

## Singapore, new B-school hub

### About 3,000 Indian students go to Singapore every year to pursue management courses

Disha Kanwar & M Saraswathy / New Delhi/ Mumbai Jun 07, 2012, 00:26 IST



Singapore, a small island with a 682 square km area, about half of Delhi's size, is becoming a hot destination for Indian aspirants of management education abroad, while getting greater attention from the global educational fraternity.

Siew Kheng Kang, Regional Director, Singapore Tourism Board says, "In its totality, there are about 70,000 international students in Singapore. About 3,000 Indian students go every year to study in Singapore. The number of such Indian students has been growing steadily at 20 per cent year-on-year."

A recent report by the British research institute, Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) said that education hub status has become an aspiration of many Asian governments, particularly in East Asia. "International branch campuses are the most visible and crucial element of this aspiration," the OBHE said, adding: "The new data suggest that Singapore is meeting its aspirations most successfully."

#### AN ISLAND OF KNOWLEDGE

- There are about 70,000 international students in Singapore
- About 3,000 Indian students go every year to study in Singapore, and their number is growing at 20 per cent year-on-year
- Research institute Observatory on Borderless Higher Education says the number of international branch campuses in Singapore rose from 12 to 18 in two years
- A recent listing by London-based Quacquarelli Symonds ranked Singapore as the top Asian city for university education and 12th in the world
- Private education institutes, which want to take in international students, must meet even higher standards laid down by the EduTrust, a quality

assurance mark of the CPE

- Singapore doesn't have a central authority that accords recognition to courses, certificates or qualifications issued by PEIs

OBHE said the number of international branch campuses in Singapore 'shot up' from 12 to 18 in two years. Newcomers include EDHEC Business School of France, invited by the Monetary Authority of Singapore, UK's University College London and Manchester and, from the US, MIT and Stanford research centres. Scotland's Glasgow and Yale in the US are universities that have campuses planned.

Proximity to India is one of the crucial reasons for the popularity of Singapore, say industry experts. "Singapore is in close proximity to India and moreover, being a drug-free and low-crime country, it is the favoured destination in the eyes of the parents sending their children to study abroad," said Naveen Chopra, Chairman, The Chopra's Consultancy, New Delhi. He added that the cost of living and tuition fee was approximately 20-25 per cent cheaper as compared to the other premium, sought after destinations like USA and UK.

At East Asia Institute of Management (EASB), Singapore, there has been a significant spike in the intake of Indian students over the past three years, especially in post-graduate programmes. Travis Kok, Senior Marketing & Communications Executive, East Asia Institute of Management informed that from an intake of 26 Indian students in 2009 in the postgraduate programmes, the intake increased to 60 students in 2011. "The Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh Business School, MBA remains to be the programme of choice amongst Indian students," said Kok.

Kok informed that apart from being a metropolitan city and one of the safest countries in the world, a recent listing by London-based Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) had also ranked Singapore as the top Asian city for university education and 12th in the world.

Another institute, Singapore Management University (SMU), has also been a popular destination for students. "SMU is one of the youngest universities to have been awarded long-term, five-year AACSB & EQUIS accreditation. In addition, we have an interactive pedagogy, an intensive but well-balanced business education, high quality of faculty members drawn from around the world, a campus located in the heart of the business city facilitating a close interaction with the business community and a diverse mix of nationalities," said S N Venkat, senior associate director, Office of Postgraduate Professional Programme, SMU.

SMU also signed three memoranda of understanding (MOUs) in May 2012 with IIM Bangalore, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade and BSE Institute respectively. The one with the BSE Institute is for collaboration and conducting training programmes and research on Asia's financial and capital markets. The MoU with IIFT is to collaborate on conducting training programmes and research, while the one with IIM-B is for conducting joint research and publication.

Venkat informed they had a 50 per cent increase in enrolment from 2011 to 2012, which includes Indian students as well. The exact figure for the number of Indian students on campus was not available. "Major Singapore companies recruit students in SMU. Some of our Indian students are back in India and are working for leading MNCs and Indian companies," he said.

According to him, Indian students have always sought SMU's established programmes like MBA, Master of IT in Business (Financial Services). The fee for the full-time MBA programme is Singapore \$57,000 (Rs 24.5 lakh). He said, Indian students have also enrolled in new programmes like PhD in Business (General Management). As there is an overall growth in the number of masters programmes in SMU, there is an increase in number of students from India and other countries," he said. The fee for this PhD programme is Singapore \$1,26,000 (Rs 54.1 lakh), excluding 7 per cent service tax.

Industry experts believe systemic changes were also responsible for the country's popularity. "Singapore has undergone a dynamic change in its Private Education Act. It now requires all private education institutions (PEIs) to be registered with the Council for Private Education (CPE), a statutory board under the Ministry of Education, before commencing operations," said Chopra. The validity period of PEIs' registration status varies (one, four and six years) based on how well a PEI measures up to CPE's registration criteria. This provides private education institutions with the incentive to improve their standards to attain a longer period of registration.

Shivanjee Dewangan, country manager, International Business of Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS), said PEIs, which want to take in international students, must meet even higher standards laid down by the EduTrust, a quality-assurance mark of the CPE. "The EduTrust certification scheme awards three ratings — 'EduTrust Star' for excellent, 'EduTrust' for satisfactory and 'EduTrust Provisional' for minimum level of performance. Till date, no institute has been able to achieve the EduTrust Star certificate. Institutes' awards are made known publicly on the CPE website, to enable students to make a more informed choice when deciding which private education institution to enroll in," said Dewangan.

Another benefit from the introduction of EduTrust is the protection of students' fees. Private schools that are EduTrust certified can collect a maximum of 12 months' fees from students which have to be protected. The fees have to be either put into in an Escrow bank account or the school will have to buy insurance from the insurance companies appointed by CPE. Over 600 private schools were forced to shut down over the past two years for not meeting the criteria stipulated by the Private Education Act. Now, only around 328 schools remain — one-third of the estimated 1,000 schools in December 2009 — according to CPE.

However, experts say what proves to be a deterrent to the students is the fact that Singapore does not allow them to work while pursuing their studies. This is to keep dynamics of their labour market intact. But, as told by sources, the curriculum is also so intensive that there is hardly any time for students to take up part-time jobs. Also, Singapore doesn't have a central authority that accords recognition to courses, certificates or qualifications issued by PEIs.



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