

Pune, an education paradise

► *With 100 B-schools in the city, Pune tops the list when it comes to higher education.*

Sonali Karande Brahma

When Mr Jawaharlal Nehru bestowed upon Pune the title 'Oxford of the East', he probably knew that it was the beginning of a journey that would take the city far ahead in times to come.

From a handful of sterling institutes like Fergusson College, the College of Engineering and the Deccan College in the days of yore, Pune today has a total of seven State and Deemed Universities with a few hundred institutes under them. Thousands of students descend upon the city with stars in their eyes in search of sound higher level education.

The opportunities the city offers in this area undoubtedly rank among the best in the country. The one-time pensioner's paradise leads the country in B-schools with over 100 recognised institutes in Pune alone. As Mr Chetan Wakalkar, Group Director and Trustee, Indira Group of Institutes puts it, "Pune is most easily the B-School capital of India today."

STUDENTS SPOILT FOR CHOICE

Students who wish to pursue higher education today are spoilt for choice. Besides the conventional streams like engineering and medicine offered by long-standing institutions like the College of Engineering, BJ Medical college, Armed Force Medical

College among others, they can choose from a plethora of new disciplines such as catering, design, aviation, hospitality, tourism, foreign languages, animation and gaming, fitness, courses in construction, petroleum and infrastructure related streams, aeronautical engineering, marine engineering, advanced IT techniques, insurance among several others.

I2IT located in the IT destination Hinjewadi is an institute that offers Masters Programmes in varied areas like computational fluid dynamics, advanced IT in Intelligent Systems & Robotics, Intelligent Transportation Systems, Satellite Communication & Space Science, Biotechnology and Services Management, to name a few.

The National Institute of Construction Management and Research (NICMAR) offer specialisation in construction and related research. B-Schools too offer far more choices in specialisations. The Symbiosis International University offers along with conventional specialisations, MBA in banking, telecom, logistics, operations, geo informatics, agri-business, energy and environment and even fashion communication. "These are growing sectors and have a lot of takers, because of the dearth of trained human resource in these specific sectors," says Dr Vidya Yeravdekar, Principal Director, Symbiosis.

Another emerging trend is tie-ups with companies. The Indira Group has a tie up with ICICI and HDFC Banks where students are given special training for about 3-4 months in banking. This is a fairly new trend and largely ups the 'employability' or



Institutes like SIMC have tie-ups with companies.

'employment quotient' of the students. As Dr Yeravdekar puts it, "When students are trained in that particular industry, companies find them a better prospect as they are well-versed in that industry and can start delivering on the job within a few days."

The corporate mindset is moving towards 'spending less time in training and getting the young recruits to start delivering ASAP'.

"The other trend on the rise," says Chandan Chatterjee, Director, Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication "is the setting up of campuses by corporates like Birlas, Reliance, Vedanta, RPG and many more for profit or philanthropic motives. But, finally, it is the size of the industry, its manpower requirement and growth that will be key drivers to new education models and verticals coming up over time." This trend, however, comes with its share of downs and is not perceived by some as a healthy as it curtails the exposure a student will receive and may limit his 'placement' potential.

BRAIN DRAIN

The International Institute of Information Technology (I2IT), had a very unique way of planning its curriculum. The founders examined the reasons for the rampant 'brain drain' from India and decided to design such programs easily available in the western world but missing in India. The guiding principle was that even if the number of students was small, there would be no compromise on quality.

Ms Aruna Katara, Dean, I2IT does not mince words when she says, "There's nothing wrong in looking at business schools from a 'business' point of view, but nurturing a mall culture in the name of education and compromising on quality should be a strict no-no. 40 per cent of I2IT students have had rural beginnings, but as long as they had the right attitude and aptitude, nothing matters."

(The author is an independent Creative Consultant and Writer and has 12 years of experience in advertising, brand building and communication.)