

Decoding the ‘Intuition’ Code and Role of Educational Institutions

The word ‘intuition’ originates from the Latin word ‘intueri’, which is frequently translated as ‘to look inside’ or ‘to contemplate’. Some common ways of describing intuition are: hunches, a sixth sense, gut feeling or a still, quiet inner voice. According to behavioral researchers, it is a way of ‘perceiving’, which relies on relationships, meanings, and possibilities beyond the reach of the conscious mind and includes behavioural attributes. Researcher Arthur Reber defined it as ‘a kind of natural judgment process that takes place without conscious thought and generally outside any explicit awareness of knowledge base that allows for that thought’.

There are two schools of thoughts about the origin of intuition:

- Synthesis of Prior Knowledge – a blend of logic, experience, and subconscious information that’s stored in our mind and recalled when needed.
- A Higher Power – divine intelligence, a ‘compass of the soul’ that guides, informs and directs one towards success.

In modern psychology, intuition equals with preconscious incubation, emotional involvement, subjective consistency, automatic, rapid and effortless processing. According to the renowned neuropsychologist and neurobiologist Roger Wolcott Sperry, intuition is a right-brain activity while factual and mathematical analysis is a left-brain activity. Thus, intuition exists at the interface of the affective domain and cognition.

Historically management education and research has been biased toward the analytical process in decision-making. This rational approach has been more popular as the preferred and acceptable method for studying management practices. In mid-1970’ Harold Leavitt, a managerial psychologist, discussed the consequences of over- emphasising analytical problem-solving in management education. He coined the term ‘analysis paralysis’, suggesting the intuitive and emotional elements of information processing deserve the same attention as the logical and analytical aspects. A thorough review of past researches on the relationships between psychological types as measured by the MBTI, and managerial attributes, behaviours and effectiveness reveal that intuitive types are predominant among top managers. Research finding

concludes managers who effectively employ intuition in the workplace are confident and comfortable, open-minded and flexible, experienced, willing to take risks, fair and unbiased, reflective and insightful, knowledgeable and creative. In times of rapid and unprecedented change in the business environment, intuition plays an increasingly significant role in contemporary decision strategies. Executives who understand how to balance their use of intuition and analytic thinking may be better prepared to lead in this environment.

In spite of many such research findings, management education has largely shielded away from including intuition in its curriculum. Intuition is not an activity to be willed by an individual but something that occurs spontaneously. Therefore, enhancing intuitive awareness, capabilities and skills of our future business leaders should encompass practical and experiential approaches. There are activities that individuals can do which are a mix of cognitive, affective and somatic methods to allow it to emerge and expand voluntarily. Techniques such as NLP, visual imagery, mindfulness, meditation, listening to your body closely, maintaining a morning journal etc can be employed through in-class training sessions and out-of-class extended practice.

Concluding with a quote by Albert Einstein, “The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.” Educators and business leaders should start by acknowledging the value of intuition and recognizing it as a sacred gift, begin to consult it for wisdom and guidance and listen to it when its input come in the form of a sense or feeling. We can then call upon the rational mind to define the process of making this vision a reality. In this way we can honor and allow each to play their respective role in the process of creation.