Introduction to the Special Issue

This special issue features a select set of five articles, presented at the fourth Pan-IIM World Management Conference hosted by Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA) during 13–15 December 2016 at Ahmedabad. Pan-IIM World Management Conferences are an annual event organized by the Indian Institutes of Management. The first three editions of the conference were organized by IIM Calcutta (2013), IIM Kozhikode (2014), and IIM Indore (2015). The fifth Pan-IIM World Management Conference was organized by IIM Lucknow in 2017 and the sixth edition of the conference was hosted by IIM Bangalore in 2018. The Pan-IIM conferences provide excellent opportunities for academicians, researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and thought leaders to exchange their ideas and foster collaboration.

The theme of the fourth Pan-IIM World Management Conference held at IIM Ahmedabad was ‘India: Towards Better Governance’. Governments are one of the most strategic organizations of any country. Economic development of any country is dependent heavily on the performance of its governments and government-controlled public enterprises. Effective governance is extremely critical to the development and progress of a young and aspiring country like India. Population growth, rapid industrialization, and urbanization have created a demand for interventions by both governments as well as organizations that work closely with governments at a level never seen before. However, the management of government and public enterprises is significantly different from the management of private sector organizations. While the government and public organizations have a long-term horizon, the private sector uses the market as its source of creation and control, the customer as its focus, and has a short-term horizon. The public sector is authorized and controlled largely by law, and its mandate is ultimately the collective public good.

With increasing awareness as well as public scrutiny, leaders of governments and organizations that work closely with governments (public sector and private sector) are coming under increasing pressures to perform and to provide quality services with ever-fewer resources while facing additional stress emanating from increasing global economic, social, political, and cultural integration. The duties of such leaders...
are multifaceted and often very complex. They need to balance the inherent tension between efficiency (working with fewer resources) and effectiveness (achieving development and welfare for all). The complexities involved in terms of services, personnel, organizations, regulations, and revenue and expenditure require nothing less than a study independent of other management disciplines. There is a need to better understand various facets of the functioning of the Indian governance systems and the associated institutions, such as the leadership of public enterprises, public administration, decision-making processes (including the political setting in which decisions are made), programme implementation challenges, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of government policies and initiatives aimed at bringing improvements that better serve public interest.

The theme of the fourth Pan-IIM World Management conference invited researchers to take up this challenge and use a range of theoretical perspectives and methodological lenses to investigate the processes that are associated with making Indian enterprises more efficient and effective. The conference encouraged scholars working with multiple approaches (e.g., evidence-based approach, logical-empiricist, post-modernism, critical theory, etc.) to study the Indian governance systems, as well as associated public and private sector organizations. The conference invited the participants to think creatively about how the management scholars can make the Indian enterprises more robust and effective.

Some questions that the conference encouraged its participants to explore included:

1. What are the characteristics of the Indian public sector leadership and how does they compare with that of the private sector? What should be the metrics of evaluation of the performance of public sector leaders?

2. What performance management principles can be applied to the study of Indian governance systems and the associated public sector institutions?

3. What are the human resource management challenges (talent acquisition, retention, pay-for-performance, etc.) faced by public sector leadership? What are some of the possible ways through which these challenges can be overcome?

4. What are the lessons from the marketing and branding of private enterprises that can be applied to the running of government, its associate governance systems and to the associated challenges? What marketing principles (e.g., consumer behaviour, customer segmentation, branding, etc.) can be applied to the Indian public sector and governance systems?

5. What finance and accounting principles can be borrowed from the private sector organizations and applied to the Indian governance systems?

6. What management principles can be used to better understand the functioning of Indian public enterprises? How can Indian public sector develop a sustainable competitive advantage over private sector? What will be some of the important strategic decisions that will need to be taken to make Indian governance systems (and public institutions) more competitive and effective?
The conference also invited papers (conceptual and empirical) that were not directly related to the conference theme but represented cutting-edge management thinking. Extended abstracts (of not more than 2000 words) of original research papers were invited in all areas of management including the following: agri-business management, communication, decision sciences (quantitative methods, statistics), economics, finance and accounting, human resource management, information systems, marketing, operations management, organizational behaviour, public systems area, and strategic management.

Setting a record of submissions, the conference received 838 extended abstracts. Following a very rigorous review process, 140 extended abstracts were accepted for presentation in the conference. One hundred thirty-one papers were accepted for poster presentation. Table 1 presents an area-wise break up of papers presented at the conference.

The conference saw participation from scholars from 94 reputed institutes within India and around the world. Scholars from countries such as the United Kingdom, USA, France, Poland, China, Nepal, and Germany presented their research work at the conference and participated in the discussions.

**PROCESS OF SHORTLISTING ARTICLES FOR THE SPECIAL ISSUE**

The shortlisting process involved several stages. In the first stage, we requested the reviewers of extended abstracts to indicate whether they would recommend the articles for *Vikalpa*’s special issue. In the second stage, during the conference, every session chair made an assessment of the suitability of the papers presented in their sessions for the special issue. The recommended papers pooled from these two stages were then reviewed by the editorial team of *Vikalpa* to further shortlist the papers to be invited for submission. Of the 36 invited papers, we received acceptance from the authors of 15 papers. Finally, eight papers were submitted for full consideration.

Out of the eight, two manuscripts were rejected in the first round of review. For one of the manuscripts that received a major revision, the author chose to withdraw the paper. Five manuscripts that went through roughly 2–4 rounds of peer review and revision, following *Vikalpa*’s standard processes for publication of research articles, received final acceptance for the special issue.

**SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLES**

| Table 1: Area-wise Break Up of Papers Submitted and Accepted at the Conference |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Area**                                      | Accepted for Paper Presentation Session | Accepted for Poster Presentation Session | Number of Submissions Received |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Agri-business management                                    | 5                                           | 5                                           | 22                             |
| Marketing                                                   | 11                                          | 12                                          | 108                            |
| Economics                                                   | 10                                          | 0                                           | 52                             |
| Finance & accounting                                        | 28                                          | 32                                          | 101                            |
| Operations management                                       | 5                                           | 3                                           | 48                             |
| Organizational behaviour and human resource management       | 30                                          | 33                                          | 184                            |
| Decision sciences                                           | 5                                           | 1                                           | 19                             |
| Information systems                                         | 6                                           | 8                                           | 38                             |
| Strategic management                                        | 16                                          | 16                                          | 73                             |
| Communication                                               | 4                                           | 3                                           | 15                             |
| Public systems area + Conference theme track                | 20                                          | 18                                          | 178                            |
| Total                                                       | 140                                         | 131                                         | 838                            |
Reflective of Vikalpa’s character as a general interest management journal that publishes research from all fields of management, the five selected articles in the special issue originate from five different fields—organizational behaviour, strategy, business analytics, economics, and public policy—and three different country contexts. The first article of the special issue is on ‘Application of Multivariate-Rank-Based Techniques in Clustering of Big Data’ by Pritha Guha. The article uses the idea of data depths and proposes a spatial ranking-based algorithm of clustering data which is non-parametric, robust and is therefore better suited to handle big data. The second article by Rajesh Kumar Sinha examines the ‘Impact of Publicly Financed Health Insurance Scheme (Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana) from Equity and Efficiency Perspectives’. The study assesses whether Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna (RSBY) achieved its intended objectives of increasing care seeking and reducing health expenditure burden. The study found that RSBY neither improved care seeking nor reduced burden of health expenditure among the resource poor households. The article recommends the policymakers to carefully re-examine the decision to invest in the health insurance model as a solution for universal health coverage. The next article by Sarada Devi Gadepalli and Arindam Mondal is titled ‘Sources of Business Unit Performance Heterogeneity in India: The Influence of Ownership’. It estimates the contribution of an important institutional variable, firm ownership type to business unit performance and compares it to other factors in Indian context for the period 2002–2013. The article further evaluates whether the relative importance of corporate headquarters, industry, and business unit effects changes with owner type. The next article on ‘Role of Self-efficacy, Optimism and Job Engagement in Positive Change: Evidence from the Middle East’ by Raina Chhajer, Elizabeth L. Rose and Thomas Joseph investigates change at a Middle Eastern financial services firm that had implemented a year-long positive business initiative. Analysing data from 406 employees who participated in this initiative, the study examined the role of self-efficacy, optimism, and job engagement in positive change. The study found that higher levels of self-efficacy and optimism predict higher levels of engagement; higher levels of engagement predict performance; and job engagement mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and optimism with performance. The last article of the special issue is titled ‘Finance–Growth Nexus in Nepal: An Application of the ARDL Approach in the Presence of Structural Breaks’ by Jagadish Prasad Bist and Nar Bahadur Bista. It examines the relationship between financial development and economic growth using annual time series data for Nepal during the period 1984–2014. The study found evidence of a co-integration relationship between financial development and economic growth. The study indicated that long-run causality is unidirectional from finance to growth in Nepal.

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