



'Create Indian management theories'

The Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM-A), has retained its numero uno position among all the B-schools in the country since its founding in 1961. However, the director of the No.1 B-school of the country, **Samir K. Barua**, is not content with this feat. He wants much more. He wants the country's management gurus to create Indian management theories that can be taught to the rest of the world. This, he believes, is possible only by freeing management studies from the shackles of academic bureaucracy. In an interview with **Nachiketa Desai**, Barua reveals the secret behind the evolution of IIM-A as a centre of excellence in management studies

On what made IIM-A the top B-school

First, the institute was started on the right footing. Its foundation was strong, having put in place right processes. The foremost principle followed by the IIM-A was equality among the teaching faculty. It was a deliberate decision not to provide a separate house for the institute's director because of the firm belief that the director was one among equals. This created an egalitarian environment in which all faculty members could contribute their best minds for the enrichment of academics. This entails a whole lot of commitment from all.

Second, the pedagogy was based on case studies, whereby faculties from different disciplines collaborate to address the challenges posed by various management issues. Initially, the curriculum drew heavily on the course syllabi of the Harvard Business School. However, as the institute tackled more and more India-specific problems, the curriculum evolved to equip the faculty and the students with the necessary acumen and knowledge base to meet the management needs of the Indian corporate world.

Third, the institute attracted the best of students who, after their graduation, started leaving their mark on the industry. An institution's reputation and standing mainly rests on the graduates it produces.

On the road ahead

So far, Indian management schools have been harnessing knowledge that was mainly created by North American universities. We interpreted, disseminated and trained students in the knowledge created by the Western world. There was limited original Indian knowledge. It is high time we started creating Indian knowledge. We must ask how many management theories have the Indian B-schools produced. The main responsibility of creating Indian management theories rests with the older B-schools

such as the IIMs.

Areas where Indian B-schools can show the way to the world include how to balance development of the society with the development of private enterprises and how to promote social entrepreneurs in fields such as healthcare, education and sustainable development. Many IIM-A alumni have taken up socially relevant enterprises.

On what ails Indian B-schools

There are more than 2,000 B-schools in the country. It is said that, in some cities, there is a B-school at every street corner. Of these, only about 200 are reputed to impart good training and education. There is an acute shortage of management teachers/instructors. As a result, one finds what are disparagingly called 'butterfly' faculty members who hop from one B-school to another to deliver the same lecture four or five times a day.

However, the main problem plaguing most B-schools is that they follow a straitjacket curriculum drawn up by academic councils of universities which treat management courses on a par with pure science or engineering courses. Management studies are not pure science studies and involve a multi-disciplinary approach. B-schools should be given the freedom to draw up their own curriculum so that they can address the problems of businesses in their respective geo-political regions.

B-schools, recognised by the All India Council for Technical Education, or affiliated to various universities, have to follow a syllabus prescribed by these regulatory bodies and have no freedom to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of the businesses that recruit management graduates.

IIM-A is willing to share its course content with any other B-school. However, there are no takers as all the B-schools have to follow a straitjacketed curriculum prescribed for them by the academic babus. ♦