

The premise behind the International Masters in Practicing Management (IMPM) is different to that of other management degrees. It was conceived (in part by the noted management thinker Henry Mintzberg) 18 years ago at a time when degrees from business schools focused on functions and disciplines (marketing, finance and accounting).

In contrast, the IMPM's content is built around the managerial mindsets that managers use in their day-to-day work. Each module focuses on a particular mindset framed around the managers themselves, their organisations and the unique environment in which that organisation exists.

The five managerial mindsets of the IMPM are:

1. Managing self: the reflective mindset
2. Managing organisations: the analytic mindset
3. Managing context: the worldly mindset
4. Managing relationships: the collaborative mindset
5. Managing change and continuity: the action mindset



THE IMPM INNOVATIONS & TEACHING APPROACH

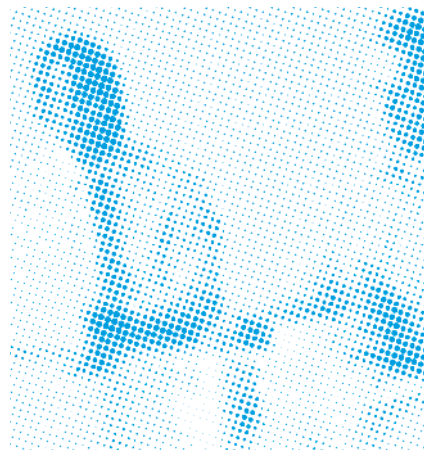
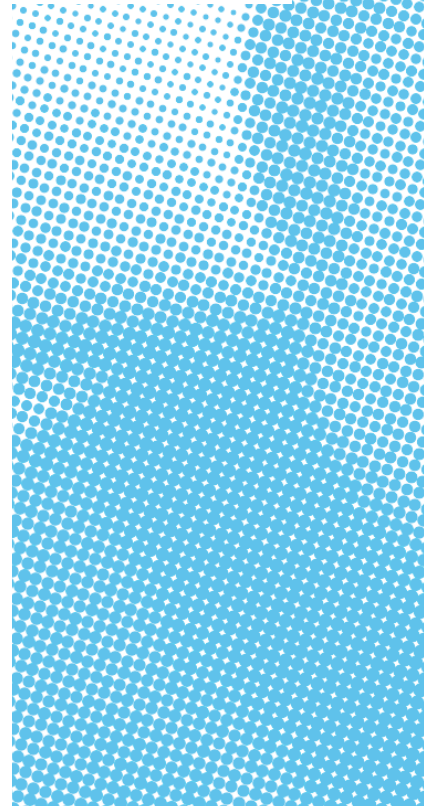
The International Masters in Practicing Management (IMPM) programme is 18 years old but continues to be seen as one of the world's most innovative senior management degree programmes. **Leslie Breitner** and **Dora Koop** explain how the programme has retained its freshness for so long

Truly international – a worldwide campus

The IMPM is not a domestic programme with foreign activities. It is a truly international management programme that is balanced across different parts of the world. It is delivered over 16 months in 10-day modules at five different universities: Lancaster University in the UK, McGill University in Canada, the Indian Institute of Management (IIMB) in India, Renmin University in China and FGV/ EBAPE in Brazil.

An academic director in each country leads each of these modules. The module director designs the curriculum, hires the faculty and sets up the field and site visits and evening events based on the mindset being delivered at the school. In other words, the programme is heavily influenced by the location of the module. It is as Brazilian as it is Chinese.

Participants are therefore exposed to different countries, different cultures and different organisations.





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Workshops (the 50/50 rule)

A basic premise of the IMPM is that participants learn as much from each other as they do from the faculty or guest speakers. The programme's "50/50 rule" is a guideline for everyone involved and is used to remind them that about half of each module should be given over to participants for discussion, in-company visits, personal reflection and, of course, workshops. This opportunity for learning is built into the programme in a number of ways.

In every module, in all the schools, the layout of the classroom is the same. Participants sit at round tables, which means faculty can switch to instant workshops at the tables, allowing discussion of conceptual and theoretical material from a small group point of view.

And because a flat classroom is used, various seating arrangements are available for listening, observing and discussion to foster a broader learning experience. The focus is also on challenges and work situations that the participants bring to the programme rather than on published case studies. Thus, lecturing in 20 to 40-minute sessions is ideal since it allows instructors to initiate a workshop. This involves turning the session over to the participants so they can discuss how the content relates to them and to their managerial challenges.

Sessions that share competencies allow the wealth of experience in the class to be tapped. The focus is not on how a particular managerial skill can be used or should be used but on how it actually is used – how a group of talented and experienced managers get things done.

Field or organisational visits provide an opportunity for the participants to have input in another way. The visits are a strong and influential component of the programme and are set up to reflect the learning that is taking place in the classroom and to experience how it can be applied within an organisational setting.

In Module 1, the Reflective Mindset, for example, participants are introduced to a theoretical framework, a cultural web, that helps them understand organisational culture. The larger group is divided into smaller teams, each visiting a different organisation. The team is exposed to different units and levels of managers and, through observation and discussion, team members experience one perspective of the organisation's culture. The groups spend time in analysing this experience from the perspective of the organisation they visited and also from the perspectives of their own organisation and learning from the programme. All of this is shared with the larger group the next day.

Experienced participants

The IMPM is designed for managers with at least eight years of managerial experience. As many of the components of the programme are based on learning from each other, these years of experience are critical. Over the years the average age of participants has been between 40 and 44.

Learning from each other does not end in the classroom. One of the most powerful experiences for most participants is the "managerial exchange".

In this, each participant spends one week of the programme observing a fellow participant at his or her workplace. The visit is returned so that each participant acts as both host and guest. Preparation during the module and before the exchange includes sessions on learning through observation and listening. Insights are both personal and organisational.

Impact

Throughout the IMPM we encourage participants to use the classroom experience to make improvements in their managerial practices, their jobs, their organisations and the larger environment. We see this happening in two ways.

Through *teaching impact*, participants act as teachers on the job (mentors, coaches) and diffuse the learning to their colleagues at work.

Through *action impact*, participants drive changes in their organisations as a result of what they have learned.

To further this process, "Impact teams" have been added. ("Impact" signifies the pact between the IMPM participant and their team back on the job.)

A team, or teams, is established in the workplace to support managers while they are in the IMPM programme and when they return to the workplace. IMPM participants may share their papers written after each module or the team may be part of a change project that the participant has initiated as a result of the learning.

In fact, the sponsoring organisation is getting the development of a number of managers for the price of sending one to the programme.

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Reflection

Insight is the product of reflection and reflection is built into the IMPM programme on a daily basis. Every morning participants take time to think and add their experiences of the previous day(s) to a personal journal.

The process begins on an individual basis but these reflections are then shared with other participants at the table, usually followed by a large plenary. All of these reflections are captured in an "Insight book" or as one participant called it, looking back, "the best management book I have ever read". Learning from reflecting on experience is the original source of knowledge.



Tutoring and advising

Throughout the programme participants are required to write a paper following each module. These "reflection papers" should mirror the individual's unique set of challenges in the workplace and the relevance of the conceptual material of the module to those challenges.

Participants are encouraged to read beyond what is assigned for the module if they have interest in a particular area. Tutors who advise small group of three to five participants guide their work.

The benefit of this process is that participants share their papers and get advice from their colleagues as well as from the tutor (whose primary responsibility is to evaluate the written work). The criteria of focus for these evaluations are authenticity, integration of conceptual material and demonstration of a personal action plan or impact plan.

The IMPM is a degree programme and is structured to meet the diverse needs of the group. Participants can choose to obtain their masters degree from either Lancaster University or McGill. An advisor guides participants as they write their final masters papers. Topics are the choice of each participant and the advisor is assigned based on his or her area of expertise.



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Conclusion

Since the IMPM was launched 18 years ago, other executive or management degree programmes have been established with some of the same elements, in particular having participants take part of a programme in different locations.

However, it is the combination of the unique elements of the programme, the customisation of the programme to participants in each class and the adaptation to the different contexts that keep the IMPM current and impactful.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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