

The SELECT sense

Zeroing in on the right B school is the first step to a successful career, writes Ravindra Bhatia

MBA/PGDM schools have mushroomed, of late, making it more difficult for choosing the right B-school. MBA and IIM's were synonymous 25 years ago. However, some good B schools have now emerged both in the private sector as well as in the universities. This has made it very difficult both for the students and their parents to decide which is a good institution. There are no laid down norms for making a choice. However, based on past experience certain broad parameters are listed below which might make taking a decision easier.

ACCREDITATION

One must look out for an institute that is approved by the AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) since all institutes are not approved by it. Moreover, the approval has to be got renewed from AICTE annually. Verify the latest approval letter and visit the website of AICTE – www.aicte-india.org and satisfy yourself. Further look out for B Schools that are NBA (National Board of Accreditation) and AIU (Association of Indian Universities) accredited since the PGDM programme is recognised as equivalent to an MBA by them. Please bear in mind that very few B-Schools have got this accreditation which again is valid for three to five years. Without accreditation an institute is not eligible to give PhD or engage in research projects, eligible to participate in government-student assistance programmes and is NOT acceptable to recruiters, especially the public sector.

STANDING

How long has the institute been in existence? How many batches of students have passed out? What is its market reputation? These are some of the points which should be absolutely cleared by the aspiring students.



POINTS TO PONDER

- Have a hard look at the options.
- Make a checklist.
- Don't expect to find everything everywhere.
- Study the pros and the cons.
- Decide where you see yourself five years down the lane.
- Does the B school match your vision.
- If yes take the plunge!
- Don't consult too many people around as it will add to your confusion.

INFRASTRUCTURE

A fully equipped campus, library, computer centre, and classrooms are some of the facilities that a good B school will provide to its students.

INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL

It is essential that an institute has well qualified (post PhD) and experienced faculty. Industry-experienced faculty is the icing on the cake. Recruiters get attracted to students who are taught by this class of faculty. Does the institute rely heavily on visiting faculty? If so, beware. An institute with core faculty is a big plus for the students as they are available for guidance and consultation regularly vis-a-vis "suit-

case or visiting faculty".

The biggest challenge being faced by B schools is the lack of good faculty who can churn out managers and not university students. A B School that is able to hire and retain faculty fares much better than the others. Of course this comes with a price which explains why some B schools charge higher fees!

Pedagogy and curriculum is the heart and soul of education. In recent years, there has been a significant shift in the teaching methodology. The emphasis is to make management courses relevant to the real world. Theoretical teaching is being replaced by practical exposure. Curriculum needs to be revised in consultation with experts from the industry and experienced faculty on a yearly basis so as to bridge the gap between what is being taught and what the industry needs. Ultimately the student should be "industry ready" at the end of a two-year programme. Pedagogy should combine lectures-cum-discussions, case studies, simulations and games, brain storming, industry visits, lectures from industry experts, projects, presentation etc.

E Cell – All the students who pass out

do not necessarily want to do a 9 to 5 job. They wish to be entrepreneurs and do something different for themselves. An institute that has an E-Cell can better prepare the students to develop e skills. Such institutes' E cell works in collaboration with NEN – "National Entrepreneurship Network" which organises meets with entrepreneurs and holds annual conferences.

SUMMER INTERNSHIPS (SIP)

Does the Institute arrange for summer internship for all its students or do they have to fend for themselves? Some B-schools permit students to undergo their SIP in their native places. Ideally, the SIP should result in final placement of the students.

PLACEMENT

An institute should normally assist in 100 per cent placement of its students. Find out the details of the companies that visit the campus. Ideally, the companies need to be from diverse verticals and should preferably visit the institute annually. Management Development Programme (MDP) establishes good relations between the corporate and academics. They are a good indicator of future placements.

Most B schools boast of 100 per cent placement since inception. Check out the facts on your own. Compare the intake of students of the institute and number of students placed. Remember the larger the intake, more will be the difficulty in quality placement. See the ROI. Good institutes make the aspirants visit their placement cell to dispel any doubts they may be harbouring. Talk to seniors and alumni. See if there are enough alumni of your interest. If not take a call.

All the Best!

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