

A man in a pinstriped suit jacket is seen from the back, looking out over a city skyline at night. The background is filled with blurred lights and buildings, creating a bokeh effect. The overall mood is professional and forward-looking.

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# Inciting exciting insights

**Julie Davies** looks back on five years of the International Deans' Programme, a joint initiative between the Association of Business Schools and EFMD



**D**o business school deans take their own medicine? How do they make a difference? What keeps them sane? These are just some of the questions the International Deans' Programme (IDP) seeks to address.

When I joined the Association of Business Schools (ABS) in 2006 I was surprised that most deans of British business schools were British nationals. This seemed odd given the diverse international faculty and student base of the units they led. One might expect a cadre of internationally mobile talent to be running world-leading institutions.

Britain's talent pool for deans has diversified considerably since then, with 30% women and, for the first time, the business schools in Oxford and Cambridge universities have respectively appointed deans from Harvard and INSEAD.

ABS runs a suite of capacity-building programmes so it seemed natural to work with our partners EFMD on a development programme for new business school deans worldwide. We agreed to deliver the IDP over seven days in three modules, one outside Europe. The programme is designed to provide new deans with opportunities to network, gain exposure to different models, and, importantly, to re-energise and take time out to interact in debates on live challenges and plan their priorities with practising deans.

We began the IDP on a dark rainy December morning on the shores of Lake Geneva with breakfast at IMD. It felt like a séance. Lesson number one – deans need to wine and dine for their schools so that is a good place to start an IDP conversation.

Indeed, a key message in the book *Mastering Executive Education* written by Paul Strebler and Tracey Keys, IMD faculty members, is the importance of tapping into executives' emotions and real-world experiences.

The first activity on the IDP was for trios of deans to present the differences and similarities between their business schools. Some were very guarded and reluctant to collaborate. Lesson number two – build up trust first.

Thankfully, Peter Lorange, the inimitable then President of IMD, and his colleagues embraced the IDP. They volunteered candid insights into research-based thought leadership, faculty recruitment and remuneration, and IMD's particular model of non-tenured faculty, minimal meetings and faculty team bonuses. Lesson number three – visiting a business school whose dean has been in post a long time and who is about to step down generates very open and lively discussions.

In planning for the second session of the first IDP, we asked ourselves where in the world might you find some of the highest concentrations of business schools. Boston seemed a logical option. We crammed in visits to Babson, Bentley, Boston University, Harvard Business School, the offices of *Harvard Business Review*, MIT Sloan and Northeastern.

We were amazed at how distinctive they were and how some staff seemed to move with ease between them. By chance, we bumped into David Garvin at Harvard as he was returning from a lunchtime swim and quizzed him over the case studies on the MBA in leading institutions, which HBS had commissioned for its 2008 centenary.



We were quite relieved after crossing the Charles River to MIT Sloan that while the new dean there said he appreciated the value of case studies, he believed there was more to the MBA than hundreds of cases and that live student consultancy projects was just one alternative.

After this Massachusetts marathon, IDP participants visited Lisbon, where we reflected on the development of the Lisbon MBA and business and management education on the periphery of Europe.



For the second year we were immediately able to leverage our IDP alumni contacts. The general manager of training at Petrobras, Brazil's national oil company, participated in the first IDP and invited us to Rio de Janeiro. Here we had lively debates with colleagues from different Brazilian business and management education providers and a taste of samba dancing and *caipirinhas* (rum, sugar and lime for the uninitiated).

This was followed in Madrid by inspiring sessions with Santiago Iñiguez de Onzoño, Dean of IE Business School and President of IE University, about their unique example of a private business school purchasing a university in Segovia. We were fascinated by IE's teenage advisory board, their student induction sessions that include team sports and the launch of the IE Brown Executive MBA Program, which broke the six figure dollar tuition fee barrier.

The IDP has been to Spain twice – a testament to what are now world-class private business schools in Barcelona, where Jordi Canals, Dean of IESE, has written books about business schools as has Alfons Sauquet, Dean of ESADE and an IDP alumnus.



Since then IDP cohorts have visited Central Europe and the Baltics, with thought-provoking discussions on executive education thanks to Danica Purg, President of IEDC in Bled, Slovenia, and Nerijus Pačėsa, President of ISM University of Management and Economics in Lithuania.

The IDP has taken us to Cambridge Judge Business School and Cranfield School of Management in Britain. We had a magical dinner in King's College Cambridge with Howard Thomas as an after-dinner speaker before he embarked on his deanship on a third continent.

Subsequently, we travelled to Beijing, where Rolf Cremer of CEIBS was opening its new campus and we compared the Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business model with the Tsinghua University School of Economics and Management experience.

In 2011 we took IDP to North America for the second time with a visit to Philadelphia to explore Wharton, Haub School of Business and Drexel University's LeBow College of Business.



Clockwise from top left:

Danica Purg  
Peter Lorange  
McGill  
Santiago Iñiguez  
Laurent Batsch  
Harvard Business School  
Rolf Cremer



Seeing George Yip at Rotterdam School of Management a few weeks before he stepped down was useful as he could reflect frankly on his experiences as dean,

or “plate spinning” as he called it. In the Netherlands we also met Ramon O’Callaghan at TiasNimbas, another leading European business school, with an interesting set up as a private company with shares owned by two universities.

In 2012, the IDP moved to IÉSEG School of Management’s site at the Grande Arche in la Défense in Paris. At Paris-Dauphine University, President Laurent Batsch (an IDP alumnus) explained the formation of PSL Research University. We were similarly inspired by Peter Todd, Dean of Desautels Faculty of Management, and Michel Patry, Director of HEC Montréal in Canada, for their negotiations with the provincial government and students and focus on nurturing a high-performance research culture. Finally in 2012, BI Norwegian Business School hosted two insightful days where we focused on deans’ strategic priorities, how they manage their time and energies and on topics relating to technology in teaching, entrepreneurship and innovation.

In 2013, for the first time, the IDP is scheduled immediately prior to the EFMD Deans and Directors-General meeting in Istanbul so that new deans can get to know each other in a small group hosted by one of our alumni, Baris Tan, at Koç University before joining the main event. IDP6 will also include visits to three business schools in Singapore and two in Germany.

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Virginie Heredia-Rosa at EFMD and I collaborate with a tremendous range of talented individuals on the IDP, both delegates and hosts. We are amazed at the hospitality and openness provided by the business schools we visit and the high-quality discussions generated. We are able to draw on topical debates in literature on business schools and historical developments and have developed a range of activities for IDP cohorts to work on separately as a group. Over time we have also compiled an Amazon listmania for business school deans and YouTube interviews with deans about their roles (<http://www.youtube.com/user/TheABSUK/feed>).

We are getting better at briefing our hosts to minimise PowerPoint slides and classroom tours. IDP participants really want to discuss what it is to be a dean, to share and develop views on their current problems, such as how to attract and retain research-active faculty and to craft a clear brand relevant to key stakeholders in society beyond being milked as a “cash cow” or a narrow fixation with totemic A ranked journal publications.

As Howard Thomas and Eric Cornuel suggest in their 2012 article (“Business schools in transition? Issues of impact, legitimacy, capabilities and re-invention”, *Journal of Management Development*, 31(4): 329-335), deans need to enhance their academic legitimacy and review ideas of business and management education in the context of changing business models that are driven by globalisation, sustainability, social media, cost efficiencies and effective delivery.

The IDP is evolving to match this complexity in uncertain times. We are working confidently with new generations of deans, as Flávio Carvalho de Vasconcelos, EBAPE, Brazil, says, “to exchange ideas and help gain perspectives on the complexities business schools face all over the world.” **gf**



IE’s launch of the IE Brown Executive MBA Program broke the six figure dollar tuition fee barrier (priced at \$102,000 in 2013)

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