



Teaching EI: Integrating mental health education in the MBA curriculum

As the demands of leadership evolve, business schools are rethinking on how they prepare students for the human side of corporate life

Mental Health: A Leadership Imperative
The post-pandemic reality has further underscored the importance of emotional well-being. Rising levels of stress, burnout, and anxiety—especially among early-career professionals—have made mental health an organizational priority. Companies now seek leaders who can handle their own stress while also supporting the emotional needs of their teams.

Mental health is no longer a personal or isolated concern; it is a leadership issue. A manager's emotional state can directly influence team morale, productivity, and retention. Future business leaders must therefore be equipped not only to perform but also to foster inclusive, empathetic, and emotionally healthy workplaces.

Redesigning Management Education for the Human Side of Leadership
To prepare students for these evolving expectations, management programs must integrate EI and mental health into their core structures—not as optional add-ons, but as foundational components of leadership development.

This integration can take several forms:

Curriculum Integration
Courses like Organizational Behaviour, Business Ethics, and Leadership can be enriched with modules on emotional intelligence, stress management, mindfulness, and well-being. These subjects help students understand how emotional factors influence decision-making, communication, and team dynamics.

Mentorship and Counselling Support
Providing access to trained mentors and mental health professionals allows students to discuss challenges in a safe, supportive environment. Regular mentoring sessions and peer group dialogues can normalize emotional conversations and promote a culture of openness.

Reflective Practices and Emotional Assessments
Students benefit from tools that encourage self-awareness and reflection, such as emotional intelligence assessments, journaling exercises, and feedback loops. These activities allow them to



track emotional growth and understand their interpersonal patterns over time.

Faculty Sensitization
Instructors play a vital role in shaping classroom dynamics. Equipping faculty with the ability to identify signs of emotional distress, facilitate sensitive discussions, and create psychologically safe learning environments is essential.

Experiential Learning for Emotional Skills
Group projects, case simulations, and role plays offer students opportunities to practice emotional regulation, empathy, and active

listening in real-world scenarios. Structured debriefs and reflection sessions further enhance learning.

Rethinking Success in Management Education
The inclusion of emotional intelligence and mental health in MBA programs is not just a progressive step—it's a necessary evolution. As workplaces become more collaborative, diverse, and emotionally complex, technical competence alone will not suffice. Managers must be emotionally literate, resilient, and self-aware to lead effectively in this new reality.

Today's management

students are tomorrow's decision makers, culture builders, and change agents. Equipping them with the skills to navigate emotional challenges, foster well-being, and lead with empathy is not just good education—it's future-proofing leadership.

By integrating these human dimensions into business education, institutions can cultivate not just high performers, but balanced, compassionate, and future-ready leaders who are capable of building healthier organizations and a more humane world of work.

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In a world marked by uncertainty, complexity, and constant disruption, the profile of an effective leader is changing. Today's professionals are expected not only to think critically and solve problems but also to manage their emotions, understand others, and foster healthy team dynamics. As this shift becomes more evident in modern workplaces, management education is undergoing a necessary transformation—placing emotional intelligence and mental well-being at the heart of its mission.

Traditionally, MBA programs have focused heavily on analytical

reasoning, quantitative skills, and strategic thinking. While these remain important, they no longer guarantee success in the human-centric world of business leadership. Soft skills—once considered secondary—are now strategic assets. Emotional intelligence (EI), in particular, has emerged as a key differentiator in leadership performance.

The Strategic Value of Emotional Intelligence
Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, regulate, and express one's emotions effectively, while also being attuned to the emotions of others. It is typically defined through five core components:

self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Together, these competencies help individuals navigate interpersonal relationships, lead teams, manage stress, and make ethical decisions under pressure.

In management settings, EI plays a crucial role in conflict resolution, team collaboration, customer engagement, and organizational culture. Leaders with high emotional intelligence are more likely to inspire trust, communicate clearly, and foster psychological safety—all of which are critical for long-term success.