

BOOK REVIEW ON – ‘WHAT WORKS’ BY HAMISH MCRAE

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Abstract *In Given the dominance of Facebook globally, this paper will present a selective review of Social Media Analytics tools for Facebook.*

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In his book- What Works by the famous economist Dr.Hamish Mcrae, published in Great Britain, by Harper Press in 2010, the author has tried to provide many instances across the globe emphasizing on the successful strategies adopted by various countries, organizations and companies in carrying out their governance, administration and implementation. What worked for them and why it worked.

He has tried to bring out best ideas from different corners of the world, ranging from the successful educational strategies of Finland, to the rising infrastructure empire of the Dubai, to the slums of Mumbai. From Harvard to Africa, an idea emphasizing style and affordability of IKEA Sweden, to the municipal corporations of Shanghai, the author has left no part of the world untouched.

The author has tried to put forth his explanations regarding the selection of a particular story, though these may appear generalized, they give valuable insights in the fields of politics, management, governance and education. He has also tried to foretell what could go wrong in the existing set up if things were not controlled. This book basically imparts lessons which can be used to succeed in stressful times like the world is now facing, be it recession, natural calamities, war, financial downfall to name a few.

The book has a very optimistic tone throughout and is an ideal read for someone who wants to learn global lessons in politics, management and Governance in a short duration. It would truly help a manager who wishes to know the global scenario without having to travel to the different corners of the world.

The author's intention behind writing this book was the desire to report and share success stories from across the world. His study does not aim to propose or sell a theory. As there is no one such theory which works for all the organizations across. The author has just tried to critically examine the

successful strategies used by the organizations or countries to get themselves out of difficult times, also at the same time he has mentioned what could go wrong if things were not handled as they should have been.

At times, he seems biased to the European nations, praising much of their systems and neglecting the fact that due to their rigid systems they are now facing the downfall. Also there is an element of personal liking as some destinations chosen by him would be of no significance value to someone who has never had the experience of it, for e.g. his mention of a ski resort in Montana. For someone who has never skied in his entire life this example is futile. However, towards the end of each chapter he has tried to recapitulate the learning's that contributed to the success of the country/institute/company. These learning are can be taken as valuable lessons in management.

The initial part of the book covers most of the European countries and cities like Edinburgh, London, Ireland, Germany, Denmark and Sweden which is later followed by the mention of the North American cities like New York. The middle part of the book deals with the Asian countries like India, China, Hongkong, Japan and mid Eastern ones like Dubai; also there is a mention of the continents like Africa and Australia. There are institutions like Harvard and International Baccalaureate also mentioned in the book. The author has not limited his observation and learnings to different countries and continents, but has also included places where he had visited, the institutions he felt made substantial learning experience. If we put together all the learnings which the author has noted at the end of the chapters it would form a very good reading material for strategic management students.

The author has very systematically and concisely noted his insights about the places which have succeeded in his opinion. Be it the traffic management at Copenhagen or the

Mittlestand, Germany’s largest powerhouse or even simply the affordable and stylish Swedish furniture manufacturer, Ikea; all of them find a mention in this book. The only reason being, their successful management strategies. At times however the audience fails to relate to the author especially when there is a mention of places like the ski resorts or the philanthropic view of the New Yorkers.

This book bears a close resemblance to the famous book by Thomas Friedman- The World is Flat. Both the books look at the globalized world only with a difference that, Friedman looks at it with colored glasses where as McRae sees it as black and white with a few shades of grey. Also Friedman fails to give the success strategies where as McRae has succeeded in doing so. McRae, in addition to giving the success strategies has also made a mention of what could go wrong in the presently successful scenario and instigates the readers to think of a solution in case things change. The book is interesting to read as it gives the perspective of the world and the little things people or governments do in order to make life easier. In the book the World is flat the author tries to portray a very rosy picture, forgetting the Government and just focusing on the individual nations. Also he completely fails to mention anything about Africa or Australia where as McRae has handled both these continents with their respective competencies and their lack of it. The lessons learnt from this book in the words of the author are as follows:

1. Optimism, balanced by realism: pessimism paralyses
2. Excellence, tempered by decency, if wider responsibilities are neglected you end up in trouble when you meet them headwinds
3. Community works if allowed to: look at things with a bottom up approach
4. Government works too, compare like with like
5. Be a true magnet for talent
6. Be honest about failure
7. Be sensitive to success as you are to failure
8. Be nimble, make sure you are quick to adapt
9. Listen to the market; it’s about more than money
10. Have a sense of mission: Keep long game in view

These strategies would well not only in the corporate, but also in the personal life. In my opinion this book is a must read for someone interested in self improvement or in the improvement of one’s organization, a little dose of this book goes a long way. Truly helps in understanding why some

things or changes succeed and why some don’t and what needs to be done to make it work. On the personal front one could also compare the book with –Outliers by Malcom Gladwell, which elaborates on how people succeed not only due to personal drive but through the contribution from society, the circumstances and the people around them, and the extra effort which the individual puts in (10,000 hours) to outperform himself. Outliers mainly focuses on a team or individual where as What works is about the success of community as a whole, though it doesn’t quantify the number of hours, but it does give us strategies to succeed as an individual or as an organization.

The book is with some caricatures here and there, but there are no photos or pictures anywhere in the book. The author has left a lot of imaginative work to the readers. He could have added the illustrations of Copenhagen or pictures of Dharavi or photos of IKEA stores, as that would have given the readers a true perspective of the cities or the organizations discussed.

FINAL WORD

This book is a wonderful collection of strategies that have actually worked for organizations, nations and continents across the world. Renowned economist Hamish McRae has made a detailed study of cities, continents, businesses and institutions across the world which has succeeded due to the strategies incorporated by them. No two success stories share the same secret and this is what makes this book interesting. There are a lot of lessons to be learnt from individual and organization’s point of view and true to its title what works actually gives the readers a detailed reading of What actually works!!

