

# B-schools use Mandarin mantra for global success

**Apoorva Puranik**

■ [letters@hindustantimes.com](mailto:letters@hindustantimes.com)

**MUMBAI:** Indian management students have devised a unique strategy to take on their Chinese counterparts when the two face off on the global stage. The B-school students are learning Mandarin, the official language of China, with several private MBA colleges and even some of the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) offering the language as part of their curriculum.

While IIM Calcutta, Bangalore and Shillong offer Mandarin as an elective in their post-graduate diploma courses, Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai, has made the language a compulsory subject in all eight terms of its post-graduate course. At Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS) in Mumbai, students are required to learn either Mandarin or Spanish as a foreign language.

“China is a growing market and will soon become

the most dominant global economy. For management students, knowing English and Mandarin means they can communicate with half the world’s population,” said Bala V Balachandran, founder of the Great Lakes Institute of Management. “Knowledge of Mandarin puts students at a great advantage.” The institute included Mandarin in its flagship programme in 2008, but made it a compulsory subject last year.

According to officials at the institute, the decision to intro-

duce Mandarin in the curriculum was triggered by investment bank Goldman Sachs’ BRICs report, which forecasts that China along with Brazil, India and Russia will dominate the world economy by 2050. China is already the second biggest economy in the world, having bypassed Japan, and is on its way to replace the US as the biggest economy.

Professors at NMIMS feel it is essential for students to be familiar with trends and practices in international markets.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 14**

# B-Schools use Mandarin mantra...

“Knowledge of a foreign language prepares them for assignments in the international arena in their career. Along with foreign languages, subjects like Multi National Management, Strategic Alliances & International Marketing are included to facilitate exposure to global issues,” an NMIMS spokesperson said.

At IIM Bangalore, spoken Mandarin was introduced for the batch of 2011-2013 for second-year students. The scores of the course are added to the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of the students at the end of the year. In fact, the course has gained popularity, with 45 out of 381 students in the batch opting for it.

IIM Calcutta has also seen its student base for foreign languages doubling from 40-45 last year to 80-85 for the 2012-2014 batch, out of which a majority of students chose Mandarin.

“China’s economy is rapidly rising and learning the language will not only benefit students, in terms of jobs, but also give them global exposure. A student placed with a multinational firm will have an edge over the others with knowledge of Mandarin. Moreover, apart from the language, the Chinese

model of economic growth is worth learning,” said Anindya Sen, dean of academics at IIM Calcutta.

Students at IIM Bangalore have opted for the Mandarin course because it’s an innovative learning experience. The language is part of the Chinese Business Course taught by professor S Swaminathan. “The language is difficult to learn and has around 500 characters. But, in this course, we are using the PINYIN method of teaching, which uses the Roman alphabet for teaching spoken Mandarin,” said Swaminathan.

However, not all B-schools are in favour of introducing foreign languages in the curriculum. “Instead of learning a difficult language, students would benefit more from add-on marketing or finance courses which complement their field of study,” said Vijay Karnik, faculty member at Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai, adding that learning a language like Mandarin is very difficult and can’t be done in a matter of months.

At IIM Ahmedabad, although the response for the Mandarin course, which was introduced in 2010, was good and a new course ‘Doing Business with

China’ was on the cards, the foreign language courses for the next batch have been put under review. “The institute can’t share any information before the new academic session begins,” said Ishita Solanki, IIM-A spokesperson.

Apart from B-schools, the study of Mandarin has also caught owing to increasing number of people travelling between India and China. “On an average, over 500 Indians apply for Chinese visas daily and most of them are going there for business. This trend has escalated in the recent past, indicating the surge in the importance of the language for Indians,” said an official at the Chinese embassy in Mumbai, on condition of anonymity.

Even family-run businesses have realised the importance of knowing Mandarin. Gurgaon-based Aniket Gidada, whose family runs a company dealing with water purification and sanitation equipment, started learning Mandarin two years ago as his company sells its products in China. “I can now converse in the language. Unfortunately, when I was in college, no B-school offered a course in the language. It would have been helpful,” said Gidada.