# International Conference on Operations Management and Research (ICOMAR 2016)

**Dimensions Team (to Dr. Schlenker):** You mentioned that one of the problems with regard to B-schools is that they don't identify results with their objectives. So do you think that would mean Business schools are not defining their objectives correctly in the first place?

**Dr. Lee Schlenker:** Good question. In action theory, the hypothesis is, that's the major problem in any business. The fact that we are all a little bit disappointed with our results, given the objectives that we have. As per Action Theory, this is mainly because of three reasons: Technology, Culture, or Norms and rules, or it could also be a combination of all three. And so you need to be able to work with all three of these things in order to be able to create a better environment to learn. This is as true in businesses, as it is in any business schools. I think however, in terms of the real objectives, there is a difference between what you say and what you think, and I think part of a business school is about getting to know yourself.

**Dimensions Team (to Dr. Carter):** How can we apply biostatistics in public health, including nutrition and environmental health?

**Dr. Randolph Lee Carter:** First of all, that begins with research. And wrt how it is applied, I think the way that it is applied in the United States and here in India is through the public health department. The school of public health is very much community oriented, and ideally, the research filters down to those public health departments, and the public health departments apply those methods. Most of the application comes from the public health departments. But there are also community health organizations that adopt much of the practices and research that come from the research schools.

**Dimensions Team (to Dr. Schlenker):** In the current scenario, B-schools don't pay enough consideration towards operational excellence. Ratings are more based on placements and such related parameters. How do you suggest B-schools can place more importance on operational excellence when it comes to school ratings?

**Dr. Lee Schlenker:** It's quite a complex issue because you have to understand who the customers of business schools are. In this case, you could almost argue that the Trust is your customer, and that the students are actually products satisfying the Trust's needs, because the Trust has a certain set of values it would like to share to students. Other business schools are more about producing graduates. And so the more graduates they can produce, the better the school runs. Very few schools actually focus on employment, which is a key value for the students. At Pau, we've chosen our best corporate clients, and we try to monitor what positions they offer, what projects they are working on, what their needs are

basically… And then we evaluate our curriculum to find out if it meets those needs or not. And then we suggest to our students, "This is where they are hiring. If you want to go here, you need to do this." This is a strategy for small schools, because we have fewer students, and so we need to be innovative in order to stay competitive.

**Dimensions Team (to Dr. Carter):** You talked about the "Curse of big-data." Particularly in India, properly identified data is hard to find. What is your suggestion or strategy to overcome this difficulty?

**Dr. Randolph Lee Carter:** There are the usual data management techniques that can be applied, but these techniques are not helpful if the original data is not of good quality. To get high quality original data, at least in a research setting, feedback is most important. The back and forth communication, and the usage of data can really help to improve the quality of data over time. In these communications you can point out what is lacking in the data, and where; so the using of the data is really important.

In a public setting however, I think the only way to improve quality of data collected is for the government to make sure that the people collecting the data do a careful job of it. That probably comes down to training. But even here, feedback is just as important.

As a researcher though, I think the best way is to actually use the data. Once you start using the data, you find out the inconsistencies in the data as well.

**Dr. Lee Schlenker:** If I may add to what Dr. Carter just said, I think it's a very interesting and complex question- that whether India really needs to do the same things that have been done in Europe or in the United States, or whether there is another way of looking at the problem.

You have an excellent spiritual advisor at this Trust- Dr. Veerendra Heggade. To me, he is a brilliant data scientist because he spends his day listening to people's motivations, dreams, pains, and actions. And he, and the 24 generations before him, have spent their time focusing on how to put that data together. So maybe in the more developing nations, rather than the classical surveying techniques, the answer is in capturing data through what most people have today- the mobile phone. I think this would offer an interesting alternative to the data collection problems that India is facing.

**Dimensions Team (to Dr. Schlenker):** With regard to what is defined as "wicked problems", do you think these problems are common to all B-schools across the globe?

**Dr. Lee Schlenker:** I think they are common to life itself. Under Scientific management, Taylor suggested that the way to improve a system was by focusing on efficiency. I think this is a fairly good solution that you can improve just by focusing on the operational performances. The problem is that will only go so far. It doesn't solve unemployment, it doesn't solve the lack of engagement or of passion at work, and it doesn't solve lack of meaning in life. And these problems don't seem to be going away, they actually seem to be getting worse. So the solution to these

"wicked problems" will come from thinking out-of-the-box.



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