

Driving Inspired Impact: Deconstructing Social Sector Systems in India
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Shoikat Roy is an Associate Director with The Boston Consulting Group. He is a leader of the firm's Social Impact practice and is based out of the New Delhi office. Shoikat has worked extensively with Governments, Foundations and Development agencies on topics of education, skilling, employment and more recently also on agriculture and environment. Prior to BCG, Shoikat was consulting in the education and food security spaces. Shoikat also has deep interest in global affairs having worked with the Permanent Mission of India at the UN in NY early in his career.

Seema Bansal is a Director with The Boston Consulting Group and leads BCG's Social Impact Practice in India and till recently also for Asia Pacific. She has been with the firm for 23 years. While she is personally passionate about large scale system change especially in education and health; she has also mentored a lot of BCG's other Social Impact work in India and beyond. Seema is a TED and TEDx speaker where she has represented BCG's view on what does it take to create breakthrough change in development spaces in India.

Overview of the Course:

The development sector in India today is a vibrant space especially for young professionals. There is an increasing openness of governments to civil society, not-for-profit grassroots organisations, social ventures, and professional services/external experts. This has been equally matched by shifting young adult preferences, especially from socially conscious and economically secure backgrounds, who are looking for opportunities to enhance their social contribution through their professional lives. The opportunities to affect social change have therefore grown exponentially – in the form of public sector fellowships, lateral entries into government, social sector/not for profit roles, research and think-tanks, entrepreneurship and start-ups, as well areas like social sector consulting and impact investing.

However, even as the inputs (people as well as money) increase manifold into this space, the improvement in outcomes is much slower. The quality of public-sector school education remains poor and successive NAS/ASER reports do not indicate a secular upward trend; even over decades. Public health systems still provide for only 30% of India's population with 70% people paying out of pocket for healthcare needs. Metrics like IMR/MMR/immunization rates or stunting are barely moving. Despite increasing subsidies and numerous programs, agriculture that engages 45% of India's workforce, it is not remunerative and holds limited attraction for youth as a talent pool. The average monthly income per agricultural household is just ₹10,218 with just 4-5% annual growth.

Where does this dichotomy of increased inputs and yet stagnant outcomes come from? Why do entrepreneurial innovations typically not scale and lead to transformative outcomes? What structural factors lie at the heart of it? How can those who are looking to enter this space understand and begin to tackle this dichotomy from day 1?

We hope that this course will help you answer some of these essential questions and better prepare you for a professional career that interacts with this space in any shape or form.

Proposed Structure/Flow for the course

We will begin with a deep dive on the topic of school education. We will focus on a deep study of this development system for the first 5 classes. Once the framework of examining a development system have been set via this deep-dive; the remaining 7-8 classes will focus on public health systems and agriculture systems via 3-4 classes each.

Three distinctive elements of the course will be:

1. **Case studies** – The course will be taught as a series of case studies barring a couple of classes where the faculty will bring their knowledge of a sector as a lecture. Students will be required to engage with the case study in between classes and also read/research/further on the topic. Classroom time will be used primarily for active discussion, debate, and nuanced reflection on implications of the topic going forward for nation-building.
2. **Field visits** – for each of the topics discussed; we want students to go to the field and not only observe but also engage with the reality of the on-ground context. 3-4 field visits are planned through the term, covering all the focus sectors. The intent will be to plan the visits close to the campus to ensure significant time for observation, immersion and discussion. Some of the case study discussions will also happen in-field during these visits itself.
3. **Guest speakers** – Over the length of the course, we intend to invite at least 3 external speakers such that students can engage not only with the content and the faculty but also the real protagonists of the story. The proposed speakers will span Government leaders, experts from Foundations and think tanks as well as frontline delivery owners such as a clinical doctor from a public health facility. While some names are proposed, actual speakers will be locked in based on availability at the beginning of the term.

What can you expect? Some highlights from the course



In-field discussions on stubble burning with farmers, balers, and ex-situ industries to explore solutions to the health & environmental consequences



Exploring the **political economy of school education** and diagnosing structural factors such as school size and teacher cadre structures that bedevil high quality primary education in India



Expert discussions with **govt. clinical doctors and public health experts** on emerging constructs for primary healthcare and the future of technology and digital health initiatives

Who is this course for/how can it benefit you?

While this course has a distinct public sector focus, it is not meant just for students who want to work with or in the government. ***This a course that will give you a foundational grounding about how to think about and understand fundamental human development problems in India; irrespective of how you choose to engage*** with it – either as a direct stakeholder working in the Government, as someone who is looking to make a career in the development ecosystem through a professional pursuit or a start-up or even just as a concerned citizen.

This course is for:

- *Students looking to work directly in this space with the Govt* or related ecosystems
- *Social entrepreneurs* who hope to solve some of India's most complex problems
- *Student looking to work with social sector players* – consulting firms, foundations, development banks
- *Socially conscious citizens* – example: how do I engage on critical issues/debates like the farm laws, RTE etc. Or where do I contribute as a volunteer/citizen etc.
- *Anyone looking to challenge their own biases* – especially along typical conceptions of left/right and their applicability to the development sector

What are the proposed learning objectives?

At the end of the course, students will:

- *Develop an appreciation* for the fact that development systems are complex and multifaceted. Issues that are immediately visible are often symptoms; not root causes.
- They will then learn to *undertake systems thinking and structured exploration* (including building an analytical framework for themselves) to deeply *analyse and identify the root causes/fundamental drivers* of poor outcomes.
- Gain a *deep understanding of the constraints* within which any innovation/policy/idea needs to function such as weak state capacity, limited financial resources, inadequate data, overburdened frontline systems, complex vested interests etc.
- Based on the above, students will be able to *apply the principles of implementation design to design interventions/innovations* for a development system such that chances of transformative impact (as opposed to incremental change) are higher.
- In this context, students will also be able to *distinguish between ideal policy & implementable policy*
- While studying all of the above, students will gain *preliminary but structured working knowledge and understanding* of India's education, public health and agriculture systems

Proposed assessment/evaluation*

Each case study will have several discussion questions and 2 assignment questions. Students may choose any 3 assignment questions to respond to over the course of the 9 case studies. They must do one each on education, health and agriculture.

The overall score for the course will be split as given below:

- Attendance and Class Participation – 20%
- Three assignments through the semester – 30%
- Education Roadmap Mid Sem Paper Submission – 25%
- End Sem Project/Assignment (TBD) – 25%