



On the global path

International accreditation is the newest differentiator

Ever since we started the annual B-school rating, *Business India* has been putting stress on the need for the top schools to go in for independent global benchmarking with regard to their quality. The B-school community has, in the recent months, discovered that global accreditation is a key differentiator to their quest for growth. Even though only a handful of schools have started on the road to global accreditation, more schools around the country are showing keen interest about accreditation. "We know that, to move to the next level, we need to accredit globally," says G.P.C. Nair, chairman, School of Management and Communication Studies (SCMS), Kochi.

In Varanasi, S.K. Singh, one of the founders of School of Management Studies (SMS), also lays stress on global accreditation. "I know the time has come to go for international accreditation," he says. TAPMI, Manipal, another big business school, has already taken the accreditation route, having started the process with the AACSB as far back as 2003, according to its director D. Nagabrahmam.

Need for accreditation

Global accreditation has several advantages. For one thing, it provides an independent stamp of approval on an institution's processes. For another, it provides for mobility of students and faculty, essential features in an era of globalisation. However, in the case of Indian B-schools aspiring to go global, there is little that has been done on the ground, even though it is noteworthy that a number of new schools are taking the global accreditation route.

With both the Indian accreditation agencies – National Board of Accreditation (NBA) of the AICTE and National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) of the University Grants Commission (UGC) – busy trying to bring all the business schools and engineering colleges within their ambit with some success, the super-leaguers in our list are looking to global accreditation to help them on their road to internationalisation.

"NAAC and NBA accreditations do serve their purpose but, to be counted as a serious business school, there is a need to go for international accreditation; there is no other choice," explains Mukul P. Gupta, professor and dean, continuing education, MDI Gurgaon, who was a key member of the team that brought the first global accreditation of a business school (that of the Association of MBAs) to a top Indian business school just a year earlier.

Why is there so much interest in global accreditation? "The first question any foreign university asks before even signing up a student or faculty exchange; programme is whether we are accredited or not", says A.K. Sengupta, director, South Indian Education Society (SIES) and former director of S.P. Jain School, who had initiated the process for global accreditation in both the schools. "We know that, to be counted among the elite schools, there is a need to go for accreditation, not just any accreditation but the best available globally," says Welingkar's Uday Salunke.

Welingkar, along with PSG institute, Coimbatore and TAPMI, Manipal, were the other B-schools which have cleared the first stage of AACSB accreditation process and got individual mentors appointed to each. "Accreditation also accelerates the transformation of the B schools and help in institution building," explains B.S. Sahay, director, IMT Ghaziabad.

IIMs have for long have been maintaining that they did not need accreditation as they themselves are schools of excellence and at par with the best in the world. But IIM Ahmedabad changed its stance and became part of the newly set up Association of Asia-Pacific Business Schools, founded by 11 top B-schools including IIM A in early 2006.

AACSB pioneered the B-school accreditation process way back in 1916, with ACBSP following suit in 1988. IACBE, an offshoot of AACSB, is the latest entrant, having been founded in 1996. Across the Atlantic, we have EQUIS, started in 1995, the European Quality Improvement System managed by EFMD and AMBA, WHICH started at the same time. The basic contours of all accreditation processes are similar, though there are some distinguishing features as well.

"We have started with the IACBE accreditation and the NAAC accreditation and are in the process of working on the others. The most satisfying aspect of the process has been the completion of the accreditation process in a record time of 15 months and the commendations the peer team had to make," says B.V. Krishnamurthy, director, Alliance Business Academy (ABA), Bangalore.

The accreditation market is also hotting up, with a number of private players expected to make an entry soon. For instance, MKM Indian institute of management, Jaipur, reported in response to our survey that they have tied up with a private accreditation body from the US. Whether or not the B-school would be able to stand out in the competitive global markets through their accreditation process, the experience would certainly make them wiser and market savvy.

♦ THOTHATHRI RAMAN