraged stronger industry-academia partnerships, pushing practitioner-led education (AACSB, 2018). Nevertheless, in an Indian context, the National Education Policy (NEP)- 2020 emphasizes experiential, interdisciplinary, and skill-oriented education, promoting more industry participation in academia to bridge the employability gap (Maheshkumar S & Soundarapandian M, 2025). It further supports the idea of PoP as a strategy for promoting students' abilities for real-world use. Thus, Indian b-schools are increasingly embracing new domains like digital transformation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability in their curricula, in what is a get to fill the gap rendered by the changing and complicated global economy (Maheshkumar S & Soundarapandian M, 2023). These institutional developments represent a paradigm shift to a multisectoral, practice-based, and innovation-oriented management education.

3.5 SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION IN MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES

Sustainability education continues to be a challenge for management training institutions worldwide. According to UNESCO, sustainability education is a strong need as one of the United Nations Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs), equipping students to tackle global problems (Sharma & Gupta, 2020). PoP is crucial in delivering industry-relevant sustainability education using case studies, project-based learning, and real-world problem-solving approaches (Wiek et al., 2011). Sustainability education is directed as one of the core elements in management programs in conjunction with other international issues like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies (Maheshkumar S & Soundarapandian M, 2024). UNESCO emphasizes the significance of education for sustainable development (ESD) to ensure that future managers can resolve economic, environmental, and social issues (UNESCO, 2017). An expanding number of business schools opt to include courses emphasizing sustainability, such as green finance, socially responsible investing, and ethical leadership, taught to improve responsible decision-making as part of business education (Benn et al., 2018). PoP plays a significant role in sustainability education by providing sustainable business strategies that aid in actualizing the industry's practices.

Case and project-based teaching, as well as fostering real-world problems, deviates from the traditional approach of faculty to teach, and instead, PorPoP (people of the profession) pedagogues work with actual industry issues (Wiek et al., 2011). Such a systematic approach helps students grapple with business sustainability challenges, including supply chain sustainability, climate risk management, and corporate ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) compliance (Stubbs & Cocklin, 2008). Interdisciplinary and problem-centered approaches have brought about new learning methods to sustainability education. There is a growing tendency to integrate simulation and community-based learning, as well as industry-academia initiatives, all of which aim at greater participation of students (Starik & Rands, 1995). Under the initiative of the United Nations, The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) urges business schools to practically engage industry practitioners in designing a sustainability-focused curriculum (Rusinko, 2010). Professors of Practice, with their hands-on expertise and professional networks, are indispensable in implementing these pedagogical advancements. Despite these advancements, challenges remain in fully integrating sustainability education into mainstream management curricula. Barriers such as institutional resistance, lack of faculty training, and inadequate industry-academic collaboration hinder the effectiveness of sustainability programs (Shrivastava, 2010). Addressing these challenges requires policy reforms, faculty development programs, and increased engagement with industry leaders, reinforcing the importance of PoP in transforming sustainability education (Lozano et al., 2013).

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to complement the efficacy of PoP in Indian management education, institutions may adopt a systematic and strategic approach that triangulates policy making, pedagogical innovations, and industry-academia partnership. This postulation is based on an overall literature review, and it is congruent with primary research aims:

Analyzing the Role of PoP in Indian Management Education

PoP serves as the key interface between industry and academia, imparting applied experience, problem-solving capability in real life, and industry best practices to the campus. They don't play their role, though, because of unclear policy guidelines, absence of standardized criteria for judging, and limited institutional commitment. For them to make their positive impact, standardized policy implementation defining recruiting, tenure, and performance-measurement guidelines in universities must be put in place. There should be a framework of systematic assessment formulated to determine their effects on student learning,

skill attainment, and industry preparedness in order to ascertain their congruence with institutional academic objectives.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of PoP in Improving Graduate Employability

One of the major purposes of bringing PoP on campus is to improve the employment of graduates by industry-specifying students, problem-solving ability, and hands-on experience. For this reason, industry-academia synergy has to come in the form of joint research projects, live case studies, guest lectures, and corporate mentorship initiatives. Institutions need to bring PoP regularly in touch with industry experts and normal faculty members so that conflict-free learning environment can be developed. Similarly, universities can promote innovative approaches to teaching, including simulations, business incubation spaces, and consultancy projects, to close the gap between academic theory and practice. Offering capacity-building workshops for PoPs can also ensure that they can convert industry expertise into organized academic learning.

Identifying Challenges and Proposing Solutions for Full Integration of PoP

While PoPs have advantages, intellectual and political barriers limit their integration into the institutions. These barriers are traditional faculty opposition, policy ambiguity, poor advancement prospects, and weak motivational drivers. The institutions should seek to overcome these barriers by including sustainability standards in curriculum design and integrating ESG concerns into management education. Some education providers perceive PoPs as instrumental in achieving a sustainable development approach and transforming students' minds to enable future business leaders to make ethical and socially responsible decisions. International benchmarks and standards must also be implemented to ensure that the PoPs are of the needed quality. Universities ought to incorporate international case studies, student mobility, and cross-national partnerships to homogenize PoP outputs and participate in the creation of a competitive management education system. Motivation, retention, and achievement in academia can be improved by establishing institutional support structures, for example, offering specific career pathways for PoPs, funding motivational awards, and sponsoring research. The PoP in higher education brings fresh prospects of closing the industry-academia divide. On the contrary, several systemic and organizational obstacles impede their comprehensive application. There is no standardized evaluation system to measure PoP's contributions, so policy and institutional constraints are significant obstacles. This results in opposition from the conservative faculty, who feel that the balance of power within academic institutions and the emphasis on research instead of teaching would be negatively impacted. This, along with poor knowledge and low levels of industry engagement, prevents organizations from forming long-term relationships, making it difficult for PoPs to make meaningful contributions to curriculum design, research, and mentoring. End-of-career aides with ambiguous employment conditions only add to the disincentives for many practitioners to take up teaching positions. The combination of fixed-term contracts and vague advancement prospects makes the employment landscape tenuous because there are no clear delineating markers for where the career begins and ends.

In order to effectively implement PoP in management education in India, institutions of higher learning need to develop and make public recruitment, tenure, and appraisal rules consistent with industry and academic standards. Strengthening industry-academia collaboration frameworks will enable collaborative research projects, shared curriculum development, and hands-on learning, thereby doubling the connection of business education to the industry. At the same time, effectiveness of the Pop model must be increased by leveraging advanced technologies, such as digital learning platforms, case methods, and other active learning methodologies. Finally, long-term sustainability and success of PoP in India will be jeopardized

if international standards of practice and those of accrediting agencies such as AACSB and EQUIS are not adhered to, as this will render Indian management education adherence to international standards.

These efforts make it possible for management institutions to harness Pop efficiently in a manner that enhances the employability of their graduates and fosters an industry-driven learning environment. A policy-oriented framework and innovative pedagogy are sure to enhance the role of Pop in management education and promote sustainability, competitiveness, and excellence in an academic environment.

5. CONCLUSION

PoP bridges the gap between academia and industry by integrating the applied nature of management education. It needs participation from the industry, a systematic design, and creative pedagogy in order to be more effective. Focus on these will improve employability and sensitization to sustainability for management education students.

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