

## **INTENSIVE AND IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE WITH 3-TP MDP**

*Contributed by Mr Brahman Balaratnarajah, Director (Manufacturing & Engineering), Haycarb PLC, Srilanka. In the narrative below, he shares with us his experience as a foreign student in the institute for the 3-TP MDP (Jan/Feb 2006).*

I am privileged to write out a note to the TheWIMWIAN extending my experiences as a foreign student on the hallowed and secular grounds of the IIMA, ‘the red brick walled campus’, during my short but most memorable stay experiencing the 3TP Management Development Programme. This goes back to Jan/Feb 2006 and I still recall how I was called up to the Managing Director’s room in my organization and informed that after much debate and deliberation, I had been selected to follow the development programme from our company. I must say, being a ‘just promoted Project Manager’, which in our company is the 2<sup>nd</sup> management rank on the corporate ladder where the Managing Director title is the 7<sup>th</sup> position on the hierarchy- this tells you how very junior I was and the feeling of euphoria on hearing this news was very hard to hide. I was given a ‘pep talk’ by the Managing Director and my immediate superior on what the expectations were and the company was investing on developing very selected personnel for the future plans. It seemed like a dagger had been driven in me and all the joy that was visible a while ago perished like how water would percolate and disappear in to dried porous ground.

Studying in India isn’t new to me as I was there a lot longer during my undergraduate studies majoring in Mechanical Engineering a decade ago. Nevertheless, India with its long heritage and diverse cultures is a unique country that has over 22 official languages, 700 dialects and the second highest population on Earth. With a wealth of educational institutions, this South Asian giant is becoming more and more attractive in the globe in all spheres. Further, when one arrives in their new host country, they are fascinated by the distinct cultural perspectives. When you study abroad you will find incredible new cuisine, customs, traditions, and social atmospheres. This paves the way for a better understanding and appreciation for the nation’s people and history. I had a great opportunity to witness a completely new way of life.

So, as I went along with applying for my Visa and trip preparations. There were formalities to be followed and it’s not all that troublesome to get these done as the embassy is very conducive to encourage students to study in India. I flew out on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January and it can relatively be a short flight if is a direct flight from Colombo to Ahmedabad, but I had to first fly to New Delhi with a transit time of 8 hours, following which I had to get across to Ahmedabad at late night due to a flight delay. It was heartening to note that the IIMA administration had made a note of all the flight details and even though the flight was delayed, the ‘airport pick up’ was waiting for me and they took me straight to the campus. Since it was late, the mess was almost closing up and I could just grab a quick bite before going to bed, quite exhausted after the tedious journey.

The accommodation was on twin sharing basis and I quickly got acquainted with my roommate who was from New Delhi and we were great friends throughout. The participants were from varied backgrounds, including cross-sectional and multi-disciplinary professionals from industries across India. Surprisingly, out of a class of 75, there was only one female participant and only one ‘foreign national, that’s myself!!! Strange, but true. Prior to my departure, I still recall reading out the ‘student brochure’ sent to us by the campus, stating the various guidelines and there was this very estranged statement - ‘All students are expected to be able to have

extended mental and emotional endurance and the will to do prolonged hours of study classes right through the course.’. This was etched like a stone carving in my mind.

The next day, even though it was a Sunday, the ‘Orientation Programme’ was held with complete faculty in attendance and the formal introductions were done, making us comfortable with the new environment. The details, norms and regulations were spelt out for the 28days’ period. A clear idea was given about how things were going to transform along with the participant’s active involvement in view of the full scope of the robust study programme.

There was no time to lose, as from the word ‘go’, it was ‘business all the while’. The different subjects were covered, ranging from Strategy, Economics & Policy, Financial Management, Human Resource Management, Communications, IT and Marketing. It was never a dull moment with ‘Case studies’, one-on-one interactions in the classrooms, dialogue and discussions taking place every day. It was a great sense of learning model that instigated the curiosity and the sharing of different experiences were also rooted deep down in one’s mind and hearts. Classes went on till 4pm in the evenings, Monday to Saturday, and thereafter one could breathe a sense of relief. However, that was short lived as just after dinner, all the predetermined groups had to come to the ‘break out rooms’ and prepare for the case study stipulated for the following morning class work. These study sessions were quite exciting, yet stressful and daunting. The groups consisted of ‘multidisciplinary’ professionals from varied industries and experiences and thus, the very salient feature here was the great quote by Albert Einstein that stated ‘Experience is knowledge’. This was the very gift that seemed to stand out. Everyone opened out and gave their comments and suggestions which in itself was further ‘take homes’ to make small notes. Nevertheless, I must mention that during these group sessions, we came across the ‘authoritarians, the participative ones and the selling types’ all in one!! It was fun at the end, as no one misunderstood but in their own sense it made a lot of difference for the cause of learning. This reminds me of the famous quotes by the much respected late Indian president, His Excellency Dr. Abdul Kalam- “After all these are all ambiguous victories, amorphous defeats and unsolved problems; One’s perseverance and ‘will to do’ propagates the transformation from impossible to possible’.

On a Sunday, it was a holiday where site seeing, going out for movies, or just putting your legs up to day dream was on the cards. This was the day in the week where everyone could ‘chill out’ at their own pace, whilst mental and emotional quotients were sharpened to face another brutal week ahead. By Sunday dinner time, depression had set in and the following day would be branded as the typical ‘Monday blues’.

The leadership within us was being sculptured, exposing our minds and thoughts to the global business challenges by teaching us the tools to apply in the real business scenarios and learn. The instigation to perform ‘impromptu speaking’ instilled the confidence and courage within. As it’s said, perseverance is priceless and imagination is powerful, we were meant to lead our dreams not just follow them while being passionate. We were daring to change and creativity was bubbling within us. The board room culture, strategic intent with business plans, financial acumen, and accountability with integrity is the fetus that’s finally the outcome of this fine journey. The destination is yet to be reached and all of us can have the fragrance of faith and the holiness of hope. This is the key to success one looks forward to in life, keeping in mind the work-life balance.

It makes me extremely proud to be part of the prestigious Alumni of IIMA and it's a rare accolade. The learnings and experiences has definitely helped me to grow in my professional life and career to climb the corporate ladder as I currently stand. I am forever indebted to the faculty. Prof Asha Kaul who was the Programme Chair, along with the faculty members who handled the whole programme were outstanding and highly committed. On behalf of my colleagues, I would extend a hearty tribute to the following members - Prof. Ravindra Dholakia, Prof. Ajay Pandey, Prof. Mukund R. Dixit, Prof Sunil Maheshwari, Prof Sanjay Verma, Prof DevanathTirupati, Prof Saral Mukherjee, Prof Venkata Rao, Prof Ramesh Bhat, Prof Shailesh Gandhi, Prof Asha Kaul, Prof Abhinandan K. Jain, Prof Piyush K. Sinha, and Prof DeeptiBhatnagar.



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