

Reading room**Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance by Angela Duckworth**

Why do naturally talented people frequently fail to reach their potential while other far less gifted individuals go on to achieve amazing things? The secret to outstanding achievement is not talent, but a passionate persistence. In other words, grit. Angela Duckworth shares fascinating new revelations about who succeeds in life, and why. Based on her research, she shows how many people achieve remarkable things not just by relying on innate natural talent, but by practising what she calls grit. She then offers a Grit Formula to help anyone to become more gritty, focusing on six key factors: hope, effort, precision, passion, ritual and prioritisation.

“Make responsible career choices by trying out a few things!”

Dr. Ranjan Banerjee, Dean – S.P. Jain Institute of Management & Research (SPJIMR), leaves a message for our student readers through an interview with Shraddha Kamdar

As I share a cup of coffee with him and a few of his colleagues over this interview one Saturday afternoon, I gain a lot of insight into what goes in training young students to work in the industry, and how to enhance their skills to make them life-long learners. He also talks of several other aspects of management education and even though the afternoon passes by quickly with healthy discussions, his thoughts stay will resonate time and again. That's the impact of Dr. Ranjan Banerjee, Dean - S.P. Jain Institute of Management & Research (SPJIMR), who has been teaching courses on Marketing, Strategy, Behavioural Economics, and Innovation at leading Indian and international institutes IIM Calcutta, Great Lakes, Symbiosis, IIT-SOM, Singapore Management University and Carlson School of Management, USA, for the past 19 years.

Talking of the idea that students need to score high marks to make progress in their academic lives, Dr. Banerjee points out that the need to score high is only part of the problem. “If marks are a consequence of understanding, then that kind of evaluation is not bad. In many dimensions of the education system, however, marks are awarded for fairly predictable things. One can score well even without a deep understanding of the subject. For instance, you could have a topper in a particular subject who does not have substantive knowledge of it. There is where the problem lies,” he says.

Overcoming the issue lies largely in the hands of the faculty, in terms of setting challenging examinations which test the understanding of the students. At SPJIMR, he elaborates, at the time of admission, a certain importance is attached to versatility of the candidates. “It's like the student could have good marks, may not be the highest, but has exceptional performance in sports or say music, then he would do well, since he has developed a skills which would work exceptionally well when studying for his MBA,” Dr. Banerjee explains.

Going further, talking of related issues, the Dean mentions that SPJIMR is a value-based institution, it is mentioned even in the mission statement! “You see, since we are admitting 23- and 24-year-olds, we can strengthen their values, but not create them. So we recruit for values as well. Our entrance exam carries a question on a time when the candidate has failed, laying an equal importance to failure and learning from it. Similarly, in the interview process, we go by two things – what they say for themselves as well as how they react to what others say. In that sense if our selection process does not value only marks, I think it gives the right signal to the students.” In that way, also, he says, the institute by and large

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**Dr. Ranjan Banerjee****Hard talk**

gets students who are academically oriented, grounded and real.

The idea is not limited only to the selection process. The curriculum at the institute also reflects a lot of learning by doing. “Apart with their corporate internships, our students also go for rural internships where they spend four or five weeks in the region, learning. Students are involved in a project called ‘Abhyudaya’, where social responsibility is inculcated within the students by working for underprivileged families. “All of these are marked courses. So students’ evaluation is linked to the things they

are doing, and learning from. When the marks are related to skills that improve industry knowledge, are fine! It is only when marks are linked to an entry point for something, they become an issue. Unfortunately, the self esteem of many students is affected because of the ability of taking an exam,” he says.

This leads to the theme of students learning from different aspects, both inside and outside the classroom, with experiential learning. “Management is a discipline that takes in students with limited work experience, teaching a wide variety of subjects. These

subjects need a little work experience to be understood. That's why we have differently designed courses for our students, where they can gain some experience,” Dr Banerjee explains. One of these is ADMAP, where students form committees which are in charge of running an aspect of the institute. “Here, the power does not lie with the students, it lies with the faculty or with the administration. So, effectively, students learn to operate from and get things done from a position without power! At the end of the course, the committees come together in a cross committee and talk of the

learning they developed by doing all of it, and how to learn to carry out operations from such positions,” he says, elaborating the process. There are other ways as well, where industry practitioners set and evaluate projects for the students, or how they shadow a particular professional for a day and glimpse into a day in the life of that professional.

All of this, undoubtedly, requires a certain engagement from the students, which needs to be generated. Enter faculty. The Dean admits that it could be a challenging task for a faculty member to hold the attention of 60, often 80 students for an hour and 10 minutes, but he says “we're also good at teaching excellence”. He lists several reasons to say that today's students look at more interactivity in class, rather than being delivered a monologue to. “We're looking at the teacher creating a balance somewhere between lecturing and facilitating the class. And of course, tools like role play, case studies and videos help.” He also believes that students will relate to things which are in the context of what they do and what they care about. That's why it becomes imperative to get a good mix of local and foreign case studies. And if the teacher can augment a case study from a few years ago with a video showing the current situation, the impact on the class will be quite effective. Essentially, in some of these ways, the class will become a class where students want to go.

As the afternoon meeting draws to a close, I ask him what the MBA institutes and faculty expect from aspiring students. Dr. Banerjee mentions a base level of communication skills and a certain amount of general awareness of what is going in the business world. Most importantly, however, he says that students should ask themselves why they want to do an MBA. “Even if the reason is that because you want a wider variety of options, that is fine, but come to that conclusion after examining yourself. If your choice is not dictated by peer perception of lucrativeness, then it is in the right direction,” he tells our student readers. “Conduct your choice in what you like or care about, what you have passion for. If possible, spend a little time in that field before you draw your conclusions, so that you make choices which are more responsible,” he adds.

For the teaching community, Dr. Banerjee's parting shot is, “Teaching to me is an extended form of parenting, in the sense that you need to be a little selfless as a teacher like you are as a parent. If I have the opportunity to touch 60 students' lives and manage to do so even for a few, then it is worth it. Teachers should have a sense of service and pride, and the world will come to respect teachers when they respect themselves!”

COUNSEL QUERIES



I need to supplement my education to improve my job prospects in a huge way. In that effect I have done some research and think that marketing might prove a good field for me, so in future I can expand my options to pharmaceutical marketing. The only thing I feel is that after spending four years on pharmacy, I will have to utilise another two for an MBA, and then start working. Also, will I be a suitable candidate for admission to MBA? I fear I might not be able to stand ground with those who are applying after engineering.

– Santosh Bhole

Dear Santosh,

MBA is a study programme that welcomes students from all diversities. In fact, many institutes feel that the more versatile the experience of the student, the better learning he can derive from an MBA programme. So you should stop worrying about the idea that you may not be a suitable candidate for MBA admissions just because you are a pharmacy student. Every year, many pharmacy students take up MBA in various disciplines and end up getting placed very well after they graduate. With every degree, a student learns several aspects and pharmacy is no different. In fact, your experience with your internships and that

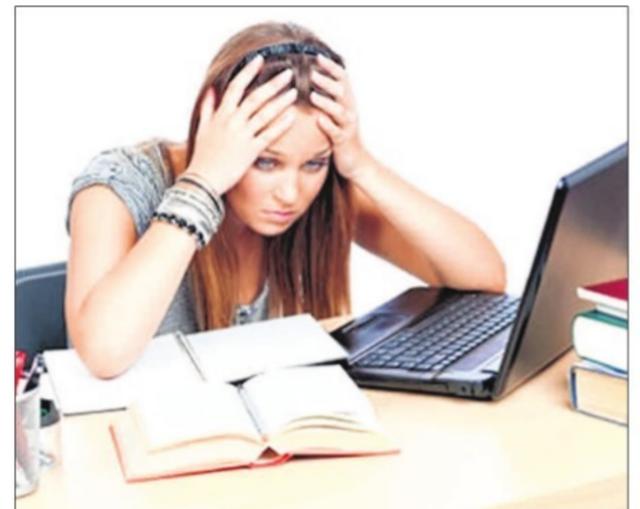
you have arrived at a decision after looking into all the facts is one that will be highly appreciated in the industry, as well as the MBA application.

As far as the admission process is concerned, you should focus on the entrance exam, the personal interview and the group discussion. As long as you do well in these three, you do not need to worry. You should stop stressing out on the fact that engineers are applying, since students from all disciplines will be applying to MBA programmes, not exclusively engineers. You focus on preparing for the entrance tests, and take the process one step at a time.

In the mean time, you should also start looking at the institutes you would prefer to study at, and short list a few so that you can focus exclusively on the entry requirements at these institutes.

Dilemma for taking up a job

I am a BMS student and I feel that I want to take up something in retail after I graduate. Will it be a good idea to take a up a job immediately after my bachelor's or should I finish my higher studies (postgraduation) in one go and then look at placements? Can you also suggest a few



institutes which offer courses in retail management?

– Manan Shastri

Dear Manan,

It is great that you have already decided which field you want to take up for your career. As far as the choice of taking up a job after BMS or later, that is a dilemma many students face. In fact, earlier many were of the opinion that it is better to finish studying everything in one shot so that you can concentrate on work later. However, now, the industry is more open to students who gather a few years of experience in a field of their choice and then later opt for the best higher education programme for them. In that sense, you will be better off looking for a job after your BMS and then opting for a higher degree. A few institutes which offer programmes in retail management are listed below. Do look up the individual websites for the description of the programme as well as the entry requirements.

A few courses offered in Mumbai include:

- K. J. Somaiya Institute of Management Studies and Research - Post Graduate Diploma in Management (Retail Management)
- Padmashree Dr. D.Y. Patil Vidyapeeth's Department of Business Management - Master of Business Administration (Retail Man-

- agement)
- ITM Business School - Post Graduate Programme (Retail)
- Prin. L. N. Welingkar Institute of Management Development & Research - PGDM Retail Management
- Durgadevi Saraf Institute of Management Studies - Post Graduate Program in Retail Management
- Jankidevi Bajaj Institute of Management Studies, SNDT University - Master of Business Administration (Retail Management)
- K. C. College of Management Studies - Diploma in Retail Management
- Centre for Management - Professional Diploma in Retail Management
- Bharti Vidyapeeth Institute of Management and Information Technology, Navi Mumbai - Post Graduate Diploma in Business Management (Retail)
- National Institute of Retail Management - Diploma in Business Administration (Retail Management), Masters in Retail Management, Advance Diploma in Retail Management
- Institute of Business Studies & Research - Master of Business Administration (Retail)
- Alkesh Dinesh Mody Institute for Financial and Management Studies, Mumbai University - Bachelor of Management Studies (Retail Management)

BMM specialisations

I am in SYBMM, and for my third year, I have to make a choice of either studying journalism or advertising. The problem is that I don't yet know which field I want to take up in future or whether I even want to be in mass media after I graduate. I am feeling too pressurised to think of a future career and make a choice now. What should I do?

– Megha Dora

Dear Megha,

You don't have to feel overly pressurised in making this choice. There are multiple reasons to understand that either specialisation will lead you to a career of your choice in future. Just because you choose journalism or advertising in TYBMM, it does not mean that it is mandatory for you to make a career in that field only.

Consider BMM as an undergraduate degree which will equip you with the skills to study anything else in future as well as provide you the opportunities to apply for many postgraduate programmes. This is because the education eligibility for most of these programmes is completion of graduation. That's all. The admission to these programmes does not depend on the specialisation you take up at the TY level.

I understand that you are feeling overwhelmed, like many students in your place feel every year. My suggestion is that you ask some of your seniors who are currently in TYBMM about each specialisation. Ask them about the subjects, the learning that you will acquire, the knowledge that you will build, the projects, the effort that you will have to put in, the possibility of scoring high marks, everything! Also, talk to your BMM coordinator as well as any other faculty member you can rely on to get their understanding on the topic.

After you collect all these views and information, you can apply it with your own skills, abilities and interests of what you want from TY, and then make an informed choice. If need be, also talk to your own friends in SY with respect to what they think about the choices and how have they arrived upon their decision. It will help your thought process in selection as well. Do not forget to keep your parents in the loop every step of the way!

Pharmacy to marketing

I am in my final year of my BPharm degree, and after finishing my last internship where I worked very closely within the field, I realise that

