



# Scaling up to global standards

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**I**nternational accreditation is new to India, China and many other Asian countries, even though their education system is well developed and on par with the best in the world. The apparent neglect of accreditation has as much to do with the lack of interest – mainly due to low awareness about the usefulness of such global benchmarks by aspiring global B-schools – as with the accreditation agencies themselves, which have not engaged with B-schools in the right manner so far. In our case, too, the first global outreach contact with Indian B-schools was made only last year, and this year, we participated in a large international conference conducted in Hyderabad in association with the international accreditation advocacy agency, Standards for Educational Advancement & Accreditation (SEAA), in August. The Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), USA, is a two-decade-old global benchmarking agency with one of the largest number of accreditations done in several countries.

International accreditation bestows several advantages to the schools, the main one being included into a large and growing group of peer institutions equally committed to global quality. The accreditation standards are not static; they keep changing over a period of time based on the feedback from member institutions and as such, any institution joining in would benefit greatly from a pool of growing global knowledge. It is our personal experience that schools that take up international accreditation hesitatingly at best become quick converts in no time and they start interacting and helping the community to raise standards. No one would force anyone to share, but it happens automatically. Conferences and seminars are the best tools to help the member schools network and share their experiences.

ACBSP is a relatively new player in the accreditation arena, but has a growing presence as more and more schools throughout the globe recognise the value of having an accredited status. ACBSP membership includes over 589 campuses with 416 having achieved accredited status. It is also the only global accrediting body affiliated with three professional honour societies exclusively for B-schools, including Delta Mu Delta or Kappa Beta Delta for accredited members and Sigma Beta Delta for non-accredited members. In the US, an honour society is an

organisation that groups together peer institutions on the basis of their achievements.

## **Accreditation is here to stay**

International experience is that there is an increasing acceptance of accreditation as the single most significant reference point for the students to gain admission in a particular B-school, the faculty to take positions of their choice, and the recruiters to opt for their best campus to recruit from. Since ACBSP is one of the only two agencies to be recognised by the regulator, Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), it has tremendous credibility in the markets it serves. ACBSP accreditation standards are modelled on the Baldrige National Quality Program and its annual presentation of the Malcolm Baldrige Award. This is a US-based quality programme similar to the CII-EXIM Bank Award for Business Excellence administered by CII Institute of Quality in India. These two programmes are widely recognised by business and government, two important constituents of B-schools.

ACBSP will realise its vision by being committed to mission-based accreditation, which serves the dual role of promoting accountability (i.e. assuring multiple audiences that member schools and programmes are meeting acceptable standards of excellence, academic quality and integrity) and promoting continuous academic improvements (i.e. assisting institutions to improve the quality of education and delivery of services).

In India, we see tremendous scope for international accreditation, since most top B-schools are quite mature with a global presence already and many of them also have strong international linkages. The regulatory system is also strong here, which means that within a limited time period, Indian B-schools can easily scale up to global standards during the accreditation process – a luxury that does not exist in most other markets. The accrediting agencies have to keep working with the B-schools for many years before completing the accreditation process, as the schools may require hand-holding in several areas, which is not the case with Indian schools. Currently, international accreditation is available with only a few schools, which is understandable, but in future, it seems that India would do a lot better in a shorter period than most other countries. ♦



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