

Web Interview with CS. Balakrishnan Bilu, Founder, CIER on the occasion of 10 years of successful completion of corporate laws education.

CS. Bilu a well known Trivandrum based Corporate Laws Faculty for professional courses is a company secretary by profession. He is an Associate Member of various profession bodies in UK such as chartered institute of arbitrators, institute of legal secretaries, & securities & investment institute. Having over 10 years experience in teaching & guiding company secretaryship & chartered accountancy students for corporate laws subjects, CS. Bilu is a pioneer in conducting virtual classes. He is a great motivator for budding corporate professionals.



“It was very difficult to develop the concept & to maintain it in this complex scenario”

The CIER journey was started in 1998, how do you evaluate the status quo now ?

Really it was a difficult, but interesting task for me to set up CIER (Corporate Intelligence Education & Research) as a corporate laws coaching & research concept in the year 1998 when I was just completed my bachelor’s degree.

The level of acceptance was low. I faced criticism from every walks. But I stand through the same.

How do you created the brand along with criticism ?

In fact all the criticism was manure for me and for my thinking. I took every thing positively. I was taking my CS exams along with my students. It was a

joke for few. But that live experience made me a good teacher. I always give more importance for branding, as I strongly believe that there must be a brand, then market it. The earlier name of CIER was center for corporate laws.

Today there is a feeling that teaching or conducting coaching classes is a business. How do you evaluate ?

It can be so for few, but not for all. The art of teaching, I believe it is a God gifted skill, and when it becomes a business, you are selling the God. But one should realize the cost factor also. Being a professional we should value our time. Thus pricing for teaching definitely does not mean teaching is a business. To wit 'everything comes with a price tag'.

Making CIER as a professional institution was a real task. How do you managed it ?

That' true. Doing things differently is what matters. I don't wish at any time, that CIER should be branded as a tuition center or should it known by my name. So I was very determined about the corporate entity concept of CIER. Today CIER is managed by a management council, and advised by a well constituted Advisory Council.

Still the legal status is a matter of concern right ?

Not so. The matter of legal status of CIER was deliberated at different forums by the council members and students. Society, LLP, company etc. was the options. But to continue the momentum, it was decided to maintain a sole proprietorship concept. Positively we may think of an One Person Company (OPC) in future.



What values does CIER still believes that have a life in letter and spirit ?

We still believe on three values. Professionalism, Commitment & Excellence. See all the three are inter-related. It can't work in isolation.



The edge on Technology and Use of advanced ITes is the added advantage of CIER. How do you work on it ?

I would be personally happy to say it as our core competence rather than as an added advantage. We posted our first website in the year 1999. The concept of online notes, online registration etc for students was introduced in 2002. CIER was a pioneering institute in these walks. Presently we are working on a full fledged e-learning project.

What are the CIER's priorities ?

Students are our all time priority. We devote most of our resources and time for students services. Apart from coaching classes, our sms alert service, email service, online club etc. are targeted finest students services. We will be developing our selves as a nodal agency for micro-level corporate laws research and career guidance. CIER is recently involved in giving support services for other initiatives such as ICSI students forum of kerala,

other Professional institutes' chapters etc.

Talking about students' services, can you enlighten up on coaching classes for professional students ?

We are the only network which provides exclusive coaching classes in corporate laws subjects for CS and CA students. As on date CIER has 322 students. On an average we take 30 students per year for intensive coaching classes. Recently we admit students after preliminary scanning in order to maintain quality.

Being a lead faculty, how do you evaluate present recent students quality ?

They all are good. They are aggressive and self-motivated towards achieving results. But few students lack interest in IT services, they don't even check their emails. This is a bad sign in this IT savvy environment.

In your opinion how much does e-learning services are useful to students ?

Today most of the services in common parlance are IT oriented. In education sector also CA CPT, IIM Entrance etc. has become online. You will be surprised to note that there more than 20 institutions in developed countries those provide Online degrees only, by proper e-learning tools. Thus the e-learning will be the future matra.



What is the status of virtual CIER project ?

The trial version is already in operation. As a pilot testing CA final - Corporate Laws coaching is now supported by the virtual CIER project.

More modules for CS final coaching are under work. We expect that, by January 2010 a full fledged e-learning can be introduced. A CIER Information System (CIS) is also incorporated in the virtual CIER project using customized ERP based coaching and learning. In the full fledged virtual CIER, all students' database, fee status, attendance report and mock test papers will be included.

Over a period of time do you evaluated your teaching styles ?

Yes of course. I use to evaluate myself, give due consideration to the students' feedback etc. and in fact adopt new teaching styles too.

You introduced CIER BiZ into your portfolio. How does it works ?

CIER BiZ is the business arm of CIER. It concentrates more on web marketing, e-branding and designing. We had completed six projects. More assignments are in the pipe-line. By this CIER Group are composed of 11 projects / ventures such as BBLAWCLASS, CIER BiZ, CIER InFO, CIER SMS, CIER Mail Service, Companylaw4students.com, IFRS4Students.com, CSstudentsclub.com, CSjobs.Info, CgnS and Virtual CIER.

Recently you have pointed out about the guru-sishya relation in your blog. Are you satisfied with the current relations ?

This is a very sensitive matter, that's why I have posted for views in my personal blog. I got various comments for the blog. In fact the kind of relation we would expect was not received recently from most of the students. They see a teacher as a service provider, same like any other paid service. To be more harsh 'a use and throw' approach.

But meanwhile I must respect and appreciate few students of recent batches, who are upholding the divinity of the teacher-student relation. Earlier there were students who remember their teacher for a long, and they treat a teacher as a knowledge guide. But recently the approach of most of the

students is to use the teacher for success in exams, they enjoy classes like watching a movie, they praise their teacher, after classes are over they forget the teacher and even blame by defamatory words if the exam questions are tough.



Can you name few students who are your favorite ?

Oh..this is a risky question. I love all my students, I have no partiality. But of course few are favorite. Raja Karthik, Liju Johnson, A S Sreejan, Ram Ganesh, Anand, Soumya etc. are few of my favorites.

Do you feel there are few students who are against CIER or not positive with your activities ?

CIER activates in a system, so there is no personal dis-pleasures with any of our students or well-wishers. I don't feel that there is a student who is against CIER, but there may be few who may not agree with our policies. But, at the same time I noticed that there may be one or two students who are not with CIER family or myself

because of wrong information with them, which is beyond my control. We have 322 students on our 'as on roll', and we are adding 32 this year. We can't satisfy all students' psychological barriers. But I personally respect those students.

Talking about CIER councils, any change in the advisory council in near future ?

At present the advisory council is well balanced with the new inductions such as CS. K Chitra and CS. S Raja Karthik. Recently we inducted CS. K Jayan, Partner, SVJS & Associates, Cochin as CIER's Vice-President.

CS Students' Online Club was one of the recently introduced projects. It is a huge market it. How do you react ?

The online club was well received by the students' community. Within a couple of weeks we got more than 100 members. More than 270 topics were posted. CIER is aiming a target of 1000 members by mid of 2010, and we are promoting the club to act as a student centered knowledge sharing portal.

On the infrastructure front how far CIER has reached ?

Now we have a decent class room set-up, with all modern facilities.

Being a home-tuition model the students are satisfied with the present

facilities. A renewed library will be introduced soon. But my dream is to have a full-fledged owned office-cum-class room, which will be a reality soon.

Your family is always your back-up. How do you find time for your family ?

My wife who is also my colleague in the CIER management council is taking active role in the finance and pricing part of CIER's various projects. Of course, It's true that I get only limited time to devote with my child Ananthu. But I hope my wife and son understands my schedule.

Your time schedules and busy makes a student always surprising. How many hours you take rest ?

I work from 6.30 morning to 9.30 evening. After a half-an-hour break, I devote 10 pm to 12.30 pm for CIER's online projects.



What is the message you have for future prospective students ?

I just want to advise that a student should learn systematically and with a passion. Attending coaching classes is not a solution. I would say that it is where the real work starts.

What are the CIER's future projects ?

Now we are working on the CS students' online club in order to further stabilize it by attracting more members. A video based coaching is on the cards. I am on my recordings in night 10'o clock.

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A copy of this web interview is available on cier.in / bblawclass.com & on the internet word-wide.