



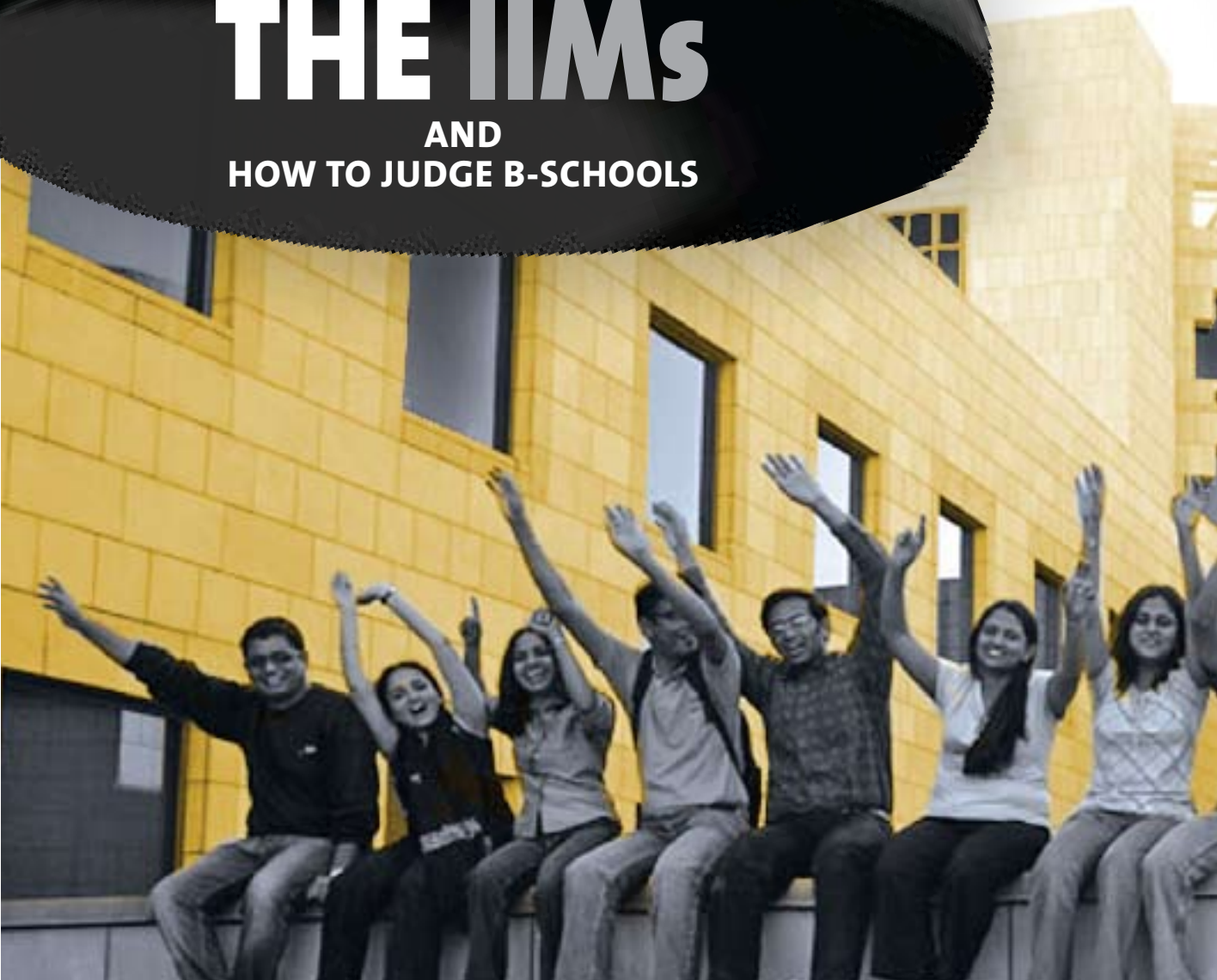
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ON

WHY ISB IS BETTER THAN THE IIMs

AND

HOW TO JUDGE B-SCHOOLS





INTRODUCTION

First things first... Ever since we started Business & Economy, we avoided the temptation of undertaking B-school rankings for the simple reason that IIPM is a B-School we are very closely associated with; and at IIPM, we have always claimed that we are the best B-school globally. So any B-school ranking brought out by us would have had IIPM right at the top, at least in the three parameters of 'course contents', 'global exposure' and 'research & consulting'! But if we were to have finally published such a ranking, our friends in the media would have taken no time to call them biased, however fact-based the rankings might have been. And undertaking a B-school ranking without speaking about ourselves would be next to impossible for an aggressive group like ours, which so passionately believes in our (IIPM's) superiority. However, after the recent Zee Business B-School Survey that ranked us No.1 on at least one very very apparent criterion – of global exposure – I thought we could at least talk about Indian B-schools, if not rank them. And with the amount I personally am immersed in B-school mechanics and workings, it became but obvious that if our magazine were to do an article on the same, the story in any case would have been ghost written and dictated by me. So I thought I should anchor the story myself.

The second issue that needs clarification is that despite IIPM's 'Dare To Think Beyond The IIMs' campaign, I have nothing against the IIMs; rather, all I have is sheer respect [My father was a professor at IIM Bangalore and is extremely proud of the same. My Managing Partner, my best friend at IIPM and the Editor of this magazine itself, A. Sandeep, is a product of IIPM and IIM Calcutta; and he specifically had gone to study there to have a first hand knowledge about the 'IIM way' before coming back to IIPM to take it up. And finally, my best friend in school and the Head of our news portal TheDailyIndian.com, Partha Saha, is a proud product of IIM Calcutta]. We believe we are the best when it comes to education, but that doesn't mean we don't know how good the IIMs are or that their students get better placements than our students or even the fact that they attract the best of students of India – though we may still not accept that the final IIM product is, therefore, necessarily better! So, this article is not an attempt to malign the IIMs, but a simple attempt to analyse some facts. Having said that, let me also state that what I am writing shouldn't shock many; at least not those who know that the 2008 *Financial Times* rankings have put ISB as the 20th best B-school in the world and haven't put any of the IIMs even in the top hundred! Yet, what I hope this article will do is bring perspective to those rankings and explain to people what management education is all about; since no magazine undertaking B-school surveys in India has even a fraction of ability to comment upon management education in India, compared to our capability. And it's no arrogance but pure facts that we present. Almost all of Business & Economy's editorial team comprises educated MBAs – the reason our magazine is such a sell out amongst those who love sharp analytical articles instead of pages full of incomprehensible *blah*

blah based upon tens of quotes [the only thing typical journalists can rely upon in the absence of analytical skills].

And finally, I must say that the reference of IIPM will keep coming up from time to time, though I will try my best to keep the focus on the 'ISB vs IIMs' issue in order to make it read most unbiased!

ISB VS IIMS: WHAT MAKES ISB SPECIAL?

COURSE CONTENTS

So, what is it that, according to us, here in *B&E*, makes us believe that ISB scores a few points over the IIMs? Well, to understand that, we need to understand what makes a great B-school. And let's first start with the upside to the IIMs and perhaps arguably the most important factor. A great B-school is about its 'course contents' first. And on this first parameter, ISB actually has the only disadvantage when compared to the IIMs. While most subjects that are taught at ISB are the same as those taught in the IIMs, the fact is that while at ISB, the



contact hours with the teachers is only about 620 hours, at IIMs, it is more than 1,400 hours [incidentally, at IIPM, this figure is more than 1800 hours – one of the reasons we so confidently believe that no other B-school teaches as much as we do]. Thus, students at IIMs obviously undergo a more rigorous course when compared to ISB; and it can be safely concluded that the contact hours of students at the IIMs with the teachers are more than double that of ISB students. This one factor itself would otherwise have been enough to make the IIMs better than ISB, had it not been for the other factors that I am about to elaborate upon.

FACULTY & INDUSTRY INTERFACE

Well, while a course in a B-school is of high importance, equally high in importance level is the kind of faculty imparting the course and the amount of consulting exposure they have. A B-school could actually have a superb course, yet be pathetic,

simply because the people teaching the course are pathetic. So the quality of the faculty teaching the subjects in B-schools is of the highest importance. Thus, one needs to know what makes for a great 'B-school faculty'. And here, I deliberately write 'B-school faculty' and not just 'faculty'. A great professor in a history class, for example, just needs to be very knowledgeable about history; in effect, it can almost be safely assumed that if the said professor is a Ph.D [with a good thesis], then he would be more knowledgeable than, say, a professor who is just a Master's in history. In B-schools, however, that's not the case. The quality of a B-school professor is not just about his education, but also about the kind of practical experience he has had – comparatively, a history professor cannot possibly have any practical experience of, say, the first World War! Coming back, in the case of a B-school professor without practical experience, the crowning grace then is about how much management consulting work he undertakes. And this is where ISB scores heavily! While IIM professors are, on an average, good [Our extensive research suggests ex-students of IIMs remember about four

faculty. However, as long as the studies are sincere and the students are being taught by and exposed to some of the best professors from across the world, from a very practical perspective, no one should be complaining. After all, from the students' point of view, it is better to have a great team of visiting faculty than an average team of permanent faculty members.

When it comes to industry exposure, it could be safely said that the faculty teaching at ISB has a far wider and greater exposure compared to the faculty at IIMs. It's worth noting here that there are some IIMs where the EDPs that actually take place after being announced [due to lack of participants] are hardly any number worth mentioning! Most of the IIMs are located in cities of extremely low corporate relevance; and this is another reason why mainstream corporations are hardly ever heard using the consulting services of IIM professors – a reason why the consulting work done by IIPM professors, for example, is much higher. At the same time, the IIM faculty mettle is never tested directly in competition with global faculty, since the IIM faculty never conducts joint workshops with foreign

faculty – this is again something that is mandatory for top faculty at IIPM who conduct joint corporate training workshops with the best of the best faculty from the topmost B-schools globally, like Kellogg, Wharton, Harvard, Columbia, Chicago GSB, Insead etc. (*refer to the box*), something that even ISB professors don't! Such joint workshops reveal a lot about the courage and conviction that faculty members have when pitted against the global best; and of course, at IIPM, when we claim that our faculty are the best that the world has to offer, this claim is not without reason, since we have workshop participant feedback forms with the names of these participants to prove how phenomenally corporate India



or five professors as 'very good', about the same number as 'good'; and the rest, they say, are 'forgettable', ISB professors are mostly terrific!!!

The beauty of education at ISB [where students give a high rank to about three quarters of their professors] is about each professor being amongst the best available in that field globally. In any given term in ISB [they have 8 terms of 6 weeks each], students have about 4 papers to study. Most of these papers are taken by two different professors; and out of the 8 professors that they interact with during the term, only two belong to ISB, while the other six would generally be top faculty who come to teach from Wharton, Kellogg, Columbia, Haas, Kenan Flagler, UCLA, Michigan, Georgia Tech, HKUST Business School etc. Not that all of them are brilliant, but on an average, they give students a much much better and superior exposure than what IIM professors could possibly bring to the class room. Yes, ISB does lack the numbers when it comes to high quality permanent

rates IIPM faculty!

Of course, the final aspect to great faculty is communication skills; and most of the global B-school professors who teach at ISB have much better communication skills thanks to their larger corporate interactions and to the more competitive consulting environment in their B-schools, as well as to their natural advantage. Most IIM professors really score less compared to the ISB professors in this respect. In fact, if there are two other institutes that have professors with great communication skills, they are FMS in Delhi (*having been a awe-struck student of the current dean, Dr. J. K. Mitra, and ex-deans of FMS – Dr. N. R. Chatterjee, Dr. M. P. Gupta & Dr. M. Adhikari – I can personally vouch for it*) and XLRI in Jamshedpur. In this regard, I don't even want to start speaking about IIPM faculty since they are by far superior, and that's something that sets them – one and all – completely apart!

Thus, I want to conclude by saying that though the contact

hours might be lesser, the exceptional track records of the faculty who teach at ISB make up for the lesser number of hours to a large extent; since in management, ten hours from a 'great' professor is worth far more than twenty hours from a 'below average' professor, and that difference cannot be made up by the affected students reading up a little extra. Of course, to a very limited extent, the fact that an average IIM student has about one year of work experience compared to the five years that an ISB student has, also places the ISB product in a slightly better position, wherein they can understand the same concepts from their professors through even a lesser number of contact hours.

PLACEMENTS

Truthfully speaking, once these two things are taken care of, there is not much remaining to know about a B-school in reality. But hey, hold on! B-schools are about professional studies! Thus, while judging, say, a *Shantiniketan*, one would only go by the philosophy, course and faculty. But in the case of a B-school, it is also about placements. This is where ISB scores heavily! The average salary at ISB is now almost double of that of all the IIMs put together. While about one-fourth of the ISB batch gets placed abroad [as per official statistics] the same is only about one-sixth in the IIMs, though their average international packages are

almost at par with ISB. One might always argue that someone with five years prior experience is bound to get a better package. But then, unfortunately, that's something that B-schools are constantly compared and judged by. It also is one reason why I can't still say that overall, IIPM is the best B-school in the country, since the average packages that the IIPM students get are still less than those commanded by IIM and ISB students, a reason these students prefer them over IIPM. Of course, we are aggressively working towards changing that too. Interestingly, in the case of the IIMs, an increase in the student intake itself will bring their average packages down – a reason they refuse to increase their intake by significant numbers, despite being government funded and despite there being a huge scarcity of high quality employable manpower in India. And obviously, the IIMs blame their 'inability' to take in more students on the availability [or rather, on the so-called 'unavailability'] of high quality faculty – something that we at IIPM have clearly proven wrong by re-producing great teaching skills aplenty.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

One can by now safely say that the terrific faculty, and through them the global exposure that students get, coupled up with the better placements, make ISB a better B-school than the IIMs! However, ISB scores more. The students joining ISB have a natural advantage of saving one year [theirs is technically a one year programme] and thereby earning money in the second year after getting placed! This is something that gives the students at ISB a quicker return on investment despite their course being highly priced in comparison. This year the IIMs, of course, will also be comparably priced at Rs.11 lakhs or so; something they need not have done, but did, clearly out of the complexes that they got looking at the high fees of ISB and at its growing popularity.

GLOBAL EXPOSURE

Finally, it's also worth mentioning that in the second and third-world country B-schools [like the ones in India], especially in these days of globalisation, it's very important to give supreme global exposure to students in order to make them globally competitive. In this regard again, the IIMs lag behind. In reality, IIM students – barring the lucky few who get a global summer training – hardly get any global exposure. But it must be said that while ISB, thanks to its global faculty, is ahead of the IIMs on this issue, their students still don't get the very best. This is where IIPM scores extremely heavily. With hundred percent of its students going abroad for a study tour and getting exposed to not just the best of global corporations through industry visits in top Fortune 500 corporations, but also to global professors in top B-schools abroad, what IIPM products get is unparalleled! Our research shows that when it comes to global faculty coming to India to teach, those are mostly Indian faculty members of the global B-schools who come down; but when students actually get a chance to go abroad and sit inside, say, an IMD classroom with a European professor teaching

A PARTIAL LIST OF IIPM's GLOBAL OUTREACH PROGRAMME PROFESSORS WHO HAVE TAKEN JOINT EDPs WITH IIPM FACULTY RECENTLY



GOP FACULTY	UNIVERSITY
2007-08	
PROF. RAVI DHAR	YALE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
PROF. RUSSELL WINER	NYU STERN
PROF. CRAIG SMITH	LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL
PROF. FRANK SCHUTLZ	UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
PROF. PRIYA RAGHUBIR	HAAS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
PROF. WASIM AZHAR	STANFORD UNIVERSITY
PROF. SKANDER ESSEGAIER	THE WHARTON SCHOOL
PROF. LAKSHMAN KRISHNAMURTHI	KELLOGG SCHOOL OF MGMT.
PROF. JOSEPH HALL	TUCK SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
PROF. JOHN CZEPEIL	NYU STERN



them [something that leagues of IIPM students have gone through], the exposure is spectacularly different!!! This year onwards, 100% of IIPM students will be doing joint certificate programmes in global management in about 6 of the top 15 B-schools of the world like Haas School of Business, Judge Business School – something that would take the already exceptional levels of global exposure in the IIPM programme to a different plane altogether!!! However, coming back to the key context, ISB surely scores over the IIMs here as well.

INFRASTRUCTURE

And finally, though a three acre campus can give exactly as good an infrastructural support to students of a B-school as a hundred acre campus could, the fact remains that thanks to the huge hundred acre campuses the IIMs have had, 'land mass size' became a huge issue of inferiority complex amongst other B-schools, their students and corporations. ISB understood the same perfectly well when they started off; thus, their 250 acre state-of-the-art modern campus is, without a shade of doubt, far superior to the dilapidated structures that especially the older IIMs have. The truth is that I don't subscribe to the concept of judging B-schools by their infrastructure – as long as they have a good requisite and modern infrastructure – but since India does that, most rankings do that, I thought of mentioning this aspect too!

CONCLUSION

It must have shocked many when *Financial Times* ranked ISB as one of the top twenty B-schools in the world – far far ahead of the IIMs – and it must have shocked *B&E* readers further more when they saw us endorsing the same. However, we do hope our readers, after reading this story, would now know how to judge a B-school and the reasons why we at *B&E* believe that despite the IIMs having a distinct advantage in their course contents, it is ISB which ends up scoring over the IIMs. For

long, Harvard Business School was looked upon as the undisputed leader in business education. Notwithstanding that, one look at the Harvard rankings over the last few years (*see comparative table*) clearly tells us that HBS now rarely gets the No.1 rank, and in fact has been ranked as low as No.13 by *The Economist* just last year. That surely doesn't make Harvard any worse; it just makes them more grounded and more open to the fact that there are more similarly good B-schools around; for after all, B-school education is no rocket science or anybody's father's property that no one else can impart the same better. The fact that ISB got ranked at No.20 by *FT* ahead of the IIMs and that in the latest Zee Business B-school ranking, IIPM got ranked No.1 in 'Global Exposure' is only a sign of the times to come. And in these times to come, the IIMs will more often see themselves being ranked below other institutes like ISB, IIPM etc,

for the media, one hopes, will soon become more educated about business education and learn to question the current unquestioned apparent superiority of the IIMs; which the media currently doesn't, due to their lack of confidence and due to their inferiority complexes vis-à-vis the brand name of IIMs. Be that as it may, this

surely would not in any way dilute the value of the IIM brand. It will only give respectability to Brand India, for Brand India surely deserves more than one good business education brand. Hopefully, it will also make the IIMs less complacent and more dynamic, something many of their ex-students feel is their biggest flaw. I can only conclude by saying that in a country of a billion people where the best of times are just round the corner and corporate India is getting ready for global leadership, it's only a sign of happier and much warranted times that there are other B-schools like ISB, which can now lay claim to the top slot. May a hundred more ISBs/IIMs bloom and blossom and may each of them innovate newer ways to give better education and to compete vigorously with the others, consequently making the other better!!!

B&E

IIM (A) vs HBS rankings: Time to change

	2008	2007	2006	2005
IIM (A)	1 <i>(Business Today)</i>	1 <i>(Business World)</i>	1 <i>(Outlook)</i>	1 <i>(Business India)</i>
Harvard Business School	5 <i>(Financial Times)</i>	13 <i>(Economist)</i>	3 <i>(Business Week)</i>	7 <i>(Forbes)</i>