

## POST PLACEMENT DILEMMA

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▲ Gurucharan Murmu

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$n(\text{PoR}) = e^{(\text{time})}$

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While a certain small fraction of the hostel notice board is devoted to notices, the major chunk plays home to a whole bunch of posters announcing upcoming events in the campus. Close to half of the average instizen's facebook notifications are those informing them about the next big thing in the institute. With so many bodies functioning throughout the year, all seeking to plan, conceptualize, publicize and execute activities and events, it is no surprise to see a large fraction of students in the institute holding some Position of Responsibility (hereafter referred to as PoR). With so many available positions in each body and with each body conducting so many events, there also occur some events which end up being attended by only the PoR holders themselves. Is this constant increase in the number of events sustainable in the long run? What are the possible consequences of this? And as a result of the rapid growth in the number of PoRs, is there now a reduction in the "brand value" associated with a PoR?

We attempt to answer these questions, and more, in this article. To do so, we have focused primarily on the 4 major categories of student activity bodies, namely institute bodies, hostel bodies, department bodies and independent bodies.

## Facts

We undertook an interesting exercise of guesstimating the number of PoRs in the institute and how it has changed over the last few years. The ballpark figure, from our research, shows the total number of PoRs to be just above 1000. A similar calculation for the previous year puts the figure at 900. Even after adjusting for Inter-IIT, which is a once-in-seven-years event, the growth stands at around 10%, which is abnormally high. The growth can mainly be attributed to the introduction of new clubs.

With exponentially increasing PoRs in the institute, without proportional results, we have moved to an epoch where events come up only because someone wants to be an event manager. The new clubs inaugurated under the Career Cell certainly don't seem to be serving the purpose that they were initially set up for. For instance, the objectives of the Consulting Club, as obtained from the Academic Council's GBM report, read thusly:

1. To provide consulting services to business enterprises, entrepreneurs and voluntary organizations.
2. To give students an insight into the fascinating world of consulting and the challenges it offers before they actually step into it.

Lately, though, its activities have simply boiled down to organizing 'fundae sessions' for cracking consulting interviews. Although this is novel in and of itself, it would have been a lot more effective if, for instance, projects could be floated for interested students by sticking to the initial aim.

## Reasons

One very obvious reason for this accelerating growth that comes to mind is that the GS, at the time of contesting elections, has to come up with new initiatives. So much so that the candidate stands a real chance of

# BIGGER BUT NOT BETTER

With an ever-increasing number of events in the institute, Insight sets out to find if this growth is sustainable

—  
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losing the election if they don't bring in a couple of new ideas. Consolidation of existing events and facilities comes next in the priority list. These expectations come from the student community and the candidate is usually judged on the basis of initiatives.

A little analysis of previous years' GS manifestos laments the fact that a lot of these short-sighted visions are not carried further by future councils because of no or low returns. Two years ago, the Sports council had introduced Joggers Club and Yoga Club, both of which are now extinct. Lukkha Sports weekend was also one such initiative which did not last more than a single tenure. Analytics club started last year but till date has no more than 10 sessions under its belt.

Another widespread belief is that founding a new club is a strong resume point and shows one's entrepreneurial spirit and helps one stand out from the crowd. Though the founder might be very serious for the cause, it is generally seen that if the club does not cater to a substantial section of the campus residents, it loses out in the future. The main reason for this subsequent fall is that the successors are usually not competent or enthusiastic enough for the cause. Hence, niche clubs are rarely successful in the long run.

So, although the motive behind opening clubs is indeed novel - that of bringing together people with common interests - their success depends on a lot of other factors too.

## Consequences

While such growth of student bodies has been achieved with commendable alacrity, the question of its consequences remains to be answered.

A ubiquitous lament from freshmen continues to be that there are too many clubs and too little time. With more than seven events a week and numerous posters put up at every corner, they are confused as to what to do and what not to do. The choice becomes even more difficult when the effectiveness of the events and orientations is so dubious; the orientations work chiefly as tools to lure freshies by showcasing the glamorous aspects of the concerned body. In the end, it is not just a matter of following one's interests, but also trying to keep in mind that all the events may not be as productive as they sound.

With the ever increasing number of events and fests, there is an increased burden of publicity too, and all bodies seem to be chasing publicity with both arms open. Specialised design and web conveners are deployed for these tasks when publicity can be toned down to simple posters and a mail on GPO. Another misuse of human resources is the annual overhaul of bodies' websites. With a few bodies launching their own Android app, the next-in-line fad can very well be characterized by everybody having an app of its own. Also, bodies seem to be chasing a set of similar activities, without thinking about relevance of such activities. Almost all the student bodies now have a crypt hunt, aimed at garnering publicity, maybe? Organising a fest of its own is another trend that is being replicated by clubs, without giving much thought. For instance, Speaking Arts Fest organised by Cultural Council last year had nobody but organizers attending some talks, and other talks had a low attendance too.

The increase in the number of PoR's has led to dilution of PoR's as well. It would have been great if the increase in number of office-bearers would have led to proportional increase in the number of activities, but instead, the distributed responsibilities are working more as a bottleneck.

## Solutions

One way to stop the unnecessary proliferation of PoR's is to integrate the student councils with the Institute Bodies, like having members of WnCC, STAB handling the Web departments, rather than having separate Web conveners for each club. One good step taken by GS Cult in this regard is having a design club with their designers helping the Institute Cultural Council with all the design related work, across seven genres. This has led to better quality work and, in turn, better publicity of events.

Clubs can be made more efficient by formally introducing them under GS's and proper club wise GBM should take place, critically analysing their performance. Since these clubs anyway informally fall under one or the other GS, this would lead to effective evaluation of the clubs.

Power is a zero sum game. If club culture has to grow then someone else has to give up on its power. In this case, hostel culture and structure needs to be looked all over again. The scenario of students not willing to take up secretary post is already quite evident. With increasing use of laptop and changing living styles of hostel inmates, hostel culture has already started seeing a dip. The current structure of two verticals, institute bodies and hostels, catering to same crowd is definitely not the best way forward.

While it is good to see that the institute bodies and councils want to expand their horizons, it is also important for them to have a larger vision in mind while doing so. Short term or incremental changes only lead to wastage of the institute's funds, as they will usually not be followed upon by future councils. As long as the different bodies ensure that they have some sort of long term plan in mind, they will be able to grow in a more sustainable manner.

Comic: Rahul Jain

Abe ye kya manifesto banaya hai tune..? Kaise karega ..

Election jeetne ke liye sirf 3 cheezen chahiye hoti hai... initiative, initiative, aur initiative... aur polt..



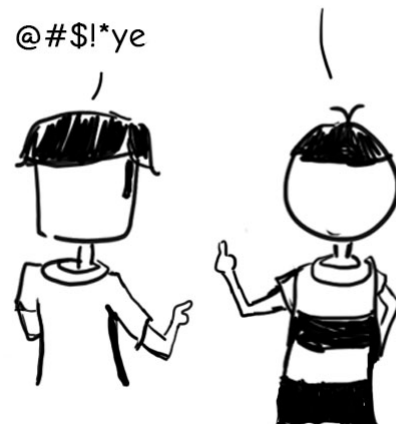
Abe, give me some exponentially increasing functions...

Kuch bhi lele..jaise  $a^x$ ,  $t^{2a}$ , No. of insti POR's,  $e^{nx}$ ...



Mera pass. CPI hai, intern hai, untagged AA wale course hai, tere pass kya hai?

Mere pass... POR hai...



# TA SELECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

An in-depth analysis of the TAship system from the perspectives of the main stakeholders involved

ANAMIKA AGARWAL, DEEPAK DILIPKUMAR, PRADEEP PADMANABHAN, SAI SANDEEP, SUYASH TIWARI, VIKAS KURAPATI

TA : Teaching Assistant | UG : Undergraduate | PG : Postgraduate

## Results from the student survey

A significant chunk of students accept that tutorials help them in some way, with 71% of students saying that their grades improved, although 42% of these students did not believe that they could say the same about their understanding of the subject.

Students expressed a generic discomfort with the communication skills of TAs. Most students are discontented with PG TAs, with 76% quoting lack of communication skills and 55% having a problem with their subject knowledge.

## The Professors

### How are TAs selected across various departments?

#### PG v/s UG preferences

While departments like Aerospace, Bioscience and Chemical favour PG TAs, the Physics and Math Depts. prefer UGs. Prof. Majumdar (Chem. E.) says “A TA should be friendly, but not a friend. PG TAs have a greater sense of responsibility.

However, Professor Suresh of the Physics dept. believes that UG TAs are more eager to share their knowledge, and will be able to come down to the level of freshmen, being of the same age group.” This captures the two sides of the argument fairly well.

#### Who gets to select?

In the physics department, TA selection for common UG courses is completely in the hands of the Instructors-in-Charge, with no involvement of the HoD whatsoever.

In the CSE Department, the FacAd is responsible for TA allocation, though Instructors can specifically demand for tutors if needed.

In the Chemical Department, there is no control of the instructors and three faculty members are wholly responsible for TA allocation. In the biosciences and aero departments too, it is “take what you get”.

#### What is the selection procedure?

UG common courses, like MA and PH courses, have a rigorous selection criterion, usually requiring the student to have an AP in that course. In this regard, Prof K.G Suresh usually asks the grade-shortlisted applicants to demonstrate their communication skills by teaching the selectors.

Meanwhile, the demand-supply problem and the need for high degree of specialization forces some departments like to shift from interview-based shortlisting to CPI-based / merit-based shortlisting or sometimes, merely making sure the student-in-question has done the course.

### The Duties, Responsibilities and Qualities of a TA

#### Qualities of a TA

At some level, TAs are expected to be responsible, eager to teach and learn. Professor Sunoj of the Chemistry department adds, “TAs should possess commitment and interest in teaching. TAs need to invest significant amount of time in preparation as students tend to know which TAs are taking it lightly.” Prof KG Suresh emphasizes the presence of both, the ability to communicate along with sound subject knowledge. However, since a large number of TAs are required, communication skills are considered important only to the extent of being able to get the message across.

#### TAship duties

TA duties witness variations both across and within departments. For example, PH107 TAs are not required to contribute to question-paper setting; PH108 TAs suggest as well as select questions. BB101 TAs conduct 5-7 quizzes each semester, grade them, and help grade mid-sems too, while CS101 TAs have to attend the discussion session in lecture hours and clear the doubts of the section of students allotted to them. Other important duties include invigilation evaluation of students during tutorial hours, as in PH108. For PH107, Prof. KG Suresh said that dedicated TAs for helping those weak in English might be appointed next semester onwards.

#### Guidelines for TAs while evaluating students

It is difficult for instructors to grade large numbers of answer scripts by themselves. Professor Akshay of the CSE department, elucidated the grading procedure, which is similar in most UG common courses, thus : “A precise grading scheme is discussed with the TAs. Each TA corrects 1-2 questions to make correction unbiased. PG TAs are generally allotted this work since they do it quite responsibly.” Professors in the physics department emphasize the discretion of the TA being of utmost importance despite the marking scheme.

#### TA evaluation

PG TAs are indirectly evaluated every month, since their work requires regular approval from their guides. However, a provision for student feedback is not currently in place.

## The TA perspective

PG students (especially PhD students) require money for their upkeep. This is provided in the form of a ‘stipend’ by MHRD grants. To be eligible for this grant, the PG students need to take up TAship. Apart from this, the institute subsidizes fees for PhD in lieu of TAship for 2 years. For students opting for PhDs , post-doctorates or faculty positions later, teaching experience is a major resume point and it also enables them to get recommendations easily.

It is unreliable to provide grants to RAs from the professor’s research fund (and not from MHRD Grants) for two major reasons. First, there are a limited no. of RAs assigned for each project which means people not willing to work as TAs won’t necessarily be appointed as RAs. Second, the research support grant can’t be used to fund manpower, because it’s barely sufficient for buying chemicals, equipments etc.

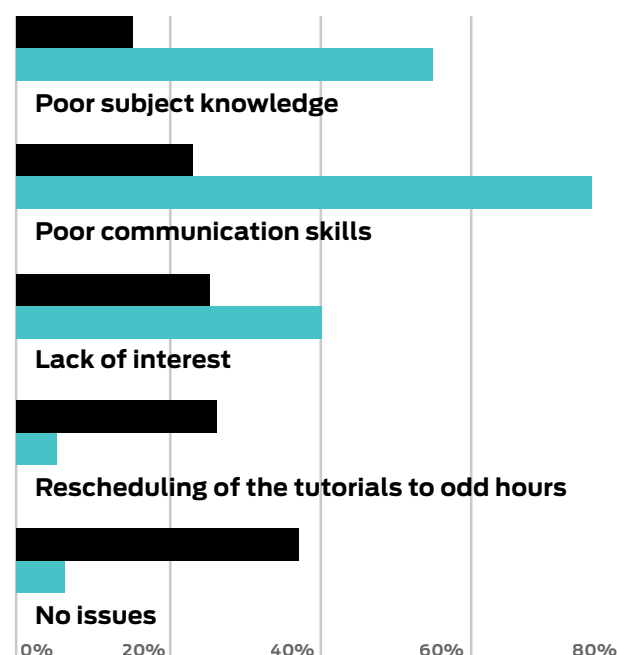
However, in the chemistry department, money constraint is relaxed because the department is externally funded and about 20 out of 130 students are funded by the institute.

For the UG TAs, money and getting to teach and interact with students are major incentives, although there is no ‘necessity’ imposed upon them to become a TA, apart from Dual Degree 5th year students.

## Potential Improvements

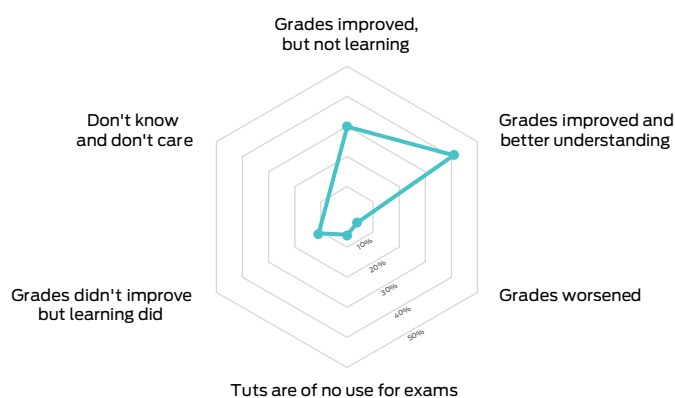
A major shortcoming in the system is lack of a stringent selection procedure for TAs. A more comprehensible process is used in universities abroad as compared to our current system. This means TAs are often ill-equipped to handle classes here. Baburaj Kanarajan, of the Missouri University of Science and Technology elaborated on the process used there, which involves parameters such as a written test, an interview and a demo class to the professor.

## Problems encountered with PG and UG TAs



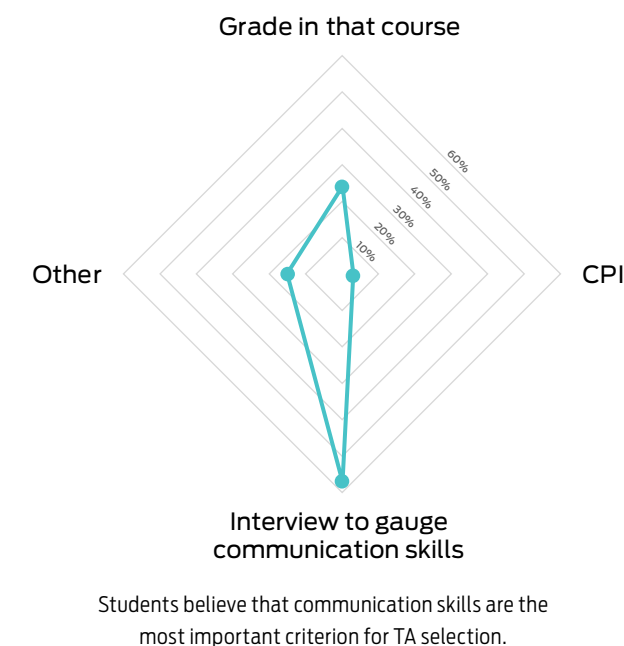
Poor communication skills and poor subject knowledge seem to be major problems among PGs.

## Effects of attending tutorials



In general, tuts seem to help in some way or the other.

## Criteria for TA selection



Students believe that communication skills are the most important criterion for TA selection.

A system of ‘TA feedback’ could also be implemented alongside professor feedback, with some involvement of the professor. However, though the system has been proposed earlier, it was never implemented.

A major bone of contention is biased checking of answer sheets. This could be reduced by allowing one TA to check one question for the entire batch, which is already being followed in some departments as elucidated earlier. The ‘TA rotation’ system is another possible option, but the fact that it does not allow TAs an opportunity to establish rapport with the class may make it infeasible in practice.

Since most of the time PG (especially PhD) students are to necessarily take up TAship, options other than teaching , like preparation of quizzes, quiz evaluation, assisting professors in preparing the slides for lectures and supervising laboratory sessions, should be available. Broader selection criteria, coupled with more generic work for the TAs would potentially keep all three stakeholders (TAs, students and professors) happy.



# POST-PLACEMENT DILEMMA

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NITISH SONTAKKE, PAVAN PRAKASH DUVVURI, PRUDHVITEJ IMMADI, SAGAR SHETH, SIDHARTH PRASAD, SREESH VENUTURUMILLI

All tied up, with polished shoes, suited to please the eye, only students in their final year can be seen in this neat-attired form, gearing up for their interviews, placement assessments and scheduled meetings. While some anxiously await their PPO-results, some wait for the cherished Day 1 companies to open up.

We are all too familiar with this elaborate process lasting a whole semester - the placement hustle. However, what is less known in the institute is what happens after the placements. Is all the hype worth it?

## Switching Jobs

We've come across quite a few stories indicating that our alumni have been quitting their jobs taking up different career paths relatively early after their graduation. This made us look a little deeper and try to validate these trends, and come up with possible explanations. We thus, surveyed the previous three alumni batches relating the issue. Surprisingly, we found out that nearly 40% of the people surveyed have moved from a job to a different field within 3 years, including some who've quit it without even completing a year! After quitting their jobs, apart from moving to work for a new company, people have picked varied fields like Entrepreneurship, Higher studies, Research Assistantship and Social Work.

Although the fields are diverse, these trends seem to stem from a common source - the student mind-set during placements? Placement flaws?

About half the students who've quit their jobs in 0-3 years didn't initially plan to leave it, which highlights the uncertainty a student might face after he/she picks up the job. A variety of reasons have been provided when asked about the reason to change jobs/fields. An overwhelming majority who picked up Entrepreneurship, Higher studies, RAs or Social Service stated that

they took it out of interest. The statistic that probably stands out is that 50% of the students who switched jobs did it because they didn't like the work profile or that they had a conflict with the companies' values. Others added that they wanted to explore different fields or raise money for their future career paths.

In all the cases apart from the latter, it interests us to see why the students took up the job in the first place.

While some picked up the job because of the humongous amount of money it was offering, a significant percentage of the people claimed that the job they took up initially was to pursue their passion, suggesting a lack in understanding about whether they were actually suited for the job. Furthermore, there are people who picked up the job only because it was a back-up option or because they weren't sure at that time. Also, understandably, some portion of the people who had joined just to gain experience have already quit their jobs.

This combined with the rationale as to why they picked up that particular company during placements gives us more **insights**. A clear majority felt that the particular company was a good-fit. A company's brand value also seemed to also have played a major role in the decision making. Other reasons include the fact that everyone else was eyeing the job.

## The Glamor Jobs

Most seniors are well aware of the attention consulting and finance jobs have been getting in the past few years. The Day-1 hype is mainly due to the high-paying non-core jobs and most of the students see them as their 'dream jobs'. As mentioned before, a company's brand value, the fact that many students are eyeing for the same job and the compensation being offered, play a role for students to take up such jobs, thus setting these job opportunities very lucrative for the students.

From our Senior Survey Analysis of the batch of 2013, we learnt that almost 30% of the batch are going into consultancy and finance. It indeed is surprising to see such a statistic for one of the country's best technological institution. Turns out, such a trend prevails in premier universities like Yale and Harvard too, where more than a quarter turn towards the Wall Street for their employment. From the current survey there seems to be a significant drop in that regard-9% of the UGs surveyed, probably indicating the switch to other jobs or career paths.

The possible dis-interest in work-profile, figuring out their passion, or wanting to be their own boss could be few reasons why people are heading out of their job.

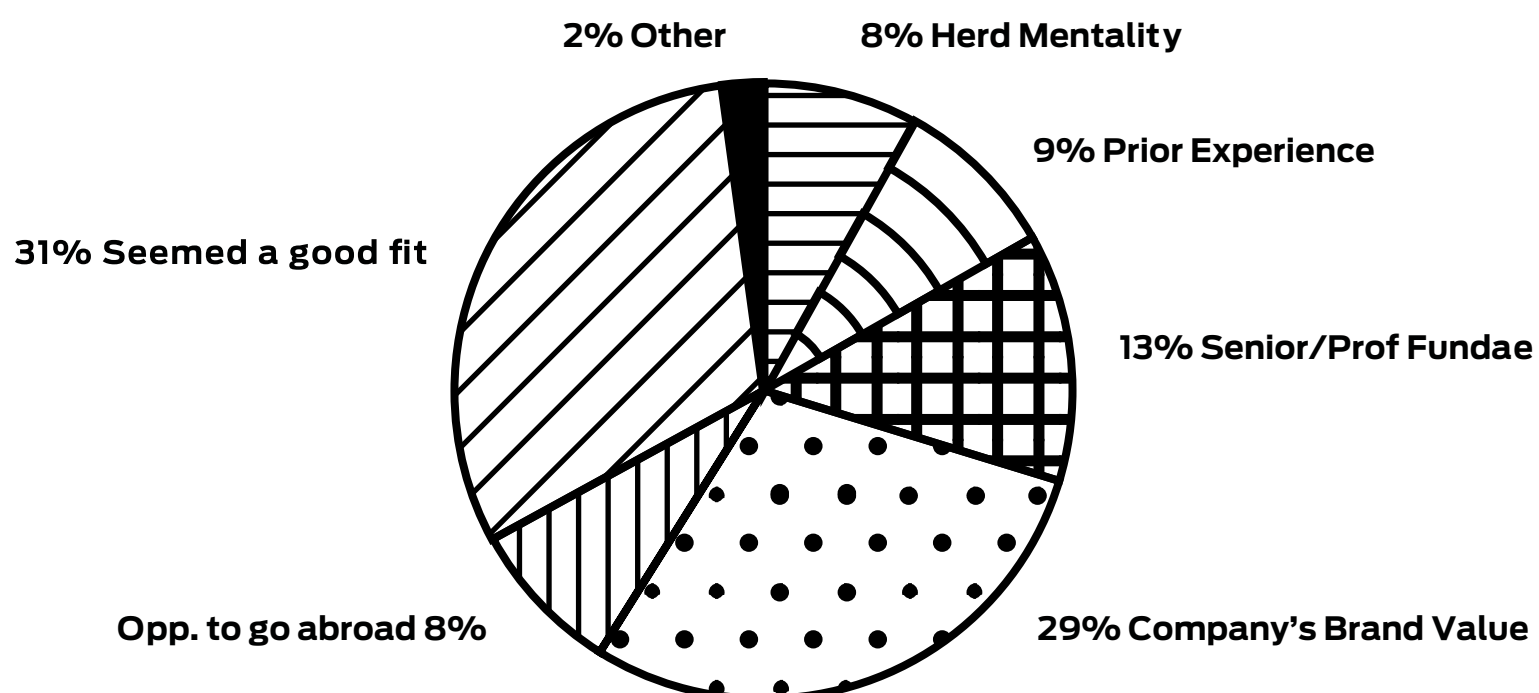
We have also come across various opinions where people said that they would have pursued "core" fields if there had been more opportunities to do so. The general opinion that students are more likely to take up non-core jobs may be true, but it is possibly due to the lack of lucrative opportunities in core, and not an inherent disinterest in the fields themselves.

But then again, we can see the role that competition plays here. Student goals might just be dictated by achievements which are in turn dictated by societal expectations and probably not what they might be 'wanting' to do, which can be inferred from the fact that people are switching fields to pursue their passion.

## A Job will do

More often than not, students view the placements as a source to just secure a job, which means there is some form of an assurance or guarantee. This leads to fact that students would want to get placed the earliest, making students pick up jobs that they might not be as interested in the actual work-profile.

## Factors influencing choice of companies during campus placements





## More Understanding on the Jobs

At first sight it seems like the mindset of the student seems to play a critical role in the game at hand. Although it is quite natural for people to change jobs, the percentage of those who did so in the first 3 years seems to be quite high. There are a few who did plan to quit either for exploring or for raising money for later career switches, at many instances to entrepreneurship. But the rest did not plan to shift this early. And here we suspect we need a student who is more aware of the options, his ambitions irrespective of what others are aiming for. A placement process should be conducive for such choices.

Slightly more than 50% of the respondents who changed jobs seem to think that there are issues with the placement process. One of the most important take-aways is that we need to understand the requirement of a placement process where more informed choices are made. We can understand that there are a few who'd want to experience working in different sectors, but the placement process must ensure that this doesn't stem from the lack of information or a thorough understanding of the job in the first place. Also it can be inferred that there are quite a few who thought they'd be a good fit for the job or took it mainly because of its package and brand value.

The institute has come up with new initiatives like the deferred placement which can be useful to many students, looking at the rise in entrepreneurship in the institute. A student needs to explore all the available options all the more carefully based on what he'd rather do later on; weighing the options; interacting with seniors who've had similar options.

To figure out about individual sectors, check out the individual sections relating to each of the career paths.

### Jobs

The survey results show that more than 31% students taking up jobs out of campus placements have switched jobs at least once in the past 2-3 years. 35% of the respondents switched their jobs even when they felt that those jobs are a perfect fit for them during campus placements citing different reasons such as increased compensation and experience in a new sector/field.

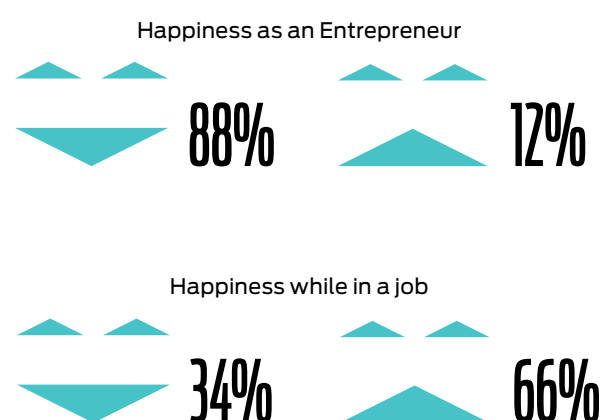
This result has a greater reverberation and tells more about the mentality of the student community who often fail to take an informed decision at the time of graduation which could be due to many reasons, one being lack of avenues which facilitate students to talk to people in particular industries.

We also asked our survey participants about the possibility of switching jobs in the near future, and we found that 50% of the people are thinking of leaving their current job. Of the 2012 batch passouts, 55% of the people intend to change theirs while 35% are unsure of their decision. Such numbers point out to a trend that many people are shifting jobs even before they complete their first year in the company.

### Entrepreneurship

The survey on the current entrepreneurs shows that 3 out of every 4 have previously worked for a company, all of them for a period ranging between 0 - 3 years. While most of them did so with the intent of gaining experience in the industry, a few do it either to raise funds for their future ventures, while others were not sure that they'd ever start up at that time. Also, a large majority of the people who've started their own ventures coming out of jobs had pre-planned their future shift and 54% of them made this shift just out of zeal to pursue their passion, indicating that the dream 'to become their own bosses one day' are more often than not, born within the hallowed provinces of IIT Bombay and that our institute is indeed doing well enough to nurture the entrepreneurship culture. This also in a way explains the short term job quitting trend, well, they want to build their own companies. However, it seems a bit astounding that every 3 out of our 4 entrepreneurs have their start-ups in the non-core sector, specially considering that they have the best technological institute in the country as their alma mater.

## From Jobs to starting up

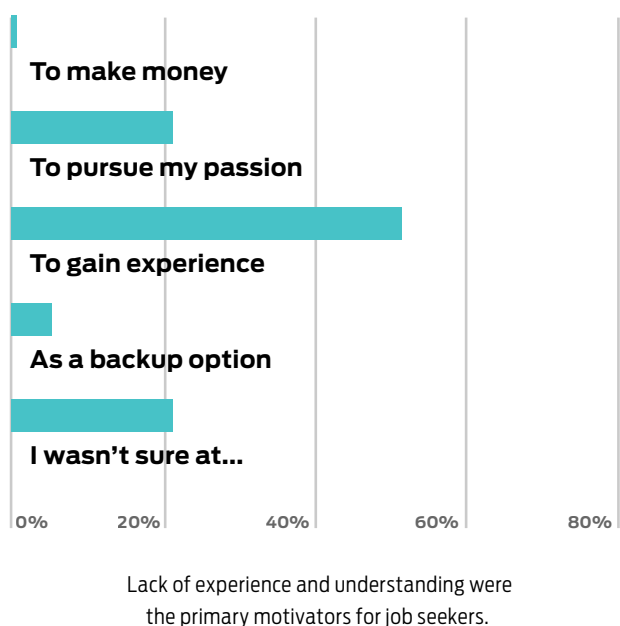


When it comes to being happy and satisfied with what one is doing, among the people who've shifted, it is clearly seen that the shift has increased the overall happiness quotient. It suggests that entrepreneurship in general is more satisfying and pleasurable.

Among the other category, the ones who've got their hands dirty with entrepreneurship right after graduation, every 4 in 5 said they wouldn't have changed their minds, even if they're given their dream jobs during placements which suggest that there exist a few 'born entrepreneurs' as well. Also, for 67% of them, their dream was born right inside the institute campus and a huge majority of them think that their entrepreneurial experience will come handy in the long run. Things like 'deferred placements' are further offering a safer option to our budding entrepreneurs cultivating healthy entrepreneurship culture.

### Higher Studies

#### Reason for taking up job after graduation



Some of our respondents moved from a job to higher studies. Most of them wanted to get a flavour of what it's like working in the industry, to judge themselves on being fit for a 'job' and to look at how things are on the other side before applying for graduate schools. Every second person who has moved from a job to higher studies said they took up a job early on just to gain experience since (s)he had always had an option of moving to a grad school later on. Further, they took up the job just because, well, it seemed like a 'good fit', and finally went for a post-grad school primarily driven by his interests.

Among the ones pursuing higher studies, 3 in 5 dream of starting their own ventures primarily out of passion while 4 in 5 think that their post-grad studies will count once they start building their own company.

### Miscellaneous

Every 4 out of the 5 people who are currently working as RAs had taken it up right after graduation, their prime motivator being either passion or an idea worth working on. This gives an indication that people who decide to go into research seem to be a lot clearer of the path they want to follow.

## Alumni Speak about their choices and the consequences



**Manish Shetty**  
Doctoral Candidate, MIT

### On consulting

"Consulting gives you a good perspective as a first job to figure out what you may like to do in the future. Besides, it also adds credibility and value to your CV for another in the future, and B-school applications as well."

### On Higher Studies

"I do not regret leaving my job and I am quite happy with what I am doing. There are daily frustrations like every job; but I feel challenged everyday and I am making mistakes and learning everyday."

### On Life

"We are still young and its okay to not been able to figure out things by your final year. IIT gives you a good springboard for the next step in your career. However, it is by no means the end of your opportunities. Opportunities are immense and there are ways to change career paths."



**Harsh Shah**  
Founder, shopsense.com

### On moving from jobs to start-ups

"You can technically start building the foundations of your startup while at job. After 2 years into the job, you pretty much know how to play the game as you now know how things work out in a big company. It can be undertaken as a gradual process where you work on your idea and when you think that things are at a stage where you can pursue the idea full time, you can quit your job."



**Anshuman Bapna**  
Founder, mygola.com

### On moving from jobs to start-ups

"This is a historic time, that it's never been easier to start a company. One advantage of starting a company while you're a student is that your opportunity cost is zero. It's not like you're giving up a big job, so while you're in your 3rd or 4th year you should seriously consider starting a company if you have an idea. Because the next opportunity that you may get to start a company might only be a decade later when you're more settled."



**Antariksh Bothale**  
Big Data Analyst, BloomReach Inc.

### On life

"For a lot of people, their sense of how well they're doing in life comes not only from whether they're doing what they enjoy, but also from whether they've been able to achieve what society considers to be a strong metric of success. It's the same story when we're trying to get into IIT and it's the same when we're inside."



# CONCRETE JUNGLE

SREESH VENUTURUMILLI

*The Lorax,  
I speak for the trees (for the trees have no tongue.)*

*I've got a few important things to share with all you  
students for unless someone like you cares a awful lot.  
Nothing is going to get better. It's not.*

*When I first chanced upon this campus, I was greeted by  
this wonderful variety of rare trees, blossoming  
flowers and animal, bird and butterfly-species. The rich  
biodiverse place is such a huge relief from the suffocat-  
ing, space-starved, polluted concrete-jungle of the city  
outside. Happily placed amidst hills and flanked by lakes,  
not many these days, can enjoy such an environment.*

*But in the recent past I've learnt a lot that is  
disturbing, and I'm here to inform you all for all this is  
about to change. And I'm here to speak for the trees.  
Try imagining a place where there is less fresh air to  
breathe, instead filled with the gloomy, grey dust and  
debris. All of you must like taking those pleasant walks  
through the campus witnessing nature, in the cool breeze.*

*We must know, that the environment is larger and much  
more complex than any man-made machinery, and the  
consequences of system failure are thus more disastrous.  
For instance, destroying the habitat of a migratory bird  
will have tangible ecological effects all over. Extinction of  
a single insect species like the bees can have catastrophic  
impacts. Healthy ecosystems and biological diversity are  
vital for communities to function properly. Apart from  
the vibrant atmosphere, it also aides us in keeping our  
mental health.*

*A lot has to change.  
It's not about what it is, it's about what it can become.*

## A study by the WWF

A group of nature-enthusiasts in the institute recognized this and pushed for the documentation of the institute's rich and diverse ecological communities. This study on the biodiversity of the IIT campus was conducted in 2009 by the World Wildlife Fund for Nature showed that the IIT campus houses nearly 843 species of flora and fauna of native and foreign origin. Of them, as many as 100 species figure as 'protected species' under different levels of vulnerability, in the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA) of 1972 or in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list. Some of them being rare orchid trees, marsh crocodiles, and the Common Pierrot butterfly among others.

Alumni, including the 1980 and 1984 batches, who wanted to contribute to the cause, gifted the institute - a garden called Kshitij Udyan, right behind the convocation hall. They also urged the institute to not cut down many trees, especially in the vegetated region of the campus which are in the bio-sensitive region as the study highlights, so that there is minimal human intervention. Unfortunately so, despite this, there have been trees felled for varied reasons, although officially, clearance is taken from the Tree Authority, Municipal Corporation. (We can't really know whether trees have been cut in excess.)

## What's going wrong?

Recently, the campus has witnessed a drastic increase in its infrastructural activities. Not only are they cut for providing land for the buildings, they are also often uprooted, damaged as collateral damage.

The study adds that there are several other anthropogenic activities that are not very conducive to conservation. Some of the activities include destroying vegeta-

tion, cutting of wood for fuel, clearing up of dead wood and logs, feral cattle movement, plastic bags and bottle dumping, alcohol bottles thrown around in the vegetated sectors of the campus, disposal of chemical waste and trapping of water birds.

Even laboratory waste which was reportedly not disposed off properly, can be hazardous to health and environment. Measures should be employed to check such misuse of the resources. For example, if the surroundings of the labs are found littered the occupants of that particular building could be fined or involved in a clean up drive.

## Inaction towards conservation and being environment-friendly

The campus was a marsh land when IIT faculty and students began settling here in 1958. Then some of the campus residents took initiative to plant trees in the campus. We can see in the pictures taken in 1970s that the campus was still quite barren. In comparisons, the campus was thriving with lush greenery by 2005. But compared to similar pictures taken recently, the reduction in green cover is clearly visible.

**2008**



**2014**



It is disheartening to learn that there is no system to check the construction activities in the campus. Whether it comes to deciding the site of the building or the foot-print it covers, or the ecological impact it might have, there is no restriction faced by the decision making entities. There is rarely any discussion to incorporate better technologies to minimize the environmental effects.

All around campus, trees are being felled to make way for concrete structures of questionable utility w.r.t the space occupied. The newly built Aravali, Shivalik and Faculty housings provide parking space for around 100 cars each, cutting down densely planted areas. Simple technology can be incorporated like multi-level parking on stilts. Not only this, all buildings must be fine tuned to have minimum ecological impact.

Another recent events is the construction of the third-guesthouse which led to the cutting down of around 35 trees adjacent to the Powai Lake. Surprisingly again, very few residents were actually aware of this when it happened. Although some faculty did rally to check the construction's ecological impact or necessity in the first place, the construction activity is now in full-swing.

## Green Office: Yet Another formality?

The MHRD ministry realized this and discussed this issue at length in one of the IIT-Council meetings. They recommended all IITs to set up a Green Office which will look into all environment related activities of the campus. Some of its functions include :

1. Green Planning and reappraisal of the campus infrastructure master plan.
2. Minimizing carbon footprint and green audit.
3. Creation of water bodies: Using several measures like water harvesting for water conservation and better utilization of the same.
4. Preserving Bio-diversity.
5. Conducting open Houses so issues are discussed with all relevant stakeholders in the campus.

This was seen as a major step in the right direction, where the institute was encouraged by the government itself to set up a body which will take measures to better the campus environment and reduce its ecological impact.

The meeting was held in 2013. It is now 2015, and not even a single meeting has taken place on the issue. The only thing done was to draft the members of the office, which, surprisingly, includes the Mood Indigo Overall Co-ordinator and GSAA-PG and not the more involved enthusiastic/relevant faculty members/student representatives who can form policies.

All this is indeed appalling as it highlights the institute's apathy in protecting its environment. All this is relevant as since then, the planning of Hostels 15, 16, 17 and 18, and housing facilities for faculty have taken place without the intervention of any body. Such decisions need to be checked as relevant stakeholders, we students, cannot allow buildings which cover unnecessarily large footprint leading to a loss of trees or construction in eco-sensitive regions leading to a loss of habitat for various species.

*Now, that you are aware,*

*it is only when someone like you cares, can one bring  
about change. Students like you can take a large role in  
policy making.*

*Here is an example wherein, activists and concerned  
students in IIT-Madras, where over 8000 trees were felled  
since 2001, took part, raised their voice and filed court  
cases to seriously hinder construction activities in the  
campus and to check the environmental impact  
of their fests.*

*IIT-B is one of the premier technological institutes,  
and thus there is a need to set an example to sustainably  
develop this place, without interfering too much with the  
nature. A host of reasons have led to the  
deterioration, such as lack of awareness,  
inappropriate disposal of wastes(including laboratory  
waste),and most importantly increased construction  
activity in the campus. The human needs of education  
and development may be considered and given a priority  
at times, but not at the expense of the vulnerable flora  
and fauna.*

*It is imperative as residents you take more action with  
increased awareness and push the institute to ensure the  
proper functioning of the Green Office, which was set up  
for this exact reason by the government. The campus  
after all is what it is after many young faculty and  
students back then, planted trees and let it flourish.*

*A tree falls the way it leans.  
Be careful which way you lean.*



# A CONVINCING PROOF OF INTELLIGENCE?

JITENDRA SAHU

A discourse on intelligence is most vividly marked by diversity. Its classification exhibits some amazing ramifications and there are many facets that still remain to be charted. We have thinkers, philosophers, mathematicians, physicists and other professions that are all marked by some or the other particular type of intelligence. Nevertheless, the distribution is never pristine and every human has such a significant share of different faculties that there exists no commonly accepted watertight system to fairly rate intelligence in its entirety. A very popular system for the purpose, followed all over the country in prominent academic institutes and gaining more popularity as days go by, is a student's CPI.

CPI has a peculiar impact on students. Those who are successful with the system tend to extol it as a foolproof system for sifting out bright minds while those who are unsuccessful with it are inadvertently critical of it. While the explanation for the divide in opinion is an entirely different issue, I hereby attempt to present an objective and logical discussion of how strongly reality is aligned along the judgement one's CPI exudes. While there are many criteria that a system has to satisfy for it to be called comprehensive and fair, the discussion begins from the lowest rung and concludes with answering the final question of how likely a student with a good CPI will succeed in their life.

CPI is indeed tenable at first glance. You take certain courses and you are rated against your performance in those courses. So, if a person interpreting it is aware of the narrow verdict that your CPI telecasts, then it is fair. But the opinion arouses a sense of misgiving if this interpretation is extended any further. Alas, CPI is always subjected to such extrapolations. Recruiters invariably correlate your CPI to your expected success or failure at the workplace. However, if you lift your gaze a little further to observe the interplay of more phenomena, this conclusion begins to fall apart. For instance, there are students who are unable to perform in quizzes and assignments but excel at solving real problems (such as course projects) that require a holistic approach rather than the practised approaches most courses preach. But since the weightage of course projects alone is low, their grades suffer. Such a student is bound to lose interest in the age-old game of quizzes and assignments that test your ability to regurgitate information upon request.

The other few reasons that buttress the arguments in favour of CPI are that it's the participants themselves who choose to enrol themselves into the system and hence the onus lies upon them to bear any misleads that it dictates. But if we dig deeper, we realise that there is a fairly subtle trap hidden within this rationale. The admission to these institutes is guarded by exams that are considered the most selective of their kind. But, surprisingly, the same students who prove their mettle in these entrance exams suffer in the academic system in these institutes. So, a doubt that first inhibits you is that CPI caters to a different breed of students than those caressed by competitive exams - a trap many fall prey to. Students are caught unawares by the fact that the ability that got them into IITB may not help them sustain their stay here. They are subjected to a salvo of

adaptations to fit the system. In many cases, the misfit is so prominent that their CPI makes their choice to study at IITB look like a rash foray.

Another feature of CPI is its relative nature which is making students make a mad dash for it and develop a blinkered vision in the process. This system of relative grading keeps everyone on a perennial vigil. The incessant need to keep up prompts them to study only that which can potentially improve their CPI - glossing over the depths of their course topics. The urge to understand takes a back-seat, conditional to the availability of time which never comes - again one of the pitfalls of the relative grading system. So, these are perfect settings to drastically reduce your chances of experiencing moments of epiphany which both assuage and stoke curiosity at the same time. It is the competition that drives the system where you ought to be running all the time and not stand still at any moment and make an effort to understand nuances that spark ingenuity. The pace inherent to the system causes students to stay tactical and to quite some extent, robotic in their approach. Everybody realises that when you are sprinting towards a goal, you can afford neither to wander, nor to wonder.

As Einstein once remarked, "If you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid", and people continually realise at some point of time that they are in the wrong place. In such cases, while CPI does discount human uniqueness that falls beyond its narrow spectrum; there is intelligence abound that it cannot fathom. CPI then gets reduced into a vicious process of stereotyping, judging everybody with the same yardstick; for the same hues of temperament and letting the individual bright sides fade into inconsequential traits. While this is a case of intelligence smothered, there is the same story at the other end of the line where an ability to work hard, stay disciplined, find loopholes in the system and manipulate it to boost CPI is frequently misunderstood for intelligence.

In summary, what CPI truly reflects is one's ability to work hard; more so an ability to get the job done, imbibe it as the then purpose of life and live by it. Such traits are not very strong indicators of intelligence that is the leading light of our civilisation. Intelligence, one that is marked by ingenuity and a restive and curious mind seeks space where it can be spontaneous and does not thrive in the pressurised atmosphere of CPI. Nonetheless the need for rating is a necessary bane of the contemporary world and CPI becomes indispensable. We are a developing society and still in the hunt for a wholesome metric of intelligence - and we have a long way to go until we have one. Until then we will have to bear with the imperfections of the system. Until then, every report card should carry a disclaimer like information sites where they disown any responsibility for any mistake. A disclaimer that says, "CPI catches only a glimpse of a candidate's ability, a glimpse so small that it is just the tip of the iceberg - just what the candidate sees. One must always use one's discretion as a supplement." Then maybe one can hope that people may not succumb to the heuristics suggested by CPI and attempt to see all the sides of a candidate's ability.

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## Editors' Note

Hey,

We're proud to bring to you the third print issue of our tenure, and really hope you have had as much fun reading it as we did creating it. Apart from our print coverage, we've also been regularly bringing news to you through our website and IIT BBC, and we hope that you've been following us regularly.

We're always on the lookout for feedback, article ideas, news and coffee. Feel free to contact us if that sounds like something you'd be interested in. In fact, if you're a designer, photographer, illustrator or a cartoonist, we'd be happy to pay for your coffee too.

**Anshul & Chirag**  
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## New Insight survey reveals apathy towards Insight surveys

A recent survey conducted within the Insight team revealed that they had spent most of their youth floating meticulously designed surveys and publishing critically analyzed results. Soon after this, members of the Insight team finally ran out of surveys to conduct (and, of course, analyze). In order to judge how their aforementioned youth had been spent, the minds behind Insight then decided to survey the general body for feedback on all surveys they had previously conducted. "What we found totally blew our minds!" the reporters told themselves.

In this first-of-its-kind survey, it was found that close to 85% of the respondents of the survey had never previously bothered to go through any survey at all, let alone fill one out in depth. While the reporters found it difficult to get their heads around this, it should also be pointed out that the results of this particular survey may not be generalizable to the Institute. This is because the survey was able to garner only 50 respondents - 7.5 of whom were Insight team members.

## GS way too far into tenure to ask what 'meeting minutes' are now

Having heard the phrase thrown around quite recklessly for the past couple of months, a certain General Secretary who wishes to remain unnamed admitted Monday that he was way too far into his tenure to ask what 'meeting minutes' actually are. "At first I thought it was a cool phrase someone had come up with to refer to the timings of a meet. Only when I was asked to upload them onto the GMail thread did I deduce that something was amiss."

It was after having put up '9.00 pm to 10.30 pm', '8 pm to 10 pm', and similar variants as minutes of the meet - and being repeatedly asked to "sober up" - that he first began to suspect he lacked a critical piece of information. "No one would even tell me what it means. To turn the situation in my favour, I began to pretend that I was merely pretending not to know what minutes were." Moments before this issue went to print, we received a cryptic message saying, "I'm getting close."

## Start-up enthusiast starts up Start-up to help Start-ups start up

After hopelessly spending months looking around for the next big thing, Hostel 7 resident Zeeshan Har-jagah-haath was just about to give up all hope of ever starting up when he realized what he'd been missing. What he'd overlooked was the fact that he needed help. And with this freshly spawned epiphany backing him up, he launched himself early Sunday morning into what will be remembered as the day the proverbial death knell was sounded for all start-up consultants.

Zeeshan, after finding himself hungover this fine Sunday morning when the birds were all achirp and sensible lads asleep, could not help but think that he needed help. What troubled him most, however, was the fact that he was totally, utterly, thoroughly unable to get his shit together and start up. Nothing like having a business of your own to boss yourself around, he mused, as he would often muse. It was at this auspicious moment that Fate decided to provide him with help and his own special startup idea all at the same time. For this cool Start-up would do just that - it would help aspiring Start-up enthusiasts start up their Start-ups. Fully enthused and with excitement and alcohol coursing through veins, Mr. Har-jagah-haath decided to immediately put his plan to action.

Later, he realized he had constructed a self-sustaining positive feedback loop of help wherein his Start-up would churn out the necessary word of action and advice for itself and for other Start-ups, thereby bettering itself at churning out said word of action or advice. And the universe, finally having learned why it existed, vanished in a flash of light that only Zeeshan could see.

## In Other News

- » **Institute Lit Secy dissatisfied after finding out Cult Council not really a cult**
- » **New fresher batch most enthusiastic ever, says Mood Indigo study**
- » **Disciplinary Action Committee voted best Action Committee (University Category)**
- » 我们写这句话的中文翻译，因为我们他妈的即可。
- » **Convocation Chief Guest asks IITians to follow dreams, encourages them to pay canteen bills before leaving**
- » **Student who didn't get a seat in CS minor "didn't want it anyway"**

## Finish your dinner

"Finish your dinner. No, you're not going anywhere until you finish your dinner. You've eaten nothing all day. No, you've not eaten. Moving it around on your plate is not eating. If you wanted it to taste good, it would taste good. Well, of course it's cold now. You let it get cold. No, you can't skip to dessert until you finish your vegetables. Yes all of them. Look at everybody else at the table. They are all finishing their vegetables, aren't they?"

Okay, five more bites. Then you can leave the table.

No, that's a nibble. Have a full bite. That's three bites. I said five bites. Five full bites. No, you can't eat it while you watch TV. Only those who finish their dinner can watch TV. I don't care if you're missing the show. You finish your dinner before you can watch TV."

Now you know what doing a DDP is like.

— An Anonymous Fifth-Year student