



Perfect positioning

The Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (IIM-B) has geared its research to address contemporary issues facing the nation. **Pankaj Chandra**, director, IIM-B, talks to **Meenu Shekar** about the institute's evolving mandate on public sector engagement and its role in transforming private enterprise through its scholarly work

IIM-B was set up to cater to the needs of the public sector. Why did that plan not work out? What were the issues involved?

IIM-B is committed to education, research and development of managerial expertise in all sectors of the economy and society in India. It has always responded with alacrity and a certain nimbleness to the changing economic and social environment in the country. At the turn of liberalisation, IIM-B strengthened its offerings to engage with and prepare managers for business and industry that was starting to witness a sea change in its regulatory environment. In the late 1990s, just before the dot-com boom, it anticipated the impending need for talent for the IT sector and launched a weekend programme for executives working in that sector.

In early 2000, it set up the Centre for Public Policy and started the Master's Programme in Public Policy and Management – another first in the country – to address issues of public systems, regulation and inclusive growth. In 2009, we started an executive PGP for managers getting ready to enter senior management positions. IIM-B has geared its research to address contemporary issues facing the nation. In that sense, IIM-B's mandate on public sector engagement has evolved over time and its role in transforming private enterprise through its scholarly work.

In hindsight, is there anything that IIM-B could have done differently when it first started?

The starting conditions of IIM-B allow it a vantage point that is unique. In times when the world is calling for increased regulation in market-driven economies, IIM-B's positioning is perfect due to its rich understanding of, and experience in, regulation, inclusion and contemporary drivers of economic growth.

How has IIM-B evolved over the years?

IIM-B has now come into its own. It has evolved its own indigenous thinking on management based on work over the past 37 years. Its strength has been experimentation, and focus on holistic learning has evolved over time and its implementation has matured tremendously. IIM-B has emerged as a confident, vibrant, research-oriented educational leader out of India.

What would you say are the key differentiators of IIM-B at present?

IIM-B provides transformative and holistic education that will help create leaders and entrepreneurs in society. Our faculty carries a strong blend of research and practice. We nurture individual potential through focussed programmes and activities. IIM-B is contemporary, aspires to be global, values evidence-based thinking, and is located in one of the most dynamic and cosmopolitan cities of India – this defines its learning ambience. Our interaction with the world of industry and government is real and involved.

What are your main challenges today and what are your strategies to cope with them?

The three big challenges that we face today are: attracting highest quality faculty globally; raising resources to hire and retain faculty and support academic activities; and modernising infrastructure to meet the changing needs of the institution. We would like to engage with the government, alumni and the corporations who gain from our talent to support our ambition to become one of the best management schools globally, and thereby, enable us to nurture leaders for the new world.

In recent years, many IIM graduates have been joining the public sector, particularly PSU banks. Is there a change in the attitude of management students towards the public sector? If so, what are the reasons for this?

Management students (or students, in general) go where they find opportunities to grow, where they can contribute positively, and to those organisations that recognise their talent appropriately. This has always been the case and will perhaps continue in future.

What are IIM-B's future plans?

IIM-B aspires to emerge as the global research school out of India. It will strengthen its focus on excellence in teaching, and partner with a few institutions globally to create a platform for thought leadership on issues of managing in emerging economies and for the globalisation of Indian organisations. We plan to deepen our work in public policy, so that we can emerge as an alternative research-based voice in India. We are also enlarging the opportunities that we provide to our students to help them shape their dreams and particularly, to help them start and grow innovation-driven enterprises. ♦