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BITSians At India's Best B-schools

Life at b-schools is significantly different from that in Pilani. More night-outs, tighter schedules, stricter grades and fewer people on campus can make the transition tough. Amidst the deadlines, projects, case studies and presentations, how do BITSians cope? Does being a BITSian make a difference? We find out from students and alumni at India's top B-schools: IIMs, XLRI, and the ISB.

Approximately 500 BITSians write the B-school tests every year. While most of these are final year students, the others are those waiting to take a break from corporate life. The number of calls from the top colleges varies every year but many of these calls are converted to final admissions. Most successful students believe being a BITSian has a lot to do with making it through and the reasons don't just stop with the brand name. It has more to do with the attitude, the adaptability and the personality that a BITSian carries out of Pilani.

Being a BITSian can also have its downsides. There's a pretty big reputation to live up to. You are automatically deemed to understand all complex mathematical problems and it's tough to accept that you really don't. However, of course, it's not long before everyone forgets which college you are from.

Of course, there are BITSians everywhere - but how many exactly?

IIM-A has five in the first year batch and seven in the second year. The second year batch has a good mix, BITSians who graduated in different years. All the first year BITSians at IIM A are from the batch of 2000.



At IIM B, BITSians are all over the place. There are 21 BITSians in the first year- from the batches of 1996-2005. IIM C has four BITSians in the first year and only one in the second year.

The number of BITSians at XLRI seems to be growing steadily. From none in 2003, there were two in 2004 and this year there are four, one from 97 batch, two each from the 99 and 2000 batches and one from the 2001 batch. It can be odd when

your junior at BITS is your senior here!

ISB also is attracting a lot of BITSian talent lately. This year, its one-year PG programme has ten from the desert. It is possibly

the only top b-school to have married BITSians in class.

So what really is the transition to a b-school student like? One major issue every BITSian faces is the attendance. From a life of late mornings (who attended

those common hours anyway?), sleepy afternoons and zero percent attendance, B-school life is a rude wake-up call.

According to this author the 90 minute long classes were the most difficult to digest- even worse than the late night ones. Life at Pilani has sure spoiled us rotten.

BITSians don't really hang out together in these schools. For one, most don't have the time. Another reason is we are a breed of people who easily gel in with other groups of people - so we



BITS & B-school

A recipe for business success

CVL Srinivas, Managing Director of Maxus India, manages the agency's operations across the Asia-Pacific. A mechanical engineer from BITS, Pilani, with a management degree from XLRI, Srinivas took charge of Maxus India early 2004. Prior to heading Maxus, Srinivas was the COO, north & south at Madison Media – an agency he joined in mid-1998.

He was part of the start-up team that set up Fulcrum in 1995, and spent a year before that at Lowe (then Lintas) working largely on brand Brooke Bond. Maxus is the media-buying arm of the WPP Group and its blue-chip clients in India included Titan, Britannia, Hero Honda, Hutch, and Walt Disney.

don't really see the need of hanging out together. "Some of them I don't see them for days. It's a tough place and offers people no time for such gatherings" says Kartik Laxman, PGDBM Batch of 2007 at IIM A. But, of course, there are always the few moments when everyone just comes together for a few minutes of Pilani 'psenti'. At a recently held XL-IIMC



(L to R) Rajesh (IIMC), Sandeep (XLRI), Vikram (IIMC) and Sandhya (XLRI), BITS' 99, came together at the XLRI-IIMC meet this year.

meet in Kolkata, BITSians who had never met at Pilani warmed up to reminisce days from college. While the background reverberated with slogans against each other's B-schools, BITS laccha happened with full gusto.

The hectic life maybe another issue that can be a little difficult to take. In one term of three months we do the amount of work which is done in two years at BITS. Projects, case studies, assignments, and submission keep us perennially running from the group to the professor to the printer and all the way back. At ISB things only get worse- the whole two year course being compressed to one. 'But then we party hard too – with professional DJs and a lot of booze!' says Raghini Rajaram (PGP Batch of 2006 at ISB). At XLRI too partying is taken very seriously. Called 'wet nites', they happen the night before every national holiday and last till 6 am. In that aspect XLRI among IIMs is a lot like BITS among IITs.

BITSians also tend to participate a lot in non-academic activities. There is usually at least one BITSian who holds a significant post in most of these schools. They pass on games of purely BITSian culture like 'Beg, Borrow, Steal' and are often found at the helm of organizing events. At times even the sacred BITSian lingo is passed along packaged with the Pilani culture. The quizzing scenes at ISB and XLRI are dominated by Ramkrishnan (Batch of 2006-PGP) and Lalith Krishnan (Batch of 2006-PGDBM and BOB 2002) respectively. We seem to lead the pack in theatre too. At XLRI, three ex-EDC members are planning to do a play they acted in while at Pilani.

OTHER HARD-HITTING REALITIES

The mess food at B-schools is much better say some while the others still swear by Sharma's, Nagarji's and Sunday special grubs. Hardly anyone has seen the breakfast table at their B-schools and the most missed

dishes seem to be *kela rabdi* and *dahi vada*.

The B-schools have relatively less number of students. While the IIMs have about 400 in each batch, XLRI has just 180. As a result of the various group projects and team presentations, there is a lot of interaction among the students in each batch. On a lighter vein – according to the BITSian guys at ISB, the girls are better looking there than at BITS. A view shared by men at XLRI too. “The choice is much better here

though the numbers are small – maybe it’s the more equal distribution” smiles Sandeep (Batch of 2007 –PGDBM). Some others beg to differ. “Only in IIMC did I realized the value of BITS girls” says Gaurav Shah (Batch of 2003 PGDBM) with a distinct sigh. The BITSian women at these schools don’t seem to have an opinion on this topic but I’m told that they keep a good distance from the BITSian men whenever possible!.

The big question at the end of the article – would these MBA grads prefer to call themselves BITSians first or by the names of these prestigious B-schools? Some paused and thought for seconds, some gave confused smiles and some rolled their eyes and looked at the ceiling. Then, after a few seconds, they all came up with the same answer- you can take someone out of Pilani but you cant take Pilani out of them.



Life and work at IIMB – by Madhurjya Bannerjee ('01 Instru)

The transition from BITS Pilani to IIM Bangalore was never expected to be a cakewalk. But neither did I realize that it'll be one of the toughest in my life. After all, how different could it be? I never knew that I was to face the biggest culture shock of my life.

The difference in the lifestyles at the two places is immense. First shock was the attendance. After four years in Pilani when you suddenly realize that this time your grades also depend on your attendance, things begin to seem scary.

The difference does not end there. The workload is something we haven't faced even in our CDC year. The last month of the CDC semesters were always hectic with innumerable assignments, but that is the norm of life at an IIM. Deadlines come at all odd hours and here unfortunately they are absolutely non-negotiable. Professionalism is the buzz word and they begin with punctuality. And no one dares break the rule here for there is no second chance to rectify a mistake. Only the 'learning'; so as not to repeat it again.

A huge difference is perhaps in the approach towards extra-curricular activities. IIM B perhaps boasts of the greatest thrust in extra curricular activities amongst the Big Three in the Indian Management Education. But the working here is starkly dissimilar to the way departments and clubs function at Pilani. At Pilani, I have seen students miss their classes in order to complete the work at the department. I would not say that I support it but definitely no one can deny the effect of the element called 'heart' in the way things function at Pilani. At the IIMs you see cool, efficient 'managerial' organizational skills. The time management is the first major achievement that a BITSian can learn here. Things get done and all glitches are smoothed out as efficiently as possible. But somewhere, the magic of working night after night at SUB seems to be missing.

The way the courses are handled is a study in contrast by itself. The importance is on the application of what we learn rather than what we can recollect from text books. The tutorials conducted by senior students are used to take care of all the questions that one might have regarding specific portions of the course. The effectiveness of the tutorials is any day better than the ones held at graduate schools across the country. But one thing becomes clear as the trimester draws to a close. The only reason that today we can say that we'll survive the grind of a B-school is because at BITS Pilani we have learnt how to face any kind of adversity that might come our way.