

B-schools and the art of going global

They should take global rankings seriously, creating a dedicated system and staff to provide the necessary data

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In 2003, when a university in China wanted to compete and eventually be recognised globally, it realised that there was no means of breaking into the mindset – even among those in China and the eastern part of the world – of favouring American universities. This mindset was based on popular perception and not on logic or evidence.

The university then decided to compile a league table of global universities ranked on multiple parameters. This eventually developed into the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) or simply Shanghai Ranking, and led to many others getting into ranking academic institutions. Within 10 years, such rankings became a regular feature and much sought-after by stakeholders from across the world.

So, the origins of global rankings lie in the need to find a logical means of assessing excellence.

Going global

globally to survive and prosper. With nearly 5,500 business schools in India, only three Indian B-schools could find a place in the Global MBA Ranking 2016 of the *Financial Times*. IIM-Ahmedabad has been ranked 24th, followed by ISB-Hyderabad (29) and IIM-Bangalore (62). It is evident that there is a dire need for these B-schools to gear up and compete in the global rankings more seriously.

Rank and file

Hence, it is time Indian B-schools took global rankings seriously. This involves five crucial aspects.

First, recognise that the global rankings are a routine feature. Ignoring them can eventually lead to isolation. It is similar to students ignoring assessment of courses. There is also a debate on rating vs. ranking.

Both are important and they serve different purposes. Ratings are absolute assessments (as against defined standards) and help in understanding and calibrating the progress of the institution. It is a declaration of how the institution is performing on a



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your rating. For example, do you have proper means of registering visiting faculty – who are counted as faculty? Have you registered all your research work? We can also look at some process changes to take it a little further. For example, can you incentivise collaborative research – especially with other regions – as this not only enriches your research, but also brings a lot additional points in most ranking systems.

These changes are not only going to improve rankings, they will also likely sow the seed for changing the outlook to be global and globally competitive.

Lastly, please treat this as a means of genuinely improving the relevance of B-school in the future marketplace.

Rankings are a good way of reflecting on what is considered relevant by sections of the public. It provides the much needed outside-in perspective. Be consistent in your participation and choose the right ranking system to measure the impact of your initiatives.

Accreditation is another impor-

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In the past decade, Indian higher education has gone global in its outlook and reach. The number of institutional tieups, exchange programmes, joint research projects, cultural tours, internship programmes, etc. have significantly increased.

This has been in tune with the globalisation of industry. We have also seen global corporates and consulting majors look at Indian talent more closely. Top Indian B-school talent being offered dollar salaries and often foreign postings have become a regular feature. All these factors indicate that Indian B-schools cannot operate in isolation any longer. They are part of the global marketplace.

Another interesting development is that of Indian B-schools becoming a preferred destination for global students. Now, with all stakeholders getting global, Indian B-schools have to be relevant

the institution is performing on a stand-alone basis.

While this is relevant for the institution, in a competitive environment, for the stakeholders who need to choose, this shall not be adequate.

Ranking, on the other hand, gives a relative performance scorecard on certain common parameters on which all institutions under a category are evaluated. In a fiercely competitive environment for B-schools, ranking plays a crucial role in selection.

This selection could determine admission for students, employment for faculty, placement for industry, grants provided by agencies, or collaboration by fellow institutions. Recognising various ranking systems is the first step towards participating in them.

Second, understand what these ranking systems are all about. There are multiple global ranking systems and each has its own mer-

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its/de-merits. Some focus on research, some on academic rigour, while others give weightage to industry perception or global participation. Each ranking system has different followers – depending on what they are looking for. A research-intensive Shanghai Ranking could be of interest to a certain audience, whereas the BRICS ranking of QS could be of interest to others. Indian B-schools need to figure out who are they addressing.

So it is important to spend time in understanding the methods of assessment, how and what form is data collected, when do the results get published and in what forum, etc.

Third, make data available. B-schools would be collating the data required for internal and other compliance purposes.

A little proactive approach in making this data available to the

ranking agencies will help avoid confusion arising out of wrong representation. For example, the faculty/student ratio is an important parameter. Do research scholars and adjunct faculty qualify? How many hours of teaching qualifies them? Similarly, do we include part-time students? What about online/distance education?

Some data need to be 'cleaned' so that a third-party can recognise that. For example, your research paper would mention the entity of the researcher as 'Dept. of Organisation Behaviour' or simply 'OB' and the institution in some cases could be 'IIM' or variations of it. It makes sense to have a senior person designated to collate and provide the information in the right fashion at the right time.

Change for good

Fourth, consider improvements and changes that would enhance

initiatives.

Accreditation is another important aspect of getting globally recognised and competitive. The three top international accreditation for B-school programmes are the Association of Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), Association of MBAs (AMBA) and European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS).

In India, we have only four institutions that are AACSB accredited, eight AMBA accredited and three EQUIS accredited. Global business schools go for all the three accreditations. Only one institution, IIM-Calcutta, has all three in India.

If we can use a judicious combination of diagnostics, ratings and rankings, it will provide invaluable external insights on how the institution can become truly global.

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