



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

Taking India towards Global Quality in Management Education

Dr. (Col) C. P. Ramchandani

Director, AMITY University, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

Founder, Management Development Centre, Pune, Maharashtra, India

Abstract:

The higher education scenario in India has undergone a sea change in the past two decades. With the doors opening up to the private education sector, India has witnessed a boom in the number of institutions and universities that have mushroomed all over. Gone are the days when students used to find it difficult to gain admission in their chosen field because of the very few seats available in the state run colleges and universities, now they have a wider and more informed choice. Also there is a sudden glut in the market. Maharashtra is one of the states that has always led the way in the field of education and has been pioneer in development of this sector. However, all has not been well in the private education sector and it has its own merits and demerits. This paper analyses it's finer points and suggests measure to improve private education sector in Maharashtra as well as the entire country to bring it to the cutting edge global standards.

1. Introduction

India has one of the largest numbers of students passing out of schools and aspiring to join the mainstream management colleges and B-Schools. The demand of management education has been spiraling over the years and that has resulted in mushrooming of many such institutions. These are affiliated to either the state run universities or some private as well as autonomous universities.

With increasing trend of globalization and privatization in every sector of public domain, education too has also witnesses a similar boom which has made management education one of the favorite disciples amongst countless aspirants.

According to a survey conducted by the magazine "Business Standard" in its issue dated 20th March 2014, B-Schools in India are increasingly trying to extend their global footprint by tying up with universities abroad and running accreditation courses. They do this with an aim of making their courses more attractive and accruing tangible benefits of an international accreditation. By doing this they can also justify the comparatively higher fees they charge. This globalization of management education has also seen increasing induction of globally qualified faculty.

Most private B-Schools aim to get further recognition by Accreditations with European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS), Association of MBAs (AMBA) as well as Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). However, they prerequisites of these affiliations are stringent and not all can manage to pass these requirements. Some of them do manage one or the other of these accreditations.

At the moment these seven Business Schools are AMBA accredited

- Indian Institute of Management Calcutta
- Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode
- Indian Institute of Management Lucknow
- International Management Institute (IMI), New Delhi
- Management Development Institute
- SP Jain Institute of Management and Research
- Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai

(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_institutions_accredited_by_AMBA)

Only the following three B-Schools are AACSB accredited and just two have received EQUIS

- Indian Institute of Management Calcutta (INDIA - West Bengal)
- Indian School of Business (INDIA - Andhra Pradesh)
- T. A. Pai Management Institute (INDIA - Karnataka)

(Source: http://www.aacsb.edu/en/accreditation/accredited-members/global-sting.aspxF_Country=INDIA)

This certainly is not a rosy picture. For a country that has a history of management education of over six decades, it is unfortunate that no Indian business school is anywhere near the top 10 global institutions measured by various rankings.

The China Europe International Business School or the CEIBS, set up 20 years ago in China, beat the 53-year old Indian Institute of Ahmedabad (IIM-A) by a long margin to feature at the 11th place in the Financial Times' Global MBA Ranking 2015, released earlier this week, and 17th in the Bloomberg Business week Ranking 2014. In contrast, IIM-A has climbed up slightly to the 26th spot (30th in 2014) in the FT Ranking. The Bloomberg Business week Ranking had taken into account only 17 international B-Schools (none from India) against 100 considered by the FT.

(Source: http://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/wake-up-B-Schools-115013100982_1.html)

While India has 3500+ MBA programs, only three Indian B schools have earned AACSB Accreditation. However of late India is catching up with 43 AACSB members in India, second only to China.

(Source: <http://www.mbauniverse.com/article/id/8367/AACSB>)

A quest for these accreditations has also encouraged various B-Schools to revamp the curriculum as well as mode of functioning to suit the global standards. It has dawned upon the B Schools as well as the students' body alike that a Global accreditation is a win-win scenario for all the stakeholders.

Such an accreditation helps because -

- Students can narrow down their choices from a plethora of B schools offering management degrees.
- Institutes are able to attract international students as well as faculty
- Global Rankings of such B-Schools increases, thus increasing the institutions credibility and status.
- Both Employers as well as students benefit as far as placements are concerned since the campus placements has a high representatives from multinational companies and business houses.

As per Business Standard, increasing the awareness of Indian student about such benefits would make international accreditations one of the most important yardsticks they look for while choosing their B-Schools.

2. A Reality Check

While most B-Schools may be aspiring to attain an international recognition, it is not an easy task by any means. In fact, a reality check speaks of a different story altogether. Various surveys have revealed that despite all the resources they use to acquire such accreditations, out of the almost 250 to 300 B-Schools that were rated, only the very few as listed above could actually come up to those standards.

It conclusively highlights the fact that the Indian Business Schools compare very poorly with their global counterparts- even with those in third world countries and emerging economies. There are many reasons that could be attributable to this state of things. Some of these are -

- Faculty that lacks in practical experience and has only bookish knowledge.
- Most of the management schools that are recognized by AICTE do not have adequate infrastructure.
- Most B-Schools do not encourage high quality research work. They often focus on quantity instead of quality.
- Research work is often inadequate and of a sub standard quality.
- High dependence on imported literature.

Management education in India is more focused on economics of running an institution and hence is more money-based rather than value-based. This tends to create a fog in ethos that these B-Schools represent. These gaps should be addressed by the administrators of the Indian management institutions if they aspire to be at par with their international counterparts. Considering the nature of changes taking place in the global arena, be it political or technological field, the quality of education has to keep pace with the matching global quality standards.

(Source: <http://businesstoday.intoday.in/story/india-best-B-Schools-2013-listing-parameters/1/199110.html>)

During the last few years there have been a number of new management collages in India. Mushrooming of colleges for monetary gain has contributed towards reduction in the quality of the education that is being imparted. This high growth in management seats has resulted in poor off take in the employability since the Industry cannot utilize so many candidates as the number of MBA holders increase much more than the industry growth.

India has more than 3,900 management schools approved by the AICTE presently. This accounts for an intake of 3.5 lakh. The states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh have almost 70% of the technical institutes of India. The malice has become so acute that the AICTE has decided to check this by shutting down 200 colleges from 2013 onwards.

The response to such a scenario has been typically Indian. Every now and then some committee or the other has been appointed to review the situation and suggest measures - that remain largely in paper. Over the years some of the important committees set up to review the management education were:

- Kurien committee
- Nanda committee
- Ishwar Dayal committee

These committees studied the maladies in the system and are briefly listed as under -

1. Faculty - Shortage of adequately qualified faculty
2. Research works - Generally inadequate, was neglected or bear minimal just to meet the AICTE norms.
3. Industry interaction & involvement - generally missing
4. Faculty development - No real value programs in most universities
5. Course material - This is not adapted to suit to the Indian context and mindset.

6. Infrastructure - Except in some of the top B-Schools, there was inadequate infrastructure.

3. Measures for Improvement

Based on these recommendations, the areas where there is an urgent need for quality improvements, if Indian B-Schools were to reach their dream of Global acceptance are -

3.1. A Separate Governing Body

Presently the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) as well as its subsidiary arm, the Board of Management Studies is the main organizations that for govern technical as well as management education all over India. However, it is felt that since the requirements of the management education are vastly different from those of the technical education, it would be a considered option to have an independent body specifically formed to look into all aspects related to improvement and governance of management education.

3.2. Improvement in Type of Faculty

Almost all B-Schools face a shortage of adequately qualified and experienced faculty. In addition, due to mushrooming of more institutions there is a marked attrition of faculty members thus leading to sudden shortages. This affects the overall quality of education, resulting in poor intake as well as inferior quality of pass-outs, which in turn has an ill-effect on the placement records. This can also be due to the lack of funds due to which some institutes tend to offer low salaries and more teaching hours, which contributes to a drop in the quality of imparted education.

3.3. Ethics in the Field of Education

Lack of ethical practices and lack of focus on value-based education system is a major reason for poor quality in education. By making these a major part of the curriculum and making them integral to management education would result in a higher quality of management graduates.

3.4. Emphasis on Research

Since management education is in constantly evolving, based on rapidly changing social, industrial and technological scenario, keeping the students and faculty abreast with these changes is an inescapable requirement. This can be done effectively by doing the subject specific research work to keep their knowledge updated.

3.5. Formulation of Realistic Curriculum

Having a realistic, industry driven curriculum needs planning which can only be achieved by keeping abreast with the continuous developments. Curriculum should therefore be reviewed regularly in the light of fast paced developments and requirements of the industry and modifying suitably to ensure an industry-ready output.

- Aiming for an Industry-Institute Harmony: A good B- School should have strong tie ups with the industry to ensure that their students get exposed to various practical aspects of realistic management practices rather than gather bookish theoretical knowledge.

3.6. This Interface Would Make Them More Industry

Ready and help them find a niche in the industry. This can be done by inviting Industry experts, workshops, guest lectures, project work, etc. It would also involve industrial visits.

3.7. Simulation Exercises

Having suitable exercises to simulate various realistic situations and giving problem-solving assignments leading to brainstorming sessions would help in lateral thinking and problem solving. It would also inculcate a sense of teamwork amongst the students.

3.8. Developing a Global Mindset

The faculty should ensure that students keep pace with global skills and knowledge in management techniques. In order for India to become a key player in global arena of education, our prospective managers ought to be exposed to an optimum blend of thinking, learning, teaching and training.

3.9. Proactive Placement

Campus Placement of passing out students is the ultimate litmus test for any B-School; therefore they should strive to have a high percentage of students placed in the vocation of their choice i.e. management. Students should feel secure about the job opportunities that lie ahead on completion of their course.

4. Methodology

To ensure that the B Schools adapt strategies that bring them up to global standards, they would do well to keep the following in mind while designing the curriculum:

4.1. Creating an Industry - Institution Interface

For this it is important to understand the differences between industry and the institution. This would have an effect on the content as well as extent to which the curriculum should be modified and developed. Some of these points of differences are -

1. In industry, the mission is clear, and quality straightforward to define whereas in education, the mission is more complex and therefore is subject to debates. Thus its quality is difficult to define in practical terms.
2. In industry, assessment of quality is relatively easy and empirical whereas in education, a strict parameter of quality cannot be formulated or agreed upon; which makes meaningful assessment process a herculean task.
3. In industry, it is easy to identify the customer whereas in education, "customers" often tend to have contradictory desires and aspirations that are difficult to assess.
4. In industry, there is a clear of command whereas in education, the chain of command is not defined and at times is totally amorphous.

4.2. Student Improvement Methods

Felder and Brent in their studies have suggested certain steps that faculty may take to improve quality, with practical and workable resource inputs from their administrators:

1. Outline clearly, the knowledge, values and skills that students ought to have.
2. Specify instructional methods that would help students in acquiring the desired salable attributes.
3. Selection of the appropriate methods to assess the effective implementation of the instructions and to estimate the resources like provision for developing the faculty.
4. Supporting role by the administration in committing to provide adequate resources required to sustain the policies.
5. Spelling out of appropriate incentives to faculty goes a long way to boost their morale and efforts.
6. Forming a detailed implementation plan.

It is important to assess the results periodically and modify the plans as necessary in order to move achieve the desired outcomes. Involvement of the students can be achieved by project work, in classroom as well as during field trips.

Inculcating innovative and entrepreneurial qualities amongst the students can be ensured by making them take initiatives and emphasizing the need to be persistent. Emphasis should be to nurture an attitude problem-solving, seeking out information, self-confidence and risk-taking.

The quality of the education program for management can be vastly improved by ensuring that all faculty members are on board to help implement such methods that would suit the organizational goals the best. These should include -

- Recapitulation at regular intervals of all the points that are taught to students.
- Questions & Answer Sessions - Responses should be encouraged from individuals or from small groups of students based on individual classroom assignments or teamwork assignments.
- Problem solving techniques - It is important to break down the larger set of problems into a series of smaller steps, like evolving the problem statement, drawing a schematic flow chart, predicting probable solutions, writing relevant equations and solving them, outlining a specific procedure, and interpreting the solution.
- Explaining to students the written material given to them. Emphasizing TAPPS (thinking-aloud pair problem solving) as a powerful activity. Help the students understand the overall situation. Generally students should work pairs or small groups and given a problem. This ensures group dynamics. Timely explanation at every step of this problem-solving exercise helps the assessment of understanding level of the students.
- Encourage creative, analytical and critical thinking.
- Practice upon summarizing. The students may be asked to think of some good questions or to summarize the major points in a recently concluded lecture.

Students are given specific case studies and encouraged to discuss all its aspects such as problems, assumptions, errors, ethical dilemmas, etc. Similarly they can be given a free hand to explain any technical concepts; or find flaw in the logic of some argument; predict outcomes of an experiment or maybe simply explain an outcome in terms of a course. A number of similarly structured exercises help students in developing their perspective thinking skills.

Using innovative joint learning methods during a classroom session helps students develop their teamwork skills and fine-tune the interpersonal relationships. These can be such as:

1. Developing Interdependence and Mutual Confidence-. By this, the students learn that a team is only as strong as its weakest member. In attempting to get better at personal skills they tend to pull up or down the entire team. This teaches individual accountability. It is important for all team members that they are all responsible for the outcome or the final solution.
2. Promoting Team Interaction - Here, the team members are encouraged to provide mutual guidance and feedback, challenge one another, and finally work towards a consensus.
3. Appropriate Application Of Teamwork Skills - Any teamwork is designed for students to help each other exercise, develop, and apply the various communication, leadership, decision-making and conflict management skills.
4. Regular Self-Assessment By Team - The team members themselves routinely set goals, carry periodic assessment of achievements and their interpersonal skills
5. Faculty Improvement & Involvement - Meaningful evaluation of techniques that the faculty adopts is reflected in an assessment of outcomes.

Some institutions encourage students to evaluate teaching. Current trends in assessment include:

- > Performance-based assessment vis-a-vis standardized tests
- > Learning-based assessment focusing on student development rather than of teaching-based assessment.
- > Use of naturalistic approaches embedded in teaching rather than just viewing assessment as a value add-on.

Burke mentions in his study that assessments that focus on evaluating students' knowledge of content or skills include not only tests but also project reports, checklists, interviews, graphics, exhibitions, journals, etc. Systems for continuous improvement of faculty by means of research work, active participation at seminars, conferences, etc and regular development classes for keeping them abreast of latest developments in their field of interest should be in place in any good Management College.

5. Conclusion

The changing dynamics of trade and industry make the management education more relevant now than ever before. When Indian B-Schools wish to adopt a globally accredited and recognized system of education which is in tune with competitiveness it needs to rise to these challenges. That would involve every player in the industry.

Institute interface which will be viewed as a veritable partnership. The overall focus should therefore be on corporate awareness, honing adaptive attitude and grooming the managers of tomorrow.

6. References

1. Angelo and Cross. 1993. Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers, Jossey-Bass Publishers.
2. B-Schools on the march: Business World, March 22 – April 6, 1999, pg 22 – 34
3. Campbell and Smith (Eds.). 1997. New paradigms for college teaching. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.
4. Deming, 1994. The new economics. Cambridge, MA: MIT Center for Advanced
5. Jensen and Robinson. 1995. Demings quality principles Education 84, no.1:45-50
6. Khandai, Sujata. Dismal State of Management Education, Indian Management, April' 73
7. McKeachie, W. 1999. Teaching tips, 10th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin
8. Rogers & Sando, 1996. Stepping ahead: An assessment plan development guide. Hulman Institute of Technology
9. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_institutions_accredited_by_AMBA