



INTERVIEW

Sustaining impactful multidisciplinary contributions over five decades

An interview with Professor Ramadhar Singh, Distinguished University Professor, Amrut Mody School of Management, Ahmedabad University

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Abstract A professor avows, declares, or professes knowledge of a field. The challenge for most professors lies in continuing to generate relevant knowledge. Of those continuing research, most make impact on their respective disciplines. Ramadhar Singh—an experimental social psychologist and currently, Distinguished University Professor, Amrut Mody School of Management, Ahmedabad University—has been steadily contributing to the advancement of knowledge in psychology and producing multidisciplinary impact over his 49-year career.

By tracing the trajectory of Singh's vast and varied experience, attitude and approach to research, and scholarly output in international publications that have advanced knowledge and found applications from management to biological and social sciences, this interview offer pathways to research scholars for sustained multidisciplinary and impactful research in their careers.

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Context note

School, professor, and research

A school or university, according to the *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*, is an institution where courses leading to a degree (bachelor's, master's, and/or doctoral) are offered and research is done. Further, a professor is a faculty member of the highest academic rank who avows, declares, or professes knowledge of a field. Consistent with this

conception, the University Grants Commission,¹ the Indian Institutes of Technology,² and the All India Council for Technical Education³ require a person of the full professor rank to be an eminent scholar (i.e., one who has been successful, well-known, and respected in her or his field of specialisation).

In 2011, however, the then Environment Minister of India made not-so-encouraging comments about faculty members of our institutions of national importance, including the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) and the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).⁴ More recently, Mishra (2014) also expressed similar concern about the research environment in our institutions:

Indian institutions ... are not able to build a culture that can provide a world-class research environment and produce best of researchers. ... our educational institutions ... have to give priority to build a culture where the basic human instinct of "questioning" is given primacy, where there is ample space for [re]creation of knowledge with changing time (pp. 1787–1788).

As of February 28, 2015, there were about 3000 schools of management in India. Over the last five years, however, only 32 of those schools had appeared in the ranking lists of top performers by *Outlook*, *Business World*, and/or *Careers360* (Sahoo, Singh, Mishra, & Sankaran, 2017). Of the 1416 faculty members of those 32 schools, only 55.37% had a journal publication captured by one of the three publication databases of the National University of Singapore (NUS), the Association of Business Schools (ABS), and Elsevier's *Scopus*. It was found that even with a score of 0.09 along the productivity scale of 0 (*not at all productive*) to 1 (*most productive*), a faculty member could find a place among top 5% of most productive researchers of India (Sahoo et al., 2017).

As per the recent and the first ever ranking of management schools in India under the auspices of National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, among 609 management schools, the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB) is at the first position, with a weighted average overall score of 93.04 along a scale of 0 (*lowest*) to 100 (*highest*), followed by the Indian Institute of Management Ahmadabad (IIMA) and the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta (IIMC).⁵ The IIMB is also the leading management school with regard to research, with a total score of 94.06/100. Of the total points allocated to (a) journal publications and (b) citations of those papers by peers, the respective percentages for IIMB faculty members were 98.57 and 99.93. However, when we compare the performance of Indian management scholars with peers abroad, a not-very-rosy scenario emerges. Drawing from the database of Scimago Country Rankings for the period 1996–2013, especially in the business, management

and accounting (miscellaneous), and other management subject categories, Balooni (2014) found Indian management scholars at the seventh rank in the world when it came to creating citable documents after the US, the UK, China, and Germany. That is, the difference between Indian and other scholars was not as noticeable in terms of number of documents created as in the recognition of those documents among the peers and citations by them. With regard to citations, Indian management scholars collectively lagged behind their counterparts from these nations. Whereas Indian management scholars had 4.14 citations per citable document, those in the US, the UK, Germany, and China had 16.96, 13.97, 6.43, and 5.28 citations per citable document, respectively. Relative to our baseline of 4.14 citations, however, there are some highly productive scholars in the Indian management schools as exemplified by the case of Ramadhar Singh. Therefore, the central purpose of this interview is to draw insights from the research and experience of Distinguished Professor Singh in order to offer pathways for sustained multidisciplinary and impactful research contribution during one's career.

Ramadhar Singh: an experimental social psychologist

Education, experience, and style

Singh started his career as an experimental psychologist (1965–70). Later on, he specialised as an experimental social psychologist under the tutelage of Donn Byrne.⁶ Given his employments in various academic departments such as Department of Psychology at Patna University and the National University of Singapore (NUS), Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (IITK), and Organisational Behaviour Area of IIMA and IIMB, it could safely be concluded that he successfully applied his experimental skills to the issues in management, psychology, and the social sciences.

Table 1 presents a brief curriculum vitae of Singh. While selecting the information from two websites⁷ for Table 1, only those pieces were chosen that were of direct relevance to his sustained contributions to management and psychology. As can be seen in Table 1, his publications in the journals listed, the Fellow status in the six professional associations of psychology, and invited colloquia at institutions of higher learning across the globe are testimonies to his unusual and outstanding contributions to the psychological sciences.

Management teachers are, as per current thinking, supposed to help their students not only "discover who they are" but also "both discern and grow into whom they might become" (Khurana & Snook, 2011, p. 360). This outlook has long been part of Singh's practice.

For example, an NUS alumnus, who had published two papers with Singh and nominated him for the Inspiring Mentor Award in 2009, wrote:

¹ <http://www.ugcfrp.ac.in/advertisements.asp?links=ugc6>.

² For example, http://www.aicte-india.org/downloads/clarification_2016.pdf#toolbar=0.

³ <http://www.iitb.ac.in/sites/default/files/Infosheet11Sep2014.pdf>.

⁴ <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/iit-iim-faculty-not-world-class-jairam-ramesh-456533>.

⁵ http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/nirf_booklet_FINAL_02_04_16_01-00PM.pdf.

⁶ <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2014/december-14/remembering-donn-byrne.html>.

⁷ <http://ramadharsingh.wordpress.com>; <https://vidwan.inflibnet.ac.in/profile/56256>.

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