How to choose an institute?

The veracity of tall claims can be determined only through analysis, writes V Pradeep Kumar

The counselling process for professional courses is due to begin soon for the new academic year. One of the most common questions students ask is how to choose a good institute, after selecting a course.

Why the confusion?

Imagine this: We have over 55,000 institutions and 1,000 plus universities, nationally. If a student has to choose an engineering college, there are about 3,500 colleges in India including 542 in Karnataka alone. Similarly, there are over 6,000 MBA institutions including over 900 in Karnataka. In recent times, the number of institutions in every stream has proliferated leading to intense competition and tall claims, the veracity of which can only be determined through analysis. Therefore, the difficulties expressed by students in selecting a good institute are understandable.

Which factors to consider?

Choosing an institute is a crucial decision that shapes our professional life. Students must evaluate institutions thoroughly and not merely accept any institute that's offered in the counselling process or otherwise. The following factors can provide guidelines for a thorough evaluation of an institute:

■ **The number of years:** It takes a few years for a new institute to get over its teething issues and create quality infrastructure. Students should be cautious and prefer established ones.

■ **Team:** Check the profile of the founding members, promoters, and directors to know their credibility.

■ **Faculty:** The experience and qualifications of faculty, research papers published, and other accomplishments by faculty members are key factors to check.

■ **Pedagogy:** Teaching and learning methods can differ across institutions and impact the quality and extent of knowledge and skills acquired.

■ **Infrastructure:** Depending on the course, infrastructure requirements vary. In general, the following factors must be checked.

■ **Hospital/laboratories, library**
■ **Classrooms**
■ **Seminar halls/discussion rooms**
■ **Hostel/canteen**
■ **Sports facilities**
■ **Hygiene and ambience**
■ **Industry collaboration:** A strong industry collaboration helps the learning process to meet the requirements of the job market.

Placement record: With unemployment hovering around 8%, it can be a challenge to get jobs. Hence, it's important to understand the efficacy of the placement process.

■ **Location:** Evaluate the appropriateness of the institute's location to the course and related industries.

■ **Approvals:** Students must ensure they are choosing an approved course from an approved institute.

■ **Costs:** The costs vary between institutes, and one must assess the worth of the benefits offered by institutes as compared to the costs.

Public assessments to check

To facilitate the selection of an institute, there is a ready source of data available, assessing institutions and providing rankings. These assessments are published by leading business houses, magazines and EdTech companies. However, these rankings are not completely reliable as they include only institutions which participate in the assessment process and often many key institutions are not assessed. Hence students have to refer to many assessments and use their judgement and discretion while choosing an institute.

This challenge is somewhat mitigated with the National Ranking Information Framework (NIRF) published by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, from the year 2016. NIRF considers 5 key ranking parameters such as Teaching, Learning and Resources (TLR), Research

& Professional Practice (RP), Outreach and inclusivity (OI), Graduation outcome (GO) and Perception (PR) and 22 key factors, within these parameters, while determining the rankings.

Thus, there's a lot of data available on the quality of institutions, which enables students to decide the best institutions for the chosen course.

Analysing an institute

Apart from ranking information, consider the following to make your analysis comprehensive:

■ **Websites:** A well-designed, user-friendly website with details of infrastructure as mentioned above, gives authenticity to the rankings extracted from all sources.

■ **Alumni Association:** It's a good idea to connect to alumni associations and get feedback from the members. Such connectivity also can help with internships, projects and also for placements. However, one should exercise some discretion while making an opinion based on feedback.

■ **Corporate feedback:** Establishing contacts with industries who regularly visit for placements will help in understanding the industry perception. Students must connect with industry professionals through LinkedIn and other professional networks and associations.

Finally, it's worth visiting the campus of the chosen institute to get that assurance of being on the right track to building a passionate career.

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