

# SPREADING WINGS

SOME OF INDIA'S B-SCHOOLS HAVE OPENED CAMPUSES AT DIFFERENT LOCATIONS. HOW IS THIS PLAYING OUT?

BY KRISHNA GOPALAN



**THE EXTRA MILE** IIMA zeroed in on Dubai as it was a futuristic city



**I** **F BUSINESSES IN** India can surpass the limits they have historically set for themselves and go-

ing global, why should B-schools be left behind? After all, with India Inc expanding into other countries at a fast pace, there is a need for managers with a global outlook and relevant skill sets.

## GOING GLOBAL

Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA) decided to open a campus in Dubai after looking at opportunities in different parts of the world. Bharat Bhasker, its director, says world education is unifying in a sense. "India is inviting foreign universities, and being one of the top business schools, we wanted to make our presence felt globally," he says.

IIMA zeroed in on Dubai as it is a futuristic city with the potential to become a centre for finance, tourism and artificial intelligence (AI). Bhasker's ambition is to bring the Dubai centre on a par with the Ahmedabad campus today. "That means we will guarantee the same quality of education, which includes bringing the case pedagogy," he says. A newly established research centre will work on case studies focused on businesses in Dubai. Besides, faculty will move from India to Dubai to ensure co-learning. The first batch comes aboard in September, and it is expected that a significant part will be from the Indian diaspora.

"In an ideal situation, we will look at a class composition with probably 30% coming from the Indian diaspora and 70% from Africa, CIS and other Gulf countries." Bhasker adds that eventu-

## MULTIPLE OPTIONS

**1** **IIMA's decision to start a campus in Dubai was taken after it looked at opportunities in other parts of the world**

**2** **The multiple campus story has many layers. Experts say several business schools will have multiple campuses by the end of the decade**

**3** **A key reason for NMIMS' growth has been a multidisciplinary approach, and that includes schools focused on technology, pharmacy and economics, among others**

**4** **Multiple campuses present their own set of challenges, and getting the structure right is critical**

**5** **For ISB, which began in Hyderabad, the next stop was Mohali. It was a 'natural choice' because of its strategic location and strong support from the Punjab government**

ally they will attract students from Europe as well.

## A DIFFERENT TRACK

The multiple campus story has many layers to it. Ramesh Bhat, Vice Chancellor, NMIMS University, speaks of how the business school will have ten campuses by the end of the decade, from seven now. From setting up base in Mumbai in the mid-1980s, NMIMS's footprint has now spread to Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Shirpur, Indore, Navi Mumbai and Chandigarh, with Bhubaneswar, Noida and Nagpur campuses expected to be up and running soon. "We will continue to look for opportunities," adds Bhat.

In 2003, NMIMS was granted the status of a deemed-to-be-university. A key part of its growth has been a multidisciplinary approach, and that includes opening schools focused on technology, pharmacy and economics, among others. When the time to look beyond Mumbai came, the trust that governs NMIMS raised a fundamental question—how should we give the benefit of quality education to students across India?

"It was becoming very clear that our expansion beyond Mumbai was difficult on account of real estate limitations. We had created capacity by going vertical, but there was only so much that could be done," explains Bhat. Bengaluru and Hyderabad seemed obvious choices—the former for being home to the big names in technology and the latter famed for its pharmaceutical prowess. "In the north, Chandigarh is an important location, and the government there invited us to





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**VARUN NAGARAJ**  
DEAN, SPJIMR

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set up a campus,” he says.

It was the same story in Bhubaneswar, giving NMIMS a presence in the east. “Our objective is to ensure quality education reaches the doorstep of the student.” A multidisciplinary approach helps in creating an industry-relevant curriculum.

Multiple campuses present their own set of challenges, and getting the structure right is critical. In the case of NMIMS, there is one vice chancellor and one registrar, while each campus has a director. “All this results in high administrative efficiency in terms of having a lean system. The structure is leaner, and the number of layers is reduced.” NMIMS has 35,000 students across campuses and streams. “It is a centralised structure but highly decentralised as well,”

says Bhat. Not surprisingly, search for more opportunities continues, and he thinks there is a good chance that it will have ten campuses by 2030.

There is, understandably, a lot that goes into the process of setting up a new campus. For the Indian School of Business (ISB), that began in Hyderabad, the next stop was Mohali. Madan Pillutla, ISB’s Dean, says Mohali was a “natural choice” with its strategic location, strong support from the Punjab government and active participation from industry leaders.

Equally, Pillutla makes it clear that the focus is on deepening the impact of what has been built, rather than expanding geographically. “Managing one school with two campuses is a complex endeavour and our

priority is to ensure that every ISB experience embodies the same excellence, rigour and brand integrity that defines the school,” he says.

## WAY AHEAD

Unlike its flagship two-year programme, IIMA’s Dubai campus will take the one-year route. According to Bhasker, a survey of the market at a middle and senior management level presented an opportunity where those with experience of five to seven years could be converted into professional managers. “A one-year programme will have a more immediate impact on Dubai’s economy and establish our brand faster. People want to taste our product in a year across senior management positions,” he says.

IIM Mumbai (rechristened in 2023 after starting off as NITIE) is now looking to launch two new centres, in Navi Mumbai and Pune. A proposal has been submitted to the state government—the focus will be on finance and manufacturing. Each business school looks at the multiple campus expansion differently. S. P. Jain Institute of Management and Research (SPJIMR), for instance, has looked outside its Mumbai campus but only through the lens of executive education. “It’s a more localised approach and we could do a weekend or a three-to-four-day programme,” says Dean Varun Nagaraj. The institute has been doing this in Delhi for seven years now.

Clearly, one size does not fit all and playing to one’s strengths is a good idea. **BT**

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