

Location as a criterion in choosing a B school

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In India the most important factor for choosing a B-School is the placement opportunities available to the students post education. Physical location of the institute is not an issue in case of the best institutes in the country because they draw strength from their core course to attract the best students as well as the best employers. One of the reasons why institutes like the IIMs or XLRI have been able to do well is because they have focused on higher learning in management as a core-competency and treated this as a science and an art. These institutes believe in the learning provided and talent created at their institutions, which in turn draw the most reputed organisations for placement from their campuses.

Case in point is XLRI, which although located in Jamshedpur gets the best recruiters in the country vying for its students every year. IIMs today have crossed international barriers and recruiters from all over the world converge on their campus come placement time.

However, if a B-School is not of notable repute or has been established very recently, it would benefit the student if the institute is located near a commercial or an industrial hub. The advantages of the location to such institutes are clearly evident for the following reasons:

- A) Since the institute is not so well known the best employers may not visit the campus. But due to its proximity to a city or a business hub, the student has an opportunity to come in close contact with potential employers.
- B) Some employers do not prefer to go very far from their location in search of hiring MBAs and would prefer to take students from local institutes, again an opportunity created because the location of the institute is near potential recruiters.
- C) Being closer to the industry gives an opportunity to the college authorities to showcase their student's talents and get employers interested in selecting students from their campus.
- D) Further, although these schools may have very few permanent faculty members, the school authorities can get industry specialists for teaching their students thereby facilitating the learning process.
- E) Trainers from industry, apart from bringing operational expertise into the training, come in close contact with the institute that may elicit a recommendation for hiring its students within their

organisations.

- F) And finally due to the industry interaction the institute can quickly mould its courses to fit the current needs of the industry thereby making its students attractive to potential recruiters.

While we are discussing location, it is also important to bear in mind that MBA institutes are not all about selling their students to the recruiters. It is necessary for educational institutes to become centers of learning by developing expertise in Research and Development. Thus apart from the location it is important for an institute to stand up and be counted amongst providers of comprehensive learning and cutting edge research. One of the factors that helps to develop the institute, as a center of excellence is an environment that is conducive to focused learning. A large campus and in house facilities give the institute an atmosphere suited for quality education.

It is our personal view and we maintain that most schools of higher learning should be residential programmes. After all, the education from any of these schools is based not only on the curriculum but also depends largely on the composition of the peer group. To have a peer group focused on learning it is important to keep it together and get the members to interact amongst themselves constantly. The institute can achieve this constant interaction and focus amongst faculty and students if all facilities are provided within the campus. All this would require large space, which in India at least, is available only far away from the major cities.

One may argue today, that schools like the IIM Bangalore, Ahmedabad, and Calcutta are well within the city limits. But let us also understand that this has come to pass over a period of time. When these schools opened their doors to students more than 30 years ago, Ahmedabad and Bangalore as cities were not as large as they are today and even IIM Calcutta was quite a distance away from the city. Today these cities have expanded and the institutes are within the city limits but their campuses are very large and the environment required is already there.

Besides, it is important for a student to make a choice based on the quality of the institute, its reputation, facilities, courses offered and only then consider "location" as a criterion. ■