



# Time for metamorphosis

**Management education in India needs to reorient itself to compete successfully in the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century**

**M**ajor transformations in higher education are waiting to be introduced to address its long-standing needs. Orienting its deliverables to the needs of changing times, making it contextual to the global world and assuring high quality standards are a few of the priorities being addressed in this transformation. The emphasis is to make the system simpler and freer from regulations so that the desired priorities are achieved faster. Management education in India too needs a similar focus. Despite the fact that India has a few world-class institutions in IIMS, MDI, ISB, etc, to make a mark on the global map, by and large, nearly 1,900 business schools in the country need attention, which is fresh in approach.

For instance, even the IIMS today have a shortage of faculty and, moreover, there is the issue of disconnect of faculty from the industry. Quality and qualifications of faculty are reflected in the teaching and courses. Not enough is being done in the area of research either. Qualified faculty see future needs better and develop courses to meet them. Their research and publications attract industry and others to work with them on real life problems.

In the evolution of B-schools during the past one decade, the parameters stressed include: infrastructure (physical, knowledge centres, teaching aids); education process (faculty, research, consultancy, publications and Management Development Programmes: MDPS); academic programmes (admission, curriculum, delivery systems); social responsibility; placement and industry interface. In several B-school rankings conducted in the country, most of the schools have been found to put up a good physical and academic infrastructure, while a majority lagged behind in outcomes, such as skill sets imparted in graduating students, research outputs, collaborative studies, training or consultancy.

Poor faculty performance and lack of research orientation is one area where performance levels have been extremely disappointing. Internationalisation and changes in curricula only partially reflect the influence of the changing global environment on Indian B-schools. Rankings have highlighted the uneven spread of quality standards across B-schools. Only a handful of schools could merit a high score in all the parameters evaluated. The top 10 schools are seen to maintain a high score but, for the rest, there is a significant fall in the scores. Low performance of B-schools on some critical parameters like

building intellectual capital and campus-industry interface was quite alarming. These need to be included for improvement.

A comparison with the findings of similar ranking exercises conducted in 1998 provides some deeper understanding of the evolution of Indian B-schools. India then had 500 schools that offered MBA or equivalent programmes admitting 60 to 180 students per year. Most of these schools operated with three to four professors and a 'skeleton' office staff. Some were located in high school buildings so that classes started after regular school had ended,

which meant sharing the same building and infrastructure. As AICTE recognition was not mandatory, anybody could start and run an institute from anywhere. Control over quality was hardly noticed either by the institutions or the authorities.

The need of the hour is to adopt an outcome-based approach to the curriculum, assessment, evaluation and quality management. There should be an attempt to define specific course and programme learning outcomes, and then assess them towards the end. This makes the success measurable and helps an institution gauge how well the learning outcomes are suitable to the industry and contextual needs.

The need and demand for accreditation of management education programmes in India has arisen because of the explosive growth in the number and the variety of such institutions and programmes since the decade of the 1990s.

Overall, Indian B-schools have an interest in promoting their rankings. The challenge for them to compete successfully in the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century is to offer a programme of research integrated with quality classroom education at branches – not just in India proper, but in neighbouring nations, as well as other parts of the world. Indian B-schools need excellent professors, top-class students, and an established research culture to make them world-class B-schools in the near future.

There will be even greater challenges, if top Western B-schools were to start offering their MBA programmes in India. To prevent this potential disaster, B-schools must strive to create a vigorous and intellectually stimulating environment. In my opinion, international collaborations should have long-term constructive goals in areas of teaching, research and other programmes and this will certainly have a long-term impact at every level of management education in India. ♦



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