

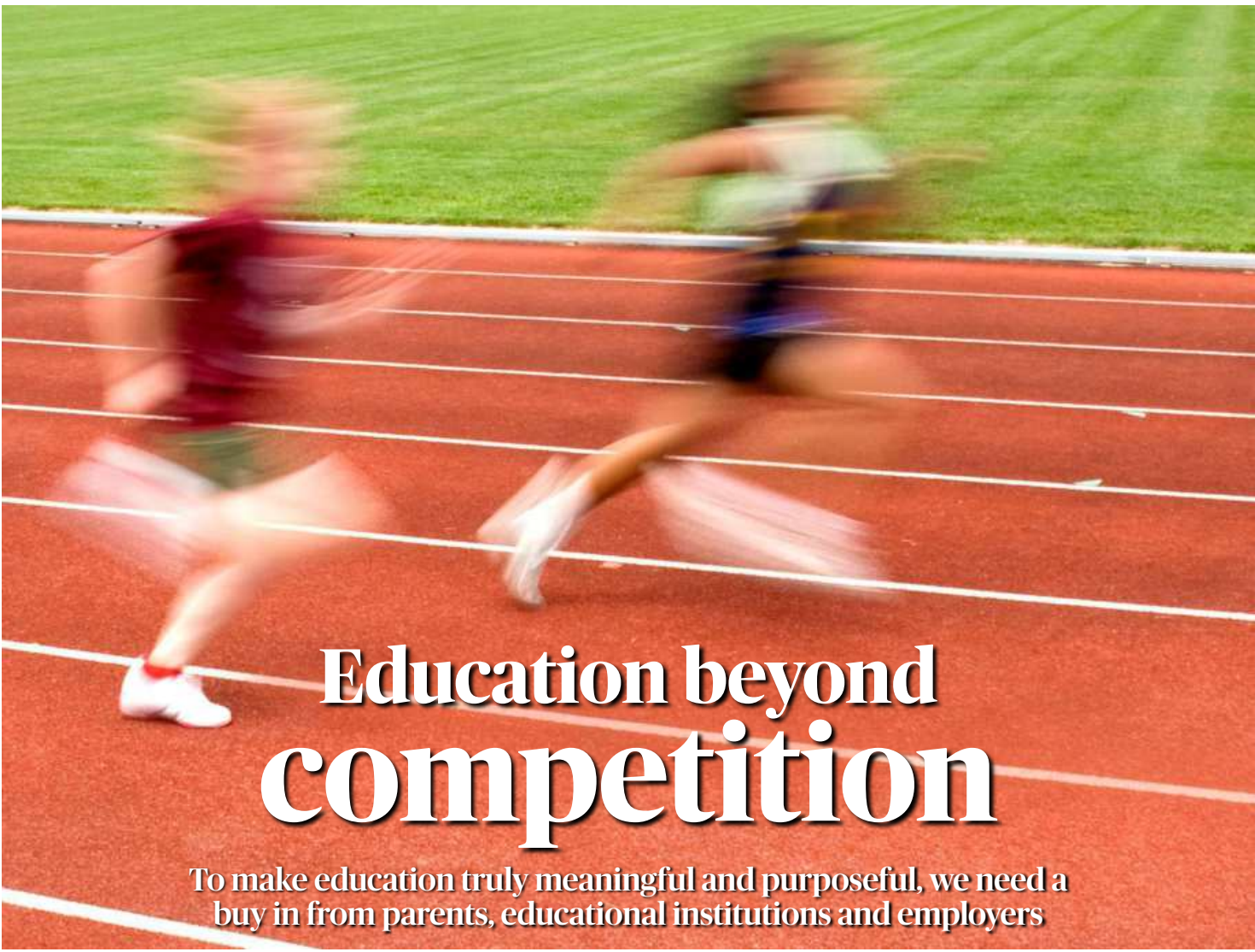
Devasheesh Mathur

Digest this. The suicide rate of students has surpassed the population growth rate in India. One in seven students between 15 and 24 years experiences poor mental health and 41% have expressed a need for support (as per the 2023 UNICEF report The State of the World’s Children). This is beyond a ‘sad state of affairs’ now; it is a call for transformational changes and a re-imagining of our education system to make our children joyful learners and not ‘rats in a rat race’.

Connect the dots

For this, we need to reignite our collective imagination and start analysing our present and past, see how it impacts our immediate future, and where we are headed? All the tragic cases of student suicides – no matter where in the country it takes place – take place against the backdrop of the crumbling pressures of entrance exams and the pedagogy in our institutes.

Humans learn best through creating narratives. When one applies foresight to imagine the future, one can use metaphors for current and future narratives. The metaphor for our present has become ‘Sharma-ji ka beta’, someone in your neighbourhood who is better than you at eve-



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rything. Parents use this character to nudge their kids to do better and probably they think they are being good parents because they went through this as well. The world view in these conversations is that life is competitive and you need to improve on the quantified performance metrics (read ex-

ams). Forget what Rancho said in 3 Idiots; it’s just a movie, silly! Movies like Udaan are good to watch, but they do not represent reality. Most of us suffer from the bias of ‘it’s not going to happen to our kid’. We think that we have taught them how to handle pressure. But the sad reality is kids belonging to all strata

of society are caged by our system. If they must break free, they need to leave the system. How do we bring about a transformation and metamorphosis? We need to think about our desired future. What are the pulls of the future? What if we changed our metaphors and shifted the narrative?

Change the narrative

We need to look at education as more than a passage to a ‘good life’, which is to be earned by going through an excruciating competitive process. Why can’t education be a passage to leading a meaningful and purposeful life with the freedom to choose? Let’s change

the narrative from ‘look at Sharma ji ka beta’ to ‘mera beta annol hai’ (my child is precious). Let’s change the metaphor of a ‘rat race’ to a ‘race to happiness within’. But, for this to happen, we need educational institutes and employers to buy into these ideas. The pursuit of excellence supersedes the pur-

suit of happiness as the goal of formal education! The joy of finding things out, as suggested by Feynman (and by that virtue, being wrong sometimes), is neither encouraged nor measured. This is established from an early age. How often have we heard: get good grades first, then you can explore extra-curricular activities! Get a good job first, then you can spend on hobbies! How about measuring (not-so) soft skills too, like empathy and reflection? When excellence is measured as a number (maximum marks, ranking, ordering), it automatically creates a pecking order. This naturally implies that those who have lower marks, rank, or percentile are not capable enough. Why do we not bring learning at a different pace into our equation? If we give all the kids exactly the same home, same parents, same car, then perhaps a measurement of marks may mean something scientifically. Excellence should be personal and not defined by society. Can we imagine a pivot to more learner-centric evaluations than standardised ones? How many suicides will it take for us to notice, act and change? Views expressed are personal. The writer is an Assistant Professor in Strategy at the International Management Institute, New Delhi.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Swami Dayanand Merit India Scholarships

An initiative of the Swami Dayanand Education Foundation (SDEF) **Eligibility:** Open to first- and second-year students enrolled in Engineering, Medical, or Architecture programmes at government or private institutions across India. First-year students should have scored at least 80% in Class 12 boards. Second-year students should have minimum 8.0 CGPA. Annual family income should be less than ₹15,00,000. **Rewards:** Variable depending on AIR score in entrance exams **Application:** Online **Deadline:** December 31, 2024 www.b4s.in/edge/SDEFSL1

Omron Healthcare Scholarship

An initiative of OMRON Healthcare India. **Eligibility:** Girls studying in Classes 9 to 12 who have scored minimum 75% marks in the previous academic year. Annual family income should be less than ₹800,000. **Rewards:** ₹20,000 (one-time) **Application:** Online **Deadline:** January 10, 2025 www.b4s.in/edge/OMHS2

KTH India Scholarship

Offered by the KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden, in collaboration with the KTH India Foundation. **Eligibility:** Indian citizens who have got admission for a Master’s programme at the KTH Royal Institute of Technology **Rewards:** Tuition fee help **Application:** Online **Deadline:** January 15, 2025 www.b4s.in/edge/KTHI2 Courtesy: buddy4study

Keep learning

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



I have finished M.Sc. Applied Psychology but do not want to do a Ph.D. How do I look for jobs with this qualification in India? Tamilarasun

Dear Tamilarasun, First, introspect and identify what kind of role you want under Applied Psychology. Then you can target your search. Connect with professionals via LinkedIn, join professional associations and alumni networks, and attend workshops, seminars, and conferences to meet peers. Use job portals to find openings specific to your interest to gain experience, build your skills, and enhance your resume. Seek certifications from institutions of repute in counselling, HR management, industrial psychology, school psychology, specific therapeutic interventions and techniques to enhance your employability. Work with a mentor/supervisor who will help give you clarity and motivate and encourage you. If you have a specific specialisation, you could consider private practice.

I have a B.Tech. in Electronics and

Communication Engineering but am not interested in coding or IT. My interests lie in design and creative fields. How can I make the transition? Nidhi

Dear Nidhi, Making a complete transition will take time and effort. Which aspects of design interest are you interested in: graphics, product design, user experience (UX), industrial design, or multimedia art? You will need a formal education in design – degree, diploma, or certifications – that can provide structured learning and recognised qualifications. Look up online courses on Coursera, Udemy, and Skillshare. Familiarise yourself with industry-standard design software like Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign) and tools like Sketch and Figma for UX/UI design. Work on a personal project or redesign existing products. A strong portfolio showcasing your work is essential to land jobs in creative fields. Join design communities to share your work and get constructive criticism. Platforms like Dribbble and Behance will

help you showcase your portfolio and connect with other designers. Find a mentor who can guide you, provide insights, and help you navigate your career transition.

I have done B.A. English Literature and taken Geography as an optional subject for the UPSC exams. Will I be eligible for an M.Sc. Geography? Yashini

Dear Yashini, Only if the programme is open to candidates from diverse educational backgrounds. The eligibility criteria vary across institutions, so check the specific requirements of the universities you plan to apply to. Some programmes specifically require a background in Geography or related fields, while others are more flexible. Some may also have an entrance exam for M.Sc. programmes.

I’m a student of B.Tech. CSE but am more interested in Forensic Science and Criminology. How can I pursue this after my graduation? Chinmayi

Dear Chinmayi, Your B.Tech CSE can help

you transition to a specialised programme like Cyber Forensics that focuses on digital evidence and cybersecurity. Learn the basics of Forensic Science and Criminology like forensic psychology, digital forensics, and crime scene investigation. For your Master’s, you could shortlist universities offering M.Sc. programmes in Forensic Science, Criminology or Cyber Forensics, as many accept candidates from diverse backgrounds. Consider taking short courses or certifications in forensic science, digital forensics, or criminology to build your knowledge. Network and attend seminars, workshops, and conferences to connect with professionals in the field and stay updated on the latest developments. Look out for relevant internships with law enforcement agencies or forensic labs and research projects to gain hands-on experience to work with professors or join research groups. Post your Master’s, you could consider opportunities as a Forensic Analyst, Digital Forensic Expert, Crime Scene Investigator, Criminologist or Law Enforcement Officer with a forensic specialisation.

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

Career conundrum

Should MBA aspirants opt for a single major or a major-minor combination?

Suresh Ramanathan
Yash Merchant

The landscape of MBA education in India has changed significantly in recent years, driven by the evolving demands of the industry and changing student expectations. One of the pressing questions facing both educators and students is that of specialisation: whether to pursue a major-minor combination or a more focused single major. This decision, often made early in a student’s journey, has long-term implications on career trajectory, employability, and adaptability in a rapidly evolving business environment.

Historically, MBA programmes were designed to provide a broad-based education that equipped graduates with general management skills. Over time, however, industries began to demand deeper expertise in specific domains such as finance, marketing, operations, and human resources, leading to the introduction of specialisations. Today, many B-Schools offer the option of choosing either a single major specialisation or a major-minor combination, which allows students to gain expertise in one primary area (major) while also acquiring knowledge in a secondary field (minor). This framework allows students to balance depth of knowledge with breadth of understanding. For instance, a student pursuing a major in finance with a minor in marketing gains deep expertise in financial management while also understanding the nuances of how financial decisions impact marketing strategies. This approach raises certain questions. Does a dual focus di-



lute depth in either area? Critics argue that students might not develop enough expertise in either the major or minor field if attention is split. While graduates may possess broad knowledge, they might lack the specialised skills that certain industries demand.

Are cross-functional skills becoming more important? Proponents of the major-minor system emphasise the growing need for professionals who are not confined to silos. A marketing manager today, for example, cannot succeed without understanding the financial impact of marketing campaigns or the technological tools that drive data-driven marketing.

Corporate perspective

Tech-driven sectors, such as data science, analytics, and fintech, often require deep domain expertise, with employers favouring candidates who have focused their MBA studies on a particular area. A singular, specialised major is often more valued, as it signals the candidate’s readiness to hit the ground running in complex, technical roles.

On the other hand, industries such as consulting or general management often prefer candidates with broader skill sets, as employers value those who can bring a cross-functional perspective to problem-solving and understand the interplay between marketing, finance, and operations. Here, a major-minor combination can be a strong asset.

The rapid rise of disruptive technologies such as AI, blockchain, and big data has further blurred the lines between traditional business functions. Employers now seek professionals who not only specialise in one area but also have the ability to leverage technology across different domains. A graduate with a major in operations and a minor in technology management, for example, is well-positioned to lead digital transformation initiatives.

Factors

For MBA aspirants, choosing the right specialisation strategy can be daunting. Here are some considerations to keep in mind:

Career goals: Students with clear career goals should align their speciali-

sation choices with their desired industry and role.

Industry trends: Staying informed about trends within the target industry is crucial. For example, finance professionals are increasingly expected to have a working knowledge of data analytics, while marketing professionals need to be comfortable with digital tools and metrics.

Long-term flexibility: Choosing a major-minor combination offers flexibility in terms of career development. While a single major can funnel a student toward a highly specific career path (e.g., investment banking or corporate finance), a major-minor combination opens up multiple avenues.

The major-minor conundrum reflects deeper shifts in how businesses operate and the skills they require from future managers and leaders. By carefully aligning their MBA education with industry needs, students can enhance their career prospects and increase their ability to adapt in a fast-changing world.

Suresh Ramanathan is Dean and Yash Merchant is Director-Brand Marketing, Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai.

SAVE THE DATE

Admissions

Anant National University will conduct the Anant Design Entrance and Proficiency Test (ADEPT) in 10 languages on January 26. <https://anu.edu.in/>

The International Skill

Development Corporation, in association with the World Design Council, the U.K., invites students from Class 6 to 12 to apply for the Future Creative Minds Programme. <https://tinyurl.com/ms2sws57>

JAIN Online is offering a two-year MCA programme in Data Science. **Eligibility:** Minimum 50% in graduation (any stream from

a recognised university. <https://tinyurl.com/4fpwpjuy>.

MBA ESG has partnered with Alliance University, Bengaluru for its MBA and BBA programmes for the 2025-26 academic year. **Eligibility:** For BBA, minimum 50% in Class 10 and 12; for MBA, 50% in Classes 10 and 12, and graduation. <https://mba-esg.in/>.

Mahindra University’s School of Hospitality Management has launched a B.Sc. (Hons.) in Culinary and Hospitality Management. **Eligibility:** Minimum 80% in Class 12 (any stream) from a recognised board. Valid score in NCHMCT JEE or Mahindra University Hospitality Management Entrance Test-2025. <https://tinyurl.com/5n6b4e6w>



Success and failure, like victory and defeat, are opposing concepts. Success is associated with positivity and accomplishment, while failure often carries a negative connotation. Eve-

Schools often focus primarily on teaching students to score high marks and se-

Learners who struggle are frequently labelled as “losers” or deemed incom-

A recent study published in *Early Intervention in Psychiatry* reported

491 student suicides in India between 2019 and 2023, with academic-related issues – such as failure, dissatisfaction, and stress – identified as the most common causes. Many students today struggle with mental health challenges because they are repeatedly told that they are failures. Even high-achieving students sometimes face difficulty accepting their

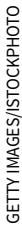
However, no one achieves success without experiencing setbacks or tasting failure. Even the greatest champions have faced defeats. In 1978,

This statement carries a profound truth: every now and then, new champions emerge, delivering a powerful message to the world. Those who “fail successfully” – learning from their failures and using them as stepping stones – ultimately achieve success.

Our education system can draw a valuable lesson from this approach. Does our education system truly tolerate failure? Do we have failure-tolerant teachers who encourage students to learn from setbacks?

The road to success is rarely smooth, and normalising failure as part of the learning process fosters resilience and a positive outlook in students. Teachers can motivate students by sharing the life stories of great achievers who overcame failures. Encouraging learners to take risks and try new things helps them grow, learn from setbacks, and ultimately achieve success in their endeavours.

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FREEPIK

Basic Programming and Data Science: In an era where data fuels business growth, MBA students must know the basics of programming and Data Science. Python helps automate processes, analyse data, and generate predictive models. Widely recognised for its versatility in business applications, it is the go-to programming language for data analysis, automation, and predictive modelling. SQL is indispensable for managing and querying databases. Tools like Jupyter Notebook make writing and sharing code alongside visualisations easier, facilitating

FREPIK

pleasing creations with commercial success. Jewellery trends change fast in the age of global business. Industry estimates show that the worldwide jewellery market will increase from \$340 billion in 2022

Career options include being a gemologist who uses scientific techniques to analyse gemstones to ascertain their quality, value, and authenticity; merchandiser who is in charge of in-

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