Monday, November 3, 2025
CHENNAI

THE HINDU

EDUCATIONPLUS

GET THE EDGE Follow us facebook.com/thehindu twitter.com/the_hindu instagram.com/the_hindu

Numbers are not enough

Although India's rise in the global higher education rankings is encouraging, it should inspire reform rather than complacency.

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

John J. Kennedy

Every year, global university rankings bring a mix of pride and disappointment for India. While some institutions deserve praise for consistent performance, others don't find a place or slip in the rankings. The paradox is stark: a country with a rich intellectual heritage still struggles to join the world's academic elite.

In the QS Asia Rankings 2025, India tops the list with 193 universities, well ahead of China's 135, marking a strong numerical presence. But quality gaps remain. In the QS World University Rankings 2025, only IIT-Delhi (123rd), IIT-Bombay (129th), and Delhi University (328th) make the cut. The THE World Reputation Rankings 2025 feature just four Indian names – IISC, IIT-Delhi, IIT-Madras, and Siksha 'O' Anusandhan; all between 201-300. IIT-Bombay, once a regular, is absent. The gulf between regional dominance and global prestige is growing.

Deep-rooted issues

India's higher education quality gap stems from deep-rooted issues. Only about 39% of universities and 20% of colleges are NAAC-accredited and the share with 'A' grades is far below the often-quoted 30-45%, revealing uneven standards and major deficiencies. Chronic underfunding, outdated labs, and inadequate digital infrastructure suppress research output and citations, eroding global standing

In addition, the faculty crisis intensifies these problems. Indian universities struggle to attract and retain world-class faculty due to a funding crunch, limited exposure to global networks, a rigid work culture, insufficient research time, limited professional development opportunities, and large class sizes. For example, the student-teacher ratio in India's higher education system is about 24:1, compared to 19:1 in China and 16:1 to 20:1 in the U.S. This not only impedes individualised attention but also disadvantages research productivity and mentorship. Administrative bottlenecks and excessive bureaucracy further limit innovation, preventing universities from responding to new research areas or academic shifts.

Importantly, research output remains a weak link in most institutions. Universities, squeezed by falling government support, are forced into survival mode rather than planning ambitious research agendas. The Indian government allocates approximately 0.17% of GDP specifically to higher education, compared to much higher total education outlays of around 4-4.6% of GDP. In contrast, China and the U.S. allocate a substantially higher percentage of GDP to higher and tertiary education as a component of their much larger public education expenditures. India's share of global research publications and citations remains low, a symptom of underfunding and a lack of incentives for original work.

India vs. the world

Comparisons are revealing. In the 2025 THE Asia Rankings, Chinese universities, led by Tsinghua and Peking, dominate the top five due to extensive state investment. Much of China's education budget is directed toward infrastructure, cutting-edge labs, and attracting international faculty. Chinese universities enjoy greater autonomy, allowing flexibility in curriculum and research priorities, while strong industry partnerships fuel both funding and innovation. The West offers further lessons. Germany, for instance, ensures stable public funding and robust research grants, while the U.S. blends governmental support, endowments, and a tradition of alumni and industry giving. High faculty salaries, institutional autonomy, and internationalisation drive teaching and research excellence. In contrast, Indian institutions remain rigid, with uncertain funding streams and limited scope for innovation.

Rankings aren't perfect, but they matter; they indicate and influence academic quality. High rankings attract talent, researchers, and funding, driving global partnerships and further progress. Poor rankings, meanwhile, repel talent and reinforce underperformance. Ultimately, these league tables reflect a nation's innovation and competitiveness.

So, how should India progress? Incremental changes won't work; bold reforms are needed. Increasing government funding is vital but institutions must also boost research revenue through patents, corporate tie-ups, philanthropy, and alumni support, following best global practices. Strengthening institutional autonomy will let universities set their own academic and research priorities. Addressing the faculty shortage and quality concerns requires sustained training investment, global exposure, flexible work culture, and competitive salaries to attract top talent. Infrastructure upgrades should enhance digital learning and advanced labs, not just new buildings. Finally, promoting original research and internationalisation by incentivising global scholarship and updating curricula for a connected world is key to lasting progress.

Although India's rise in the rankings is encouraging, it should inspire reform rather than complacency. Without implementing these much-needed actionable goals, the coming decade may yield only incremental progress, falling short of the breakthrough needed for an Indian university to crack the global top ten. It is time to move beyond explaining our lag and start planning a leap forward, for our students, nation, and global standing.

The writer is a former professor and dean, Christ University, Bengaluru.

SCHOLARSHIPS

SBI Platinum Jubilee Asha Scholarship
An initiative of the SBI Foundation
Eligibility: Students from Classes 9-12 or in UG/ PG programmes in Indian institutions ranked in the top 300 NIRF or NAAC A+ with family income not exceeding ₹300,000 for school students and ₹600,000 for others. Overseas students must be pursuing PG or higher courses in top 200 QS/THE-ranked universities. Minimum eligibility is 75% marks or 7 CGPA in the previous year (67.5%/6.3 CGPA for SC/ST).
Rewards: Up to ₹20,00,000
Application: Online
Deadline: November 15
www.b4s.in/edge/SBIFS13

Mahindra Big Boss Nayi Pehchan Scholarship
An initiative from Mahindra & Mahindra
Eligibility: Children of freelance tractor mechanics between seven and 21 years studying in school, college, or vocational course with 50% marks (or equivalent) in the previous class/semester.
Rewards: ₹6,000
Application: Online
Deadline: November 15
www.b4s.in/edge/MAMF1

McDonald Fellowships
Offered by the MS International Federation.
Eligibility: Open to PG students (M.Sc. or higher) related to the fields relevant to multiple sclerosis who are from low or middle-income countries as classified by the World Bank and who are engaged in a related project initiated within six months of the application timeline.
Rewards: € 55,000 a year for two years.
Application: Online
Deadline: December 1
www.b4s.in/edge/MCDF1

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

Weigh the options

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This column may help

I am 19 and doing B.Com (Hons.). I'm trying to develop skills, but I don't know what will help me and have no idea what I should do. What kind of skills should I develop? Rishabh

Dear Rishabh,

With the job marked evolving rapidly you need to build technical and soft skills. Strengthen your foundation in areas like Advanced Excel, learn Financial Modelling and Valuation, Data Analytics, and programming languages such as Python or R. Familiarity with accounting and ERP tools like TallyPrime, SAP, or Oracle will be a plus as will an understanding of fundamentals of Digital Marketing. Consider professional certifications such as those from the National Institute of Securities Market (NISM) or Certified Financial Planner (CFP), Certified Management Accountant (CMA), or Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) - Level 1. In addition, develop soft skills such as communication, public speaking and presentation, business writing, critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, networking and learning agility.

I am 22 and pursuing a B.Sc. Computer Science. I had taken four years off to prepare for NEET. I am worried about what comes next. Rashmi

Dear Rashmi,

Have you been able to deal with and accept the shift from medicine to computer science? Work on strengthening your practical skills and bridge the learning gap. Focus on one or two high-demand areas such as Web Development (Full Stack), Data Science and Analytics, Cybersecurity or Mobile App Development. Build a strong portfolio by working on live projects. Contribute to open-source projects and try to freelance on projects with real-world application. Ensure your academic projects are well-documented and demonstrate strong skills. Supplement your B.Sc. with online certifications such as AWS/Azure, Google Data Analytics Professional, IBM Data Science Professional, Salesforce Administrator/Developer.

Career paths after B.Sc. Computer Science include software developer or engineer, data analyst or scientist, cybersecurity analyst, cloud or DevOps engineer and so on. You can also consider an MCA, M.Sc. Computer Science, MBA in IT Management or Business Analytics or a specialised PG diplomas.

I am in the third year of the five-year Law course, but don't want this as a career. I am interested in the Digital Forensics Incident Response (DFIR) aspect of cybersecurity and am learning through online resources. I don't have an IT background. How can I make a career here? Heer

Dear Heer,

Your interest in Digital Forensics Incident Response (DFIR) along with Law gives you a unique advantage. Many cybersecurity roles require understanding legal frameworks, chain of custody for evidence, compliance with data privacy regulations, reporting and communication, and incident response planning. Look for specific roles such as cybersecurity compliance analyst, privacy analyst and so on.

Build a strong foundation in Operating Systems such as Linux, Unix, Windows. Learn Networking basics along with basic scripting in Python or PowerShell. Understand core cybersecurity concepts. Then, move to specialised DFIR skills using tools like Autopsy, FTK Imager, Volatility, and SANS SIFT Workstation. Consider certifications such as EC-Council's Certified Hacking Forensic Investigator (CHFI), GIAC Certifications (SANS Institute), GCIH (GIAC Certified Incident Handler), GCFA (GIAC Certified Forensic Analyst), EnCase Certified Examiner (EnCE), AccessData Certified Examiner (ACE). For hands-on learning, set up a home lab with VirtualBox or VMware to safely practice forensic investigations. Participate in Capture the Flag (CTF) challenges to gain practical experience. Document your progress through a blog or project portfolio. Seek internships or entry-level roles. Top consulting firms often recruit candidates with diverse educational backgrounds for their cybersecurity teams.

I have taken a gap year to prepare for CLAT after Class 12. My plan B is to pursue management. I gave the IPMAT but did not get through. What if things don't go as planned? Shrey

Dear Shrey,

With CLAT 2025 tentatively scheduled for December 7, focus on the process and not the outcome. Prepare well and ensure you don't burnout. Pursue your Plan B in parallel but with less intense pressure as the IPMAT will be only in May 2026.

Since you have taken a gap year, dedicate yourself to the CLAT. Follow a disciplined study plan, use reliable material, and consider joining a good coaching institute or online community for guidance. Take regular mock tests, review your performance, and strengthen weak areas. Manage time wisely, read newspapers daily for current affairs, and focus on applying concepts rather than rote learning. Maintain balance with proper rest and breaks to stay consistent and avoid burnout.

If CLAT doesn't work out, move to your Plan B. Prepare for IPMAT 2026 or other top BBA exams like SET (Symbiosis), NPAT (NMIMS), Christ University Test, and DU JAT (CUET). Review your previous IPMAT performance to identify weak areas and spend a couple of hours every day to improve them. Alongside academics, build a strong portfolio through college societies, volunteering, or leadership roles, as these add great value to your profile and interview performance. Also explore other UG Management programmes such as a three-year BBA or BMS programme at institutions such as Christ University, Bengaluru; Symbiosis Centre for Management Studies (SCMS), in Pune, Bengaluru, or Noida; NMIMS School of Commerce, Mumbai; Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE); Manipal's School of Management (MSOM); and Delhi University (DU). All offer strong management foundations and career prospects. Review their admission criteria, including Class 12 scores, entrance tests, and interview requirements, to plan your applications effectively.

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer.

Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge.

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Off the syllabus

The 'hidden curriculum' includes skills — subtle, interpersonal, and vital — that sit quietly under the radar of any formal curriculum.

Nehha Mishra

At 23, Aarav walked into his first job with a gleaming resume: a top-tier engineering college, GPA to boast about, internships ticked off, and a LinkedIn profile that could rival a startup founder's. Yet, two months into his new role at a global technology firm, Aarav found himself paralysed during a high-stakes client call.

It wasn't the coding he struggled with; it was speaking up. What he had not been taught was how to navigate unspoken power equations, read the room, or recover from mistakes in real time.

These skills – subtle, interpersonal, and vital – sit quietly under the radar of any formal curriculum. Psychologists and education thinkers now call this 'The Hidden Curriculum'. This refers to the unofficial, ungraded, often unspoken learning that happens through peer dynamics, role modelling, failures, and subtle feedback loops. It teaches us to build influence, recover from rejection, collaborate without authority, speak truth to power, and adapt across contexts. If the visible curriculum teaches you what to say in a presentation, the hidden curriculum teaches you how to deal when you blank out during it.

Outside the syllabus

A 2022 IIM-Ahmedabad study revealed that emotional intelligence, peer learning, and unstructured campus experiences such as organising events, navigating friendships, or even coping with a tough roommate were among the top predictors of workplace adjustment and long-term career satisfaction. The takeaway? What shapes us often happens outside the syllabus.

Today's early-career professionals aren't just looking for a pay check and promotion. They want psychological safety, hybrid flexibility, mentorship, and growth. But here's the twist: these require skills the system rarely prepares them for. Like Aarav, many young professionals today – especially those who've been high achievers on paper – are confronting a gap. This disconnect is more than just about skill. It's about the ecosystem in which these soft codes are (or aren't) modelled, encouraged, and rewarded.

Ask any senior leader today – from sports to start-ups – about their biggest turning point, and few will talk about a classroom lecture. Tennis legend Rafael Nadal often credits his uncle Toni not just for coaching, but for teaching him humility and emotional control. In India, R. Ashwin's story is often shared not just for his cricketing spin, but for the tactical composure he showed in test matches – skills he attributes to observing locker-room dynamics. From campus clubs to hostel politics, real leadership often begins in the mess halls, not in Management 101.

The hidden curriculum has always existed, but it tends to be absorbed by the privileged; those with social capital, strong mentors, confident families, or fluent exposure to English-speaking environments. For a first-generation learner, an introverted student, or someone from a rural background, the codes of campus or workplace behaviour are often harder to crack. So, how do we make this invisible curriculum more equitable and intentional?

Educators must design spaces where failure is safe, voices are diverse, and reflective conversations are part of the class – not just extra-curricular.

Parents must start conversations at home about EI, consent, boundaries, anxiety, or ambition which can act as an early foundation.

Young professionals need to treat peer collaboration, feedback seeking, networking, and learning from discomfort as core skills, not "soft" ones.

Many progressive organisations have begun to recognise the value of the hidden curriculum. Onboarding programmes now include storytelling circles, reverse mentoring, buddy systems, and simulations. But we need more. Real culture change happens when organisations acknowledge that "being smart" isn't the same as being prepared. Emotional stamina, unlearning, and invisible leadership need intentional scaffolding – just like Excel or coding.

The Hidden Curriculum is not about replacing the formal one. It's about making the invisible visible and ensuring that no student is left guessing the rules of the game. In the long arc of our careers, it's often the unspoken lessons that define who we become.

The writer is the founder of Epinomi Training Consulting Firm.

A CH-CHE

Reinvent the wheel

By moving from theory to practice and observation to action, MBA internships can create graduates who are job-ready and industry-impactful from day one.

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Prabhat Pankaj

An MBA student with specialisation in marketing got a summer internship with a reputed FMCG. When she joined, she expected that her days would be filled with market visits, discussions on brand strategy, and campaign planning. Instead, she spent eight weeks compiling data on spreadsheets, checking old reports, and creating PowerPoint decks. While she did get exposure to corporate culture, she returned to campus wondering if the internship could have been far more impactful.

Problems

This student is not alone. Across B-schools in India, students often get caught up in just being an extension of classroom assignments, while internships are meant to be the bridge between theory and practice. The intention is great, but the execution often falls short. While industry internships are usually challenging for B-schools as well as the industry, the concept is far from outdated.

The All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) prescribes between six and eight weeks of summer internship for MBA students, because it exposes them to industry expectations, workplace culture, and professional networks. According to the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC) 2023 Corporate Recruiters Survey, 88% of employers see internships as the best predictor of a candidate's ability to succeed in a full-time role.

In India, many top recruiters make pre-placement offers based on internship performance. The problem is not the internship, but the design. This is because, often, interns are assigned low-stakes, low-impact projects that neither challenge their problem-solving skills nor add measurable value to the company. In many cases, the opportunity to apply domain knowledge is missing. Second, internship reports are written as an academic assignment rather than experience sharing with problems and challenges faced and solutions found.

New models

If we want internships to remain relevant, they must evolve from observation-based learning and desk work to action-oriented problem solving. Here are some models that can help.

Challenge-based learning: Instead of generic engagement, students should work on specific and current business challenges such as optimising supply chain efficiency, designing a digital marketing funnel, or improving customer experience.

Start-up immersion: Unlike large corporations, where interns may be peripheral, in startups, they can work directly with founders, handle multiple functions, and see their ideas implemented quickly. Global studies show startup interns report a 30-40% higher learning curve in decision-making and cross-functional collaboration.

Live simulations: Partnering with companies to run week-long live simulations, where students manage virtual P&L accounts, respond to competitive moves, and adjust strategy in real-time can replicate market complexities better than static case studies. Harvard Business Publishing's simulation tools, for example, have been shown to improve strategic thinking scores by up to 25%.

Hybrid projects: A blended model where students spend part of their internship on-site and part under faculty mentorship ensures they can contextualise practical exposure with academic frameworks.

Outcome-linked: Internships should end not just with a report, but with measurable outcomes such as a cost saving achieved, a customer satisfaction metric improved, or a pilot project launched.

For example, a finance intern at a fintech startup developed an AI-driven credit scoring model for rural borrowers. The prototype was adopted for pilot testing, and the student was offered a pre-placement offer.

Another HR student co-designed an employee engagement app for a mid-sized IT firm, which saw a 15% drop in attrition over three months. These successes are possible because the internships were structured as solutions to live problems, not as academic exercises.

The MBA internship is like a well-built but underutilised gym. Discarding it would be a mistake; reinventing it is the need of the hour.

The writer is Director, Jaipuria Institute of Management-Jaipur Campus

Between yes and no

Mixed feelings are part of the human condition and learning to navigate them helps one make a reasoned decision

THINK
Aruna Sankaranarayanan

You finally feel you have found your tribe in college. While you always felt shy and awkward in school, you are glad that you aren't the loner who eats lunch by herself in class. That you have been accepted – that too by a 'cool' bunch of friends – makes you smile. If only your schoolmates could see you now. So, when your pals meet at a friend's place on a Friday night, you don't think twice about going. As your friends help themselves to wine and beer, you feel a tug. You don't really want to drink. However, you don't want to be the odd one out. Though you are having a great time, you feel conflicted.

In an article in *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vera Shuman, David Sander and Klaus Scherer explain how we appraise or make sense of emotions. Most of us are familiar with the distinction between positive and negative feelings. However, our day-to-day experience of emotions suggests that a binary split is too simplistic. Shuman and her colleagues posit that the quality or valence of an emotion may differ along a number of dimensions.

Five criteria

We need a more nuanced conception of emotional valence beyond positive and negative, because we examine an event or experience along multiple criteria. Shuman and her colleagues post five criteria that help us parse emotions.

The first refers to the pleasantness of an experience. Being with a fun group of friends whom you like feels good.

Another criterion is whether an event is conducive to our goals. If one of your goals is to have a good group of friends, spending time with them is consonant with your goals. However, if your exams are round the corner, then you may have to contend with two conflicting goals. One, of being part of a group and the other of doing well academically. In such situations where you experience a collision of goals, you may prioritise the importance of each. As you can hang out with friends even after your exams, you decide to hit the books.

A third dimension along which the valence of an emotion varies relates to your appraisal of power. The researchers aver that high power tends to be linked with "positive affect" whereas low power is deemed negative. The sense of belonging that you get from being part of a group tends to make you feel powerful. As you do not wish to jeopardise this sense of belonging, should you just sip wine to meld in? But doing so feels incongruent to your self-concept. Growing up, your mother had dinned into your head the harmful effects of alcohol. You are also training for a marathon and staying fit is a core aspect of your sense of self.

The fifth criterion relates to whether an event feels morally good or bad. In this case, you would rather remain non-judgmental about your friends' choices as long as you are not pressured into drinking.

Awareness

Being aware of the five dimensions – pleasantness vs. unpleasantness, goal conducive vs. goal obstructive, high power vs. low power, self-congruent vs. self-incongruent and morally good vs. bad – can help you understand your mixed feelings better. Arthur Brooks writes in *The Atlantic* that mixed feelings can feel worse than "purely negative feelings" because you clearly know what to do in the case of the latter whereas the former can be very taxing.

But know that mixed feelings are part of the human condition and possibly add to the richness of our lives, though in complicated ways. The next time you are in a quandary either about a person or a situation, try to dissect your feelings along the five dimensions. Mapping how you feel about various aspects of a complex issue can provide clarity, helping you make a more reasoned and deliberate decision.

The writer is visiting faculty at the School of Education, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, and the co-author of Bee-Witched.

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Abhay Firodia

Education today is undergoing a remarkable transformation. In a world flooded with digital information, today's learners seek more than just facts; they seek meaning, connection, and real-world relevance. In this shift, museums and knowledge centres are becoming vital learning spaces. Beyond displays, they offer immersive experiences that spark curiosity and foster thoughtful, engaged learning .

Museums are no longer quiet halls lined with artefacts or mere repositories of the past. They act as immersive classrooms, where learning is interactive, sensory, and experiential. Here, knowledge is not just observed, but is a lived experience. Young learners engage with these spaces as active participants exploring themes of productivity, creativity, skills, and coexistence through immersive storytelling, virtual explorations, and interactive installations.

As they move through these spaces, learners are not merely observing but engaging with layered experiences that stimulate inquiry and imagination.

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Step into the story

Museums act as immersive classrooms, where learning is interactive, sensory, and experiential.

They might listen to ancient languages, trace historical trade routes, or step into the beginnings of how philosophical thoughts were formed. This creates a multidimensional learning experience that inspires both critical thinking and emotional connection. Learning unfolds gradually – through metaphor, design, and the art of discovery.

Benefits

What does this kind of environment offer students? First is critical thinking. Students are encouraged to examine diverse perspectives. One gallery might present the concept of multiple viewpoints, while another depicts an assembly that welcomes all beings equally. These are not facts to be memorised, but ideas to be explored, questioned, and interpreted.

Second, empathy and a sense of identity are instilled. By following the evolution of civilisations, students begin to see themselves as a part of an ongoing continual human story. Heritage and a sense of belonging become something personal and alive.

Third, museums incorporate various communication mediums ranging from virtual reality and interactive kiosks to immersive audiovisual experiences that expose students to digital fluency, design thinking, and collaborative efforts.

Careers

For those who wish to work in these spaces, the museum world offers rich opportunities such as:

- Content and art curators research, interpret, and shape narratives to create meaningful, thematic spaces.
- Exhibition designers craft the overall visitor experience.
- Architects and landscape designers translate the museum's vision into physical form, extending its presence into the surrounding environment.
- Artists and sculptors recreate important artworks, adding depth and authenticity to the collection.
- Digital content specialists use emerging media to bring history and heritage to life in engaging and accessible ways.
- Conservationists safeguard objects for future generations.
- Education coordinators design workshops, guided tours, and public programmes that align with the museum's themes.

Courses

In India, various institutions offer degrees in Museology, Art History, Heritage Studies, and Cultural Management. Globally, several universities offer postgraduate courses in curatorial practice, conservation, and museum studies. Increasingly, interdisciplinary backgrounds are valued. Students from Humanities, Design, Sciences, and even Technology find their place in this evolving field. With the rise of private museums and cultural spaces, new avenues beyond traditional state institutions are being created.

In many ways, students walking through a museum gallery gain more than cultural insight. They learn discernment, depth, and direction and developing the ability to understand, interpret, and carry forward the wisdom of the past to meet the challenges of the future.

The writer is chairman of the Amar Prerana Trust, and founder, Abhay Prabhavana Museum.

Off the field, in the game

What does a career in Sports Management entail?

It's matchday. The stadium is buzzing, the broadcast team is wired in, sponsors are rolling out branding, and the teams are ready. But behind the scenes, it's a different kind of hustle: permits, logistics, schedules, athlete handling, fan engagement, and sponsor coordination. None of this happens without the sports management professional.

As India transforms into a more structured, multi-sport economy, the demand for trained sports managers is growing, not just in cricket, but in football, kabaddi, badminton, and even emerging sports like pickleball and e-sports. While the players may take the spotlight, it's the managers who ensure the game keeps going.

What does a sports management professional do? Short answer: they make sport happen. Sports managers operate at the intersection of operations, marketing, logistics, administration, and people management. They may handle tournament execution, oversee athlete welfare, coordinate with governing bodies, manage team travel, negotiate sponsorships, run fan activations, or even drive business development for sports academies and leagues. Depending on the organisation, the role can lean toward event operations, brand partnerships, content and media, or technical administration.

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Education and skills

At the undergraduate level, students can pursue a BBA or BA in Sports Management from the International Institute of Sports Management (IISM), National Academy of Sports Management (NASM), Symbiosis School of Sports Sciences, MIT-WPU, ISST Pune, and NEST Academy of Sport Management. For postgraduate studies, the options include an MBA in Sports Management, Post Graduate Diplomas (PGDMs) with a sports specialisation, and international certifications from platforms like FIFA, CIES, Coursera, or edX. While these help open doors, the real differentiator often lies in hands-on experiences i.e. internships, volunteering at tournaments, and on-ground exposure during the college years.

Sports management demands a mix of hard and soft skills. The ability to manage projects and people is critical, as professionals juggle multiple stakeholders, from players to vendors, often under tight timelines. Strong communication and coordination skills are essential, whether it's handling press interactions or navigating sponsor expectations. Tech fluency is another must-have. Familiarity with event software, scheduling tools, CRM platforms, and even basic content creation tools is increasingly expected. A strong grasp of marketing and digital strategy is equally important – a good manager understands how fans engage with sport and how to position events or talent accordingly. Adaptability rounds out the list, as no two events or teams are the same; being solution-driven makes all the difference.

Job roles

Sports management careers now span multiple layers from grassroots tournaments to international federations. Professionals take on roles such as event manager or tournament operations executive, athlete manager or liaison officer, sponsorship and partnerships manager, marketing and social media executive, team logistics coordinator or travel manager, academy business development manager, and league coordinator or technical administrator. As one gains experience, the path can lead to senior roles such as general manager, head of operations, or even CEO of a sports entity.

These roles exist across a wide variety of organisations, including professional leagues, national federations, state associations, private sports academies, grassroots foundations; corporate sports event firms; sports tech start-ups and fantasy platforms; media houses and broadcasters; and college and school leagues.

You don't need to score the winning goal to be part of the game. Sports management offers a front-row seat to the action while building real-world skills in leadership, operations, and strategy.

The writer is the COO of SportVot.