



A benchmark for B-schools

Samir K. Barua, professor & director, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, is engaged in a major exercise to formulate a benchmark for the country's B-schools. He has been holding consultations with various stakeholders about bringing management education in India at par with global standards. In an exclusive interview with **Nachiketa Desai**, Barua discusses the challenges facing Indian management education. Excerpts:

On establishing a benchmark

Though we have over 4,000 business schools in the country, the quality of education they impart is neither monitored nor is there a national standard for them to follow. This is unlike in the US or Europe, where there are institutions like the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and the European Quality Improvement Systems (EQUIS) that set a benchmark and evaluate the performance of B-schools.

The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), which gives recognition to B-schools and other technical educational institutions, is not in a position to ensure the quality of education. The AICTE simply ticks off certain specifications that the B-schools need to follow to obtain government recognition. There is no system of accreditation unlike in the US and Europe. The result is we have over 4,000 B-schools with no benchmark to follow. There is also a dearth of qualified teaching faculty. Time has come for the top 10 B-schools to set standards for the rest of the B-schools in the country.

On lack of pedagogy and research

An average B-school also lacks in pedagogy. There is no systematic curriculum and teaching methodology they follow. Since most B-schools do not conduct research on relevant topics, they are also far removed from the real life challenges facing the business, economy and industry.

Unlike China, where the

government encourages research, India does not promote research. In fact, the government should support research by faculty and students and restructure their compensation package. Why is teaching 'management subjects' not the preferred career choice for the students? This is mainly because the management graduates get better compensation from the industry.

On corporate support to education

Ideally, large corporate entities should support management education. But they resist from investing in education, because it does not fetch them good returns. Instead of expecting the corporate houses to set up their own business schools, it would be more practical to seek donations from them as part of corporate social responsibility.

On relevance of management education

The global financial market crisis of the 2008-09 made top business school mandarins sit up and rethink about the relevance of management education. One of the IIM-A alumni Srikant Datar, who teaches at the Harvard Business School, wrote *Rethinking the MBA: Business Education at a Crossroads* which became a best-seller.

Business education has been at a crossroads and the academia across the world is scrutinising the MBA program and finding ways to bridge the gap between management education and industrial needs. Datar has been working towards

identifying these gaps. Inspired by Datar, the IIM-A and IIM-Calcutta have joined hands to initiate a series of consultations across the country to find ways to make management education more relevant to the present challenges.

In view of the significant changes in the environment in which organisations would function in the future, it is imperative to examine the manner in which management education is being imparted in India. A series of conferences have therefore been planned to take stock of the state of management education in the country.

On conferences and consultations

The objectives of these conferences is to disseminate the outputs widely so as to start a national debate on what needs to be done to revamp management education, so that it becomes more relevant and responsive to the emerging needs of the nation. The first conference in this series was held at the IIM-A campus in July. The second conference took place at the IIM-C campus – the theme was *Meeting the Challenges of Globalisation*. Another conference was held in Mumbai on *Focussed MBA Curriculum Redesign: Leadership Development*. This was jointly organised at the S.P. Jain Institute of Management & Research, IIM-A and IIM-C. We hope that such consultations will help the management community to come up with a comprehensive management education policy framework for all the B-schools to follow.