

CHAPTER 5

Experience-Centric Induction to Principles of Management: The Mahakumbh Mela City Construction Assignment

Prajwal Melinamani and Ramakant Kulkarni***

ABSTRACT

Induction into foundational management courses sets the tone for student engagement and long-term learning. Traditional approaches often remain abstract, leaving learners disconnected from real-world complexity. This paper presents an innovative pedagogical experiment: the Mahakumbh Mela City Construction assignment, designed as an experiential induction into Principles of Management. By simulating the planning and execution of the world's largest congregation, students engaged in hands-on learning of management functions—planning, organizing, decision-making, coordination, and control. The exercise embedded innovation in pedagogy, mirrored technology-driven infrastructure planning, and emphasized sustainability through resource-conscious design and collaborative culture. Outcomes demonstrate enhanced student curiosity, skill development, and community engagement. The paper argues that such experiential induction models align with the evolving business landscape where innovation, technology, and sustainability converge as drivers of organizational success.

Keywords: Kumbh Mela; Pedagogy; Experiential learning; Coordination.

1.0 Introduction

The evolving business landscape is increasingly shaped by three interdependent forces: innovation, technology, and sustainability. Organizations must adapt to rapid technological change, innovate continuously, and embed sustainability into their operations. Management education must prepare learners for this reality. Induction into Principles of Management (PoM) is critical, as it sets the foundation for subsequent courses. Yet, induction often risks being abstract.

**Corresponding author; Student, Management Department, Chetan Business School, Hubli, Karnataka, India (E-mail: prajwal23.cbs@gmail.com)*

***Director-Academics, Management Department, Chetan Business School, Hubli, Karnataka, India (E-mail: ramakantkv@yahoo.co.in)*

To address this, a classroom project was designed around the Mahakumbh Mela—a mega-event of unparalleled scale. By replicating the construction of a miniature township, students experienced management principles in action. This paper situates the project within the conference theme, demonstrating how experiential pedagogy can drive innovation, simulate technology integration, and foster sustainability consciousness.

2.0 Innovation in Pedagogy

- Experience-centric induction
 - Moving beyond lectures, students engaged in hands-on construction of a miniature township.
 - The project transformed induction into a living laboratory, where management principles were applied in real time.
- Role innovation
 - Students assumed roles: CEO, group leaders, and press reporters.
 - This mirrored corporate structures, fostering accountability and leadership.
- Prototype learning
 - The township prototype became a physical manifestation of management concepts, bridging theory and practice.
- Outcomes
 - Students reported heightened excitement and curiosity.
 - The exercise demonstrated that innovation in pedagogy can sustain learner engagement and foster deeper understanding.

3.0 Technology as a Driver

- Blueprint and design
 - The project began with a blueprint drawing, simulating digital planning tools such as CAD or GIS.
- Infrastructure simulation
 - Groups replicated tasks like power substations, sanitation systems, and transport networks.
 - These mirrored smart city technologies and infrastructure planning.
- Communication systems
 - The press reporter group simulated real-time information flow, akin to ICT systems in mega-events.
- Learning parallel
 - Students learned that technology is not just about tools, but about systems integration and coordination—a core management principle.

4.0 Sustainability Embedded

- Resource allocation
 - Students worked within a constrained plot (23x13 ft), mirroring real-world resource limitations.
- Environmental consciousness
 - Tasks included tree planting, sanitation, and water supply, emphasizing ecological responsibility.
- Social sustainability
 - Group work fostered cross-cultural fusion, friendship, and collaborative habits.
 - This built a sustainable organizational culture.
- Mega-event sustainability
 - The Kumbh Mela itself is a case study in balancing tradition with modern infrastructure for millions of visitors.
 - Students reflected on how sustainability is embedded in large-scale event management.

5.0 Management Principles in Action

Function	Student Application	Conference Theme Connection
Planning	Blueprint design, task allocation	Innovation in structuring complex projects
Organizing	Group formation, CEO leadership	Technology-enabled coordination
Decision-making	Material choice, prototype execution	Sustainability through resource optimization
Coordination	Synchronizing 10 groups + press	Innovation in collaborative culture
Controlling	Progress reviews in PoM classes	Technology-driven monitoring & evaluation

6.0 Case Study: Mahakumbh Mela Data

Students engaged with real-world data from the Kumbh Mela:

- ₹5500 crore allocation
- 40 crore visitors projected in 2025 (up from 25 crore in 2019)
- 4000 hectares segregated into 25 sectors
- 1.6 lakh tents, 9 pucca ghats, 30 pontoon bridges
- 400 km of temporary roads, 67,000 street lights, 2 substations
- 1249 km of water pipelines, 200 water ATMs, 1.5 lakh toilets
- 3 lakh saplings, 18 lakh sq ft murals
- 550 shuttle buses, 7000 state buses, 13,000 trains (3000 special)

By replicating these figures in miniature, students appreciated the scale, complexity, and sustainability challenges of mega-event management.

7.0 Outcomes and Reflections

- Engagement
 - Students reported higher excitement and curiosity compared to traditional induction.
- Skill development
 - Reinforced Knowledge, Attitude, Skills, and Habits (KASH) through practice.
- Community impact
 - Opening the prototype city to Hubli-Dharwad visitors created a bridge between academia and society. About 1000 students and citizens visited the miniature during the weeklong period when it was kept open for public. Media coverage gave publicity.
- Scalability
 - The model can be adapted for other mega-events (Olympics, Smart Cities, Expo) to teach management principles.

8.0 Discussion

The Mahakumbh Mela project demonstrates that innovation in pedagogy can align management education with the evolving business landscape.

- Innovation: Experiential induction transforms abstract concepts into lived experiences.
- Technology: Simulation of infrastructure and communication systems mirrors real-world technological integration.
- Sustainability: Resource-conscious design and collaborative culture embed sustainability into learning.

This triad—innovation, technology, sustainability—prepares students for organizational realities where these forces drive success.

9.0 Conclusion

The Mahakumbh Mela City Construction assignment exemplifies how experiential induction can transform Principles of Management education. By embedding innovation, simulating technology, and emphasizing sustainability, the project aligns pedagogy with the evolving business landscape. Such models prepare students not only to understand management principles but to live them, equipping them for careers in a world where mega-events, smart cities, and sustainable practices converge.

References

1. Sundman, J., Feng, X., Shrestha, A., Johri, A., & Taka, M. (2025). Experiential learning for sustainability: A systematic review and research agenda for engineering education. *European Journal of Engineering Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03043797.2025.2532591>
2. Sohaee, N., & Farsad, R. (2025). Innovative pedagogies for sustainability education. In *Competence Building in Sustainable Development* (pp. 221–237). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-80380-2_11
3. Matsuo, M., & Nagata, M. (2020). A revised model of experiential learning with a debriefing checklist. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 24(2), 144–153. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijtd.12177>
4. Kolb, D. A. (2015). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.
5. Sinha, A. K., Prakash, A., Rayeen, A. A., & Prakash, P. (2013). *Mass gathering event management: A case study of MahaKumbh, 2013, Allahabad*. Bihar State Disaster Management Authority. Retrieved from <http://bsdma.org/images/publication/Kumbh%20Mela%20Case%20Study%20Full.pdf>



