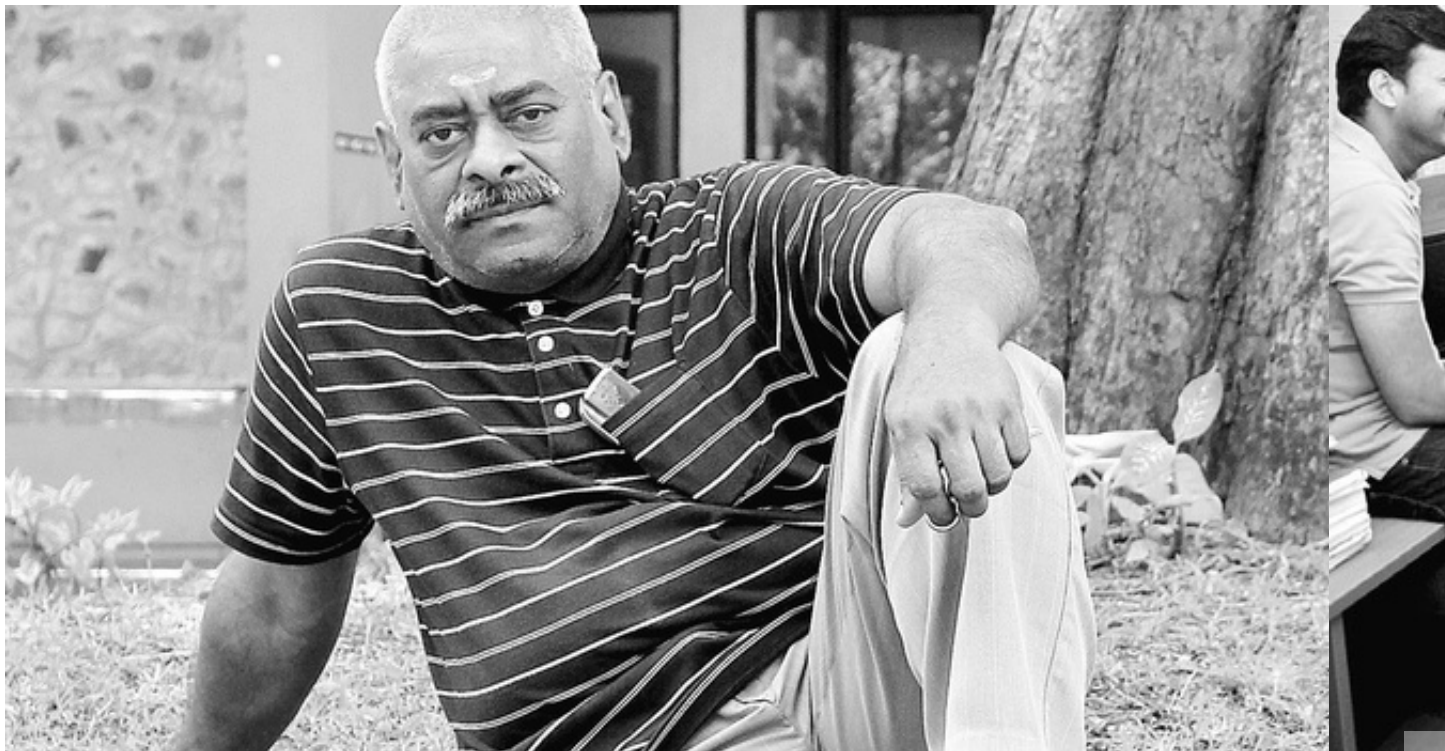


Making a Difference, their Way

By Shilpa Kappur Vasudevan | Chennai | Published: 12th January 2015 06:00 AM

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Prof LS Ga

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Prof LS Ganesh currently serves as Dean-Students of Indian Institute of Technology-Madras, Chennai, and doubles up as a management professor as well. He graduated in BE Mechanical Engineering from BITS-Pilani, Rajasthan, in 1977 and received his MTech in Maintenance Engineering and Management from IIT-Madras in 1979 winning a Merit Prize. He holds a PhD in Industrial Engineering and Management from IIT-Madras in 1986. His research focused on application of time series forecasting models and system dynamics concepts to educational planning in Tamil Nadu schools. He started off his academic career working as an Assistant Professor at IIM-Bangalore in 1986-87.

From 1987, he worked in the Industrial Engineering and Management Faculty at IIT Madras, as Assistant Professor till 1993, then as Associate Professor till December 1996, and then as Professor until April 2004, when the Department of Management Studies (DoMS) was established at the institute. Later, he served as the Head of the DoMS from July 2004 till July 2008. Prof Ganesh speaks to edex on DoMS holding on to its own despite competition from private B-Schools, job prospects for future graduates and more.

Generally the preferences of aspiring management graduates are IIMs, followed by private B-schools like Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, SP Jain and such. Where does DoMS stand in the picture?

Nowadays, students do not go just by the brand name but also specifically look at what is the kind of programme being offered by institutions. Our USP, if you ask me, is moulding the thought process of students in a holistic way. We strive hard to inculcate in them professional characteristics that will hold them good in their careers and life. An average MBA student from IIT-Madras spends about six years in their first

or first two jobs put together, which talks about loyalty they have towards their firms. A lot of our alumni have also received awards from their concerns within a few years of starting out and this is a clear indication that we are on the right path. We are not doing anything different, but DoMS is one of the very few B-Schools to be loved by its graduates. I don't know how many people out there can claim this.

A recent Graduate Management Admission Council's survey says that globally, job prospects are good for MBA graduates. What's the scene at DoMS?

While it is indeed true that we have never been able to match up to the records set by IIMs, this year, I am hopeful that we will have great offers being given to our students. Though I am not in a position to share statistics, I can definitely vouch that matters are upward looking.

It is a known secret that MBA courses are rigorous. How do you ensure that it is not just about academics for your students?

An IIT MBA is different from the ones offered by stand alone institutes in the sense that while the latter might have about 1,000-1,500 students, here students get to mingle with about 9,000 students from various departments. Many courses are of interdisciplinary in nature and this leads to more exposure for students. We have the best of facilities and networking opportunities for them in the form of presentations, guest lectures, panel discussions, etc. Opportunities to imbibe knowledge, on and off the classroom, is rich in a set up like IIT.

Students have eternal dilemmas over one vs two-year MBAs? Is work experience the only differentiating factor?

One-year MBAs are essentially designed for those with substantial work experience like say five years. When a fresher is thrust in such an environment, he/she might be lost, while on the contrary a two-year MBA will be a comparatively leisure experience. Again, one-year MBAs, due to their popularity, have large classes like 200-300. In our two-year course, the class size is restricted to 75, which ensures that there is better teacher-student interactions, richer experience, take-aways, etc. At DoMS, both freshers and those with work experience are welcome.

Any MBA class comprises fewer number of women. What's it like at DoMS?

Even at DoMS, the class composition is mostly male engineering graduates while we have about 15-20 per cent of women, people from Arts and Science, and Humanities backgrounds and such. But again, this number is low only. IIM-Kozhikode reserves some of its seats for women. But at IITs, we cant do that unless there is a policy shift. With respect to admissions, we go by merit and government reservation. Unless more and more women crack CAT and get in, we can't give any special allowances.

How often do you renew the curriculum to ensure it is updated?

We do it every four-five years taking into consideration what is happening in the outside world. We not only think of the current requirement, but look at ways as to how to reinvent the curriculum in such a way that when students step out of DoMS, they have an agenda for the company they are going to be working for, for the economy and for the society as a whole. The knowledge that they receive should be of help to the industry, bring in changes to practices, policies and work culture. Higher education systems have to be dynamic in that respect. It is not just enough if institutes construct curriculum keeping in mind the requirements of the industry but also look at how industry can give back to the institute so that a balance is maintained. shilpa.vasudevan@newindianexpress.com