

Be informed when you choose a B-school

A large number of institutes are running technical programmes without AICTE approvals. Therefore, to avoid wasting time and money, students must check with the regulatory body before taking admission into any course



SHUTTERSTOCK

SANTIAGO INIGUEZ DE ONZONO

AACSB and EQUIS guarantee quality

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Ayesha Banerjee
 ■ ayesha.banerjee@hindustantimes.com

Santiago Iniguez de Onzono, as chairman of the board of directors of GFME (Global Foundation for Management Education); member of the board of directors of AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business), and the awarding body of EQUIS (European Quality Improvement System) is best qualified to speak on the importance of international accreditations for B-schools. Also president of IE University and the dean of IE Business School in Madrid, Spain, Iniguez has authored *The Learning Curve: How Business Schools Are Reinventing Education*, which deals with the future challenges of management education.

Can you tell us about the stringent quality checks put in place by AACSB and EQUIS for granting accreditations to B-schools? Accreditation provides a form of quality control in a rapidly expanding market. In an increasingly global management education sector, accreditations contribute significantly to the transparency and comparability of educational offerings. Both AACSB and EQUIS require accredited schools to cover a demanding set of standards across the major operations of a business school: from structural requirements like autonomy and a critical size – in terms of full-time faculty – to research output, supporting services to students as well as the quality of the learning process.

How can B-schools qualify for AACSB and EQUIS accreditations?

They are both mission based, in the sense that business schools that apply for accreditation are evaluated according to their positioning, programmes and stakeholders. For example, an executive education centre has a very distinctive positioning that affects all its activities, as different from a university-based business school.

EQUIS emphasises the internationalisation and the orientation to the corporate world of business schools. AACSB focuses on the assessment of the learning outcomes of participants and students. Both accreditation agencies have global reach and are highly respected by most stakeholders of business education, including corporate recruiters.

How do AACSB and EQUIS help in the internationalisation of an institute?

Accreditation and rankings are the two most used criteria to select business schools by international applicants who decide to study overseas. Accreditation by an international agency like AACSB or EQUIS provides a guarantee to international students who may not be completely aware about the context where a business school operates. It's the equivalent to ISO and similar quality certificates at other professional services organisations.

As chairman of board of directors of GFME (Global Foundation for Management Education), what do you think is the way forward for management education?

Business education is the icebreaker of higher education, and one of the most demanded fields by university applicants and professionals. The MBA remains the hottest ticket among post-graduate programmes. For example, at IE Business School we have renovated our international MBA to focus on the attraction of entrepreneurs and corporate transformers, and we have experienced an increase in applications above 15%.

I believe that we will also see a growth of blended programmes, combining face-to-face forms of delivery with online courses, in the future. Most business schools already blend their executive programmes in order to adapt to the circumstances of their participants in terms of time and location. However, the most interesting part of blended programmes, according to the experience of IE, is that it develops a wider set of managerial skills in participants than traditional, classroom based, forms of delivery.

I also expect a significant growth in the demand for undergraduate programmes in management, as well as the category of masters in management for non-experienced students.

You are also the dean of the IE business school in Madrid... is it some sort of an experimental lab for you to test out your ideas on innovations in management education? If yes, then do tell us about the ideas that have worked.

At IE we love change and innovation. We were once defined as a group of "young people in a hurry", because we feel the same sense of urgency that is common in the real business world.

We try to be close to companies and understand how their demands for the attraction and development of talent change over time.

Every year we launch new programmes and renovate at least 20% of the existing offerings. Two of the most recent initiatives have been the launch of Corporate Learning Alliance (CLA), a 50/50 joint venture with the Financial Times Group for the design and delivery of custom programmes for companies. CLA is now operating in three different continents and we expect to be present in India very soon. The other major initiative, mentioned above, was the transformation of our MBA programme, which in my opinion is currently the most innovative experience in its category.

In Learning Curve, the book you have authored, you have said ICT is making a big impact on the learning process and that over 80% of business schools that used to offer face-to-face programmes run online courses. How important will online courses be 10 years from now and how can students in schools be prepared to change their learning methods? Do you as a dean see students struggling to cope with online teaching?

We were one of the early entrants in blended methodologies and we believe in the integration of technology and pedagogy, since it provides a much richer learning experience and develops a wider set of skills and forms of intelligence than traditional face-to-face courses.

The impact of technology in education is unstoppable and irreversible. It may not happen overnight, given that education is heavily regulated and changes more slowly than other social or economic sectors.

How important is it for countries to come together as groups – like Europe did for the Bologna process – to improve their education systems? Does that restrict countries from developing their own educational programmes the way they would like to?

I firmly believe in the beneficial effects of opening the doors, and lowering the barriers to the free movement of talent: students, faculty, entrepreneurs, recruiters and other educational stakeholders. Those countries that increase the barriers to mobility, or adopt protectionist measures, end up becoming isolated and less competitive.

Jeevan Prakash Sharma
 ■ jeevan.sharma@hindustantimes.com

The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), which was created through the AICTE Act of 1987, is the regulator for technical education in India. Apart from granting approvals to educational institutions (to run technical courses), it also carries out routine inspections to ensure that all its affiliated institutions are adhering to the prescribed regulatory norms. The AICTE website contains a section with a list of institutes not complying with its mandatory provisions. Any student seeking admission in a technical or business management course should check the legal status of the institutes he or she wants to join on this website.

"Since a lot of institutes are violating norms and offering courses, it is vital that students are conversant with certain facts concerning regulatory provisions. Of late, institutes have mushroomed across the length and breadth of the country and many of them falsely claim to have approval from regulatory bodies. Regulatory bodies like AICTE are only engaged in conducting inspections and giving approvals. And in cases of violation of norms, the body undertakes the responsibility of de-affiliating the institute and names it on its website. However, the body does not take any punitive action," says Jasbir Singh Malik, a Supreme Court lawyer.

To understand the purview of technical education, it is important to read section 2(g) of AICTE Act 1987, which says, "technical education means programmes of education, research and training in engineering, technology, architecture, town planning, management, pharmacy and applied arts and crafts and such other programmes or areas as the central government may, in consultation with the council, by notification in the Official Gazette declare."

Another section of 2(f) states "technical institution" means an institution, not being a university, which offers courses or programme of technical education, and shall include such other institutions as the central government may, in consultation with the council, by notification in the Official Gazette declare as technical institutions."

So, should universities, created under the act of a competent legislature, take prior approval from AICTE to impart any technical education? For a long time there was ambiguity on this matter.

However, in September 2001, the Supreme Court settled the issue in favour of the universities in the Bharathidasan University case and said, "If we look at the definition of

APPROVAL PROCESS

- A university which wants to start technical programmes does not need prior AICTE approval. However, colleges/institutes affiliated to the university need to apply to the Council (for approval) to run technical courses
- AICTE does not regulate BBA programmes. However, institutes which want to start MBA programmes, need to have university affiliation along with AICTE approval
- University affiliation is not required for PGDM courses. All institutes running PGDM programmes are regulated only by AICTE
- At present, Institutes running Bachelor of Architecture programmes, need to get a university's affiliation along with two approvals – one from AICTE and the other from CoA

a technical institution under Section 2(h) of the Act, it is clear that a technical institution cannot include a University. The clear intention of the Legislature is not that all institutions whether University or otherwise ought to be treated as technical institutions covered by the Act. If that was the intention, there was no difficulty for the Legislature to have merely provided a definition of technical institution by not excluding University from the definition thereof and thereby avoided the necessity to use alongside both the words technical institutions and University in several provisions in the Act."

According to legal experts, the position today is that a university and its constituent college (extension of the university or a second campus) do not need prior approval of AICTE to start any technical course. However, a college which is affiliated to a university, has to abide by the AICTE Act and seek prior approval for technical education programmes.

As far as the regulatory body is concerned, it is of the opinion that although universities do not require its prior approval to start a new department or course or programme in technical education, they do have a moral obligation to conform to the prescribed standards and norms. "For the purpose of ensuring coordinated and integrated development of technical education and maintenance of standards, AICTE may cause an inspection of the university, which has to be as per the provisions under the relevant rules/regulations of the AICTE," says senior AICTE official.

Though the Supreme Court has cleared the air in the matter of universities imparting technical education, the domain of architecture is another bone of contention between AICTE and the Council of Architecture (CoA). Recently the Supreme Court, through an interim order, asked the colleges offering architecture programmes to get approvals from AICTE as well as CoA so that the students who pass out in the coming years are not caught in the crossfire in case of any dispute between the two regulatory authorities.

In another interesting case, some business management institutes had challenged AICTE's power of regulating management courses in the Supreme Court and had argued that business management was not technical education and hence AICTE should not regulate it. The Apex court, stripping AICTE of its regulatory powers in a judgment dated April 25, 2013, had held that management education was no longer a part of AICTE's domain. However, it reversed its position with two consecutive orders in 2014. "It is directed that prior approval of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) is compulsory and mandatory to conduct any technical course, including the MBA/management course by an existing affiliated technical college and also new technical college which will require affiliation by a University for conduct of its technical courses/programmes for the academic year 2014-15," the SC order dated May 9, 2014, said in the matter of Orissa Technical Colleges Association vs AICTE. The same order has been extended for the academic session of 2015-16. Now all business management institutes, once again, have come under the ambit of AICTE for regulatory purposes.

"AICTE regulates those institutes which run master's in business management (MBA) and post-graduate diploma in management (PGDM). Bachelor in business management (BBA) does not come under AICTE's regulatory purview. For running MBA programmes, an institute needs an affiliation from a university. This is because only universities can grant postgraduate degrees. As far as those institutes which run PGDM programmes are concerned, they do not require any university affiliation. However, they have to seek AICTE's approval to start the course and adhere to the Council's norms," says Dr Avinash S. Pant, chairman (acting), AICTE.

The PGDM course is very prestigious and were started by the IIMs. "Eventually, autonomous institutes started offering these programmes," says Pant.

Fit matters most in an MBA

Mansoor Iqbal, editor of Top MBA.com of QS, known for its world university rankings, talks about the impact of accreditations on global rankings of educational institutes

Are B-schools ranked on the basis of affiliations to bodies like AACSB, AMBA or EQUIS?

The rank of schools is not contingent on accreditation. We base our rankings on a global survey of employers (worth 85% of a school's total rank) and business and management academics (15%).

How many B-schools in the QS rankings have triple accreditations from AACSB, AMBA (Association of MBAs) or EQUIS?

There are 68 triple-accredited schools in the world. However, only 48 of these are included in our Global 200 full-time MBA rankings. Remember, triple accreditation isn't everything. Many top US schools – our joint US top three of Harvard, Stanford, Wharton for example – haven't got it.

What are the five most important parameters for judging the rankings of B-schools?

Obviously we all know the main rankings, and they can be a useful starting point, looking at schools in an objective way – as far as methodologies can be objective, naturally. However, this is where it's really important to say don't fixate on them. If you want to get the most of your MBA, the thing that really matters is fit. So, think about things like: Is learning style collaborative or competitive? What is the international mix like, the industry representation? Where do people tend to go on to work afterwards – what industries and employers? What trips can you go on, what experiences can you get? Do you want to live in a big city, or do you want a quieter environment with room to think?

Rankings don't account for you as a person – and that's what really matters. There's a study from earlier this year that found 49% of Harvard alumni wouldn't really strongly recommend their alma mater, so even the world's most famous school can't make everyone happy.

More important than what a ranking could ever be – speak to some alumni, they'll be able to give you a proper idea of what it's like to study somewhere.

—Ayesha Banerjee



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The implementation of the Bologna accord had many positive effects across Europe. However, there is need to implement further schemes that transform Europe into a single unified education market: basically, financial schemes to support the cross-border movement of students and opening up the recruitment markets, and visas, for graduates from outside the EU.

Do you think there needs to be a change in mindsets of faculty and students in B-schools to focus on the larger picture and not just believe in personal or organisational gains?

Not all graduates from business

schools are arrogant, selfish profit maximisers. For example, at IE Business School a significant percentage of the graduates devote some time to social entrepreneurship ventures, and have engaged in different projects to improve less favoured communities in Africa or Latin America. At the same time, it is important that we recognise the social role of entrepreneurs and business managers in society, if they perform their jobs in the best possible way. For me, good business, executed according to the principles of good deontology, is tantamount to ethical business. Nothing more but nothing less.