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MOHANDAS PAI

Inside: An overview of NIIT Imperia



Cyber classroom

NIIT Imperia's courses, set in virtual classrooms, are geared to enable working executives upgrade and improve their skill sets



by Urmila Rao

Half past six on a Monday evening. The February air is still nippy. Hari Om, 26, is glued to the computer screen, headset wrapped around his head. He is at an academic centre with eight other students, all working professionals. The class starts by the clock and students, bunched in fours, peer into their respective desktops. On their screens is Professor Ashish Sadh of IIM Indore, teaching a module. The three-hour class is interactive, punctuated by surprise quizzes and discussions. Hari Om and fellow student Nalin Gambhir, 23, intermittently turn their gaze away from the screen to scan course material as they scribble notes.

This is one of NIIT Imperia's virtual classrooms, from the house of NIIT. Hari Om, a Delhi-based Bajaj Alliance Life Insurance executive, is one among a motley group of working-executive and-students simultaneously logged in from 22 other Imperia centres spread across 19 locations. He is pursuing a year-long Post Graduate Certificate in Sales and Marketing course. He has been in his present job for 17 months. "The course has helped me improve my presentation skills and helped gain clarity on the positioning of the products I am marketing," says the assistant sales manager.

Programmes NIIT Imperia's courses cater to entry-level professionals as well as those with up to 10 years' of work experience. Long-term management courses extend up to a year. Short-duration courses typically last 4-9 months. The short, company-sponsored, customised corporate programmes range from three days to a week. According to Shraman Jha, senior vice-president of NIIT, the general management programmes attract more students than the

Students are simultaneously logged in from 22 Imperia centres across India

Programmes on offer		
Title of Programme	Institute	Programme Fee (Rs)
General Management (Including Strategy)		
Executive Program for Young Managers (EPYM)	IMT Ghaziabad	98,500
Certificate Program in Business Administration (CBA)	IIM Indore	68,000
Certificate Program in General Management (CPGM)	IIM Lucknow	72,500
Accelerated General Management Program (AGMP)	IIM Ahmedabad	1,94,000
Finance		
Executive Program in Applied Finance (EPAF)	IIM Calcutta	1,70,000
Fundamentals of Finance for Non-Finance Executives	IMT Ghaziabad	19,100
Sales & Marketing		
Post Graduate Certificate in Sales & Marketing (PGCSM)	IIM Indore	1,64,000
Executive Program in Strategic Marketing Management	IIM Indore	84,000
Operations & Supply Chain Management		
Executive Program in Supply Chain Management (EPSCM)	IIM Calcutta	49,500
Executive Program in Managing Business Decisions	IIM Calcutta	1,48,000
Human Resources Management		
Strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM)	IIM Ahmedabad	56,500
International Business		
Post Graduate Certificate in International Business (PGCIB)	IIFT New Delhi	83,500

specific functional ones. "The latter, by design, appeal to a more niche audience," he says. The institute doesn't have any flagship programme. Its offerings range from finance to sales, marketing, international business, human resources and other sector-specific programmes. "The course curriculum is modified depending on faculty response and survey feedback. We tweak the course significantly from time to time," says Jha.

Partnerships NIIT forged academic partnerships with four IIMs at Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Indore and Lucknow in 2006. This was followed by the launch of the NIIT Imperia division. Programme contents for specific courses are designed in alliance with partner-institutions. For a few specific courses like Post Graduate Certificate in International Business and Executive Programme for Young Professionals, the institute aligned with the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, New Delhi and the Institute of Management Technology, Ghaziabad. "The partner-institutions select candidates, conduct all teaching and evaluation, and provide certification to the students," says Jha. There are four programme cycles in a year. "Lectures are conducted from studios located in Ahmedabad, Indore, Kolkata, Delhi and Gurgaon," says Dr Neeraj Sharma, head of Academics. Classes are

conducted in the evening during weekdays. Weekend classes are day-long sessions.

Payments and payback The course fee for the executive management programme starts from Rs 19,100 and goes up to Rs 1.95 lakh. A year-long Post Graduate Certificate Programme in Management, with minimum eligibility of three working years, for instance, costs Rs 1.65 lakh. The fee for the Executive Programme in Applied Finance is Rs 1.70 lakh (See table: 'Programmes on offer' above). Executives feel the need for frequent upgradation of skills, more so in the current competitive job market. Hence, most of the enrolments are self-financed. While Nalin Gambir, an entrepreneur, had no choice but to personally fund his course, employed executives like Hari Om are not entirely banking on their companies either. "In the present wobbly job market, we have little choice but to sharpen our skill sets to stay afloat," maintains Hari Om.

"We have professionals from the middle and senior rungs of the corporate ladder, who are readying themselves to take on newer job responsibilities," says Jha. Do these programmes really help candidates strike a fortune in their careers? "We equip people with relevant knowledge and skills. The results depends on how

WHAT DO THE TEACH
Executive General Management Program Strengthens area of current specialisation; develops a strong understanding of Indian and international business, both conceptually and analytically.
Senior Management Program Equips senior executives with quantitative tools and qualitative perspective for taking strategic decisions; broadens business perspective.
Certificate in Business Administration Sensitises, develops capabilities among corporate professionals like building soft skills to enhance personal and managerial competence.
Advanced Program in Strategic Management Provides understanding of market rivalries, institutions and power, leadership and transformations among other contemporary areas and developments from a strategic perspective.
Executives Program For Young Managers Develops competence in disciplines and skills associated with general management; introduces contemporary business models and practices.
PG Certificate Program in Management Provides a background of the Indian business environment, develops essential skills in all functional areas of management, integrating with industry applications.

they apply the learning to achieve the best results," says Jha.

Profile Every programme requires a certain number of years of work experience. Barring a few, like Executive Programme for Young Managers, enrolments are done on the basis of the Programme Aptitude Test (PAT), an online test by Imperia. Selection happens through the assessment of the PAT score, professional and educational profile and the statement of purpose provided by the applicant. The institute has churned out 3,000 students since inception. By and large, most programmes have more men than women. "However, the exact ratios change from location to location, and programme to programme," says Jha.

Paraphernalia "Delhi Imperia classroom can seat up to 108 students and can have three programmes running simultaneously," states Sharma. The workstations are equipped with a desktop webcam, audio system and microphone connected directly to the faculty at the institutes. The classroom interactions are facilitated by clusters of student-stations where questions are asked and assignments given periodically. Virtual classrooms have become a reality. It is now up to executives to use the virtual realities to realise their career dreams. ■