



Aboard the global gravy train

Indian B-schools have begun looking at international destinations even as they woo overseas students to their campuses



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One could easily have been addressing a top B-school classroom at Ahmedabad, Kolkata or Pune! The students were all Indian – well, almost all – and their earnestness was familiar. The induction programme of the Batch of 2009-11 at the Dubai campus of IMT Ghaziabad had only one difference. The students, though predominantly Indian, would be studying an MBA programme far different and as global as it could get.

For starters, there would be only four papers, instead of 18, in the first semester, which is normal at any Indian MBA classroom. And the students, who would spend far less time in the close confines of the classroom, would do most of their learning in the wider corporate world. “We have designed the pedagogy and curriculum in such a way that the students would get maximum time to do projects in a practical setting, which is what will help them in their

corporate careers,” says Farhad-Rad-Serecht, director, IMT Dubai, at the modern complex built by L&T in suburban Dubai.

IMT Ghaziabad, which is among the Top 10 Indian B-schools, set up its Dubai campus five years ago with the idea of catering not only to UAE students, but also to a growing mass of Indian students who are seeking international education. An estimated \$1 billion was going out in student fees, with around 100,000 students opting for overseas campuses. “Our idea was to expand to strategic markets like UAE with a potential for further expansion overseas,” explains Anwar Ali, director, IMT Ghaziabad, who played a key role in setting up the Dubai campus of IMT. The campus is wholly-owned and locally accredited, a tough proposition, unlike other Indian B-schools located in the UAE.

S.P. Jain, Manipal University of Higher Education (MAHE) and XLRI also operate their campuses in Dubai. XLRI’s campus is a joint venture with Ali Abbas Institute of Technology (AIT), a part of the Ali Abbas Group of Companies, which has a large presence in the Gulf. The Delhi-based Skyline Business School has its campus located in Sharjah near Dubai.

Indian campuses are present not only in Dubai, but also in Singapore and London – two new destinations to which B-schools have started making a beeline. However, considering the size and strength of the Indian MBA business, Indian overseas presence is minimal at the moment.

| All hands abroad | |
|---|-------|
| | (No.) |
| Overseas collaborations | 390 |
| Students sent abroad | 4,300 |
| International students at Indian campus | 1,300 |
| Indian faculty teaching abroad | 158 |

Source: Business India Best B-Schools Survey 2009



“There are several reasons for this,” says Giri Dua, chairman, TASMAC, the only Indian B-school to have its campus in London. “One is the high networking and branding that is needed for overseas governments to take you seriously and deep pockets to enter the advanced MBA markets.”

TASMAC has now been joined by Amity Business School, which set up its international campuses in London, Singapore and Dubai simultaneously this year. In contrast, branded schools like IIMS and XLRI have not made any move so far to look at other lucrative markets. An earlier attempt by IIM Bangalore to set up its campus in Singapore ended in a fiasco four years ago, with the HRD ministry withdrawing its support to the institute at the last minute.

Any future design by the IIMS abroad is now almost completely sealed with D. Purnandeshwari, minister of state for HRD, announcing in the recently concluded Parliament session that, “It may not be immediately feasible for the IITs and IIMS to open campuses abroad, as they are facing faculty shortages and have to undertake 54 per cent expansion in their intake to implement the OBC quota.” With the government going in for 14 more IIMS, as well as an IIT in every state, there is no chance of any IIT or IIM setting up campuses overseas.

The private B-schools, however, are better off. S.P. Jain and XLRI have been successful in setting up their Singapore campuses, with the former going for its own campus at a seven-acre premium location, while the latter preferred tying up with a local partner, Image International (S) Pte Ltd, which is into training and accreditation facilitation. “We have had consistently good student support and excellent corporate placements, which have sustained and grown the campus to a large size,” explains Debashis Sanyal, dean, executive management programme, at S.P. Jain’s Singapore campus.

Unplanned ventures

“Lack of creative thinking, an entrenched bureaucracy, and of course, lack of resources of the scale needed for such projects contributed to overseas ventures not beginning seriously,” says B.S. Sahay, director, MDI, who, as the former director of IMT Ghaziabad, was a key person responsible for setting up the IMT campus in Dubai. He is confident that it is only a matter of time before everyone makes a beeline overseas. “It has to happen some day soon. That is the way the overseas markets have worked, from our experience,” concurs Douglas Viehland, executive director, ACBSP, a global accrediting agency. Getting an international accreditation is a quick way of building up a brand image and also a reassurance of quality, which helps to speed up the compliance procedures in the target markets overseas, Viehland adds. India currently has only four international accreditations – at IIM-A, MDI Gurgaon, S.P. Jain and Alliance Business School.

While globalisation through physical overseas campuses may still be a rarity, the Indian MBA gravy train has developed a yen for fast movement through overseas collaborations. Almost every B-school flaunts half a dozen to a dozen international collaborations on its glossy



Matching with the best in business

Annual placement salary received last year

| Institute | (\$) |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| ISB | 1,48,339 |
| IIM-A | 1,35,000 |
| IIM-B | 1,42,000 |
| IMD Lausanne | 1,51,624 |
| Tuck Dartmouth | 1,56,124 |
| IESE Spain | 1,24,645 |
| Univerity of Chicago | 1,50,272 |
| Stern School of Business NYU | 1,44,125 |
| MIT Sloan | 1,56,451 |
| China European Business School | 1,51,641 |
| IE Business School Spain | 1,32,925 |
| Stanford University GSB | 1,70,340 |
| INSEAD | 1,47,908 |

brochures and websites these days. There is a huge industry surrounding this, with a number of overseas agents facilitating these collaborations. “Most of these are for overseas visits by students. There is a highly lucrative market for travel agencies and the collaborators, as the fee the student is charged, in addition to his travel cost, is shared by the facilitators,” explains one such facilitator. Typically, a visit lasts one to three weeks and the favourite destinations are Singapore, London and Disneyland in the US!

These are for student and faculty exchange and not so much for academic collaboration, research or even joint venture campuses, hallmarks of a growing and high-quality B-school. Even the top schools in our list have done little or nothing about their collaborations, other than sending a few dozen students at their own cost to a few select partner campuses.

A new trend in overseas collaborations is to get international students to visit the Indian campus, not just as a tourist, but as a student who would work at it for a course or two. Almost all the schools in our top 20-25 rankings have programmes running, wooing overseas students to spend a semester or trimester at the campus. “We have around 30 international collaborations and most of these are also being used for attracting overseas students to attend our courses,” says H. Chaturvedi, director, Birla Institute of Management & Technology (BIMTECH), based in Greater Noida near New Delhi. There is still not much luck in signing on any full-time students for the post-graduate management programme, even though almost all the IIMS, MDI Gurgaon, S.P. Jain, Narsee Monjee, as well as ISB Hyderabad, have western students registering for the one-year executive MBA programme.

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