

Veteran Kellogg professor seeks to add zing to MBA curriculum

# Mumbai to get its own ISB

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RECENTLY, WHEN Professor Bala Balachandran, professor of Accounting at Kellogg School of Management and founder and honorary dean of Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai, arrived at the Chennai airport from Chicago in the early hours, he was surprised to be welcomed by a group of 80 students from Great Lakes. "Why should these students come to receive me at such an odd hour?" asks Balachandran, who is called 'Uncle Bala' by everyone at Great Lakes.

Balachandran, who has been teaching in Kellogg for 35 years, besides being part of the team that set up Management Development Institute (MDI), Gurgaon, and Indian School of Business (ISB) Hyderabad, wants some change in the way future managers are taught and trained. According to him, the current global economic crisis

is the outcome of a faulty management education that focuses and reinforces "the whole idea of greed is good."

According to him, this is what happened with Harvard Business School and many US business schools, which created what is called the 'Rambo Culture', rather than the Superman culture. Superman rises to the occasion, and is not the one to brag.

When captains of the Indian industry along with Rajat Gupta, former managing director, McKinsey and Balachandran were looking to set up a world-class business school in India in 1995, the obvious location they had in mind was Mumbai. "Thanks to one politician, I don't want to name him, we could not set up ISB in Mumbai," said Balachandran. The ISB was eventually set up in Hyderabad, courtesy N Chandrababu Naidu, ex-CM of Andhra Pradesh, who provided a single win-

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Bala Balachandran  
Professor, Kellogg

dow clearance for setting up the business school.

More than a decade later, Balachandran is realising a dream — that of setting up an international business school that would train managers to influence business thinking across the world. He is part of a team, which includes

Jagdish Sheth and A Mahendran, CEO, Godrej Saralee, Godrej Hicare, and Godrej Hershey — that will be setting up Mumbai Business School (MBS) in Malad, Mumbai. The B-school will be inaugurated in early 2009.

Besides investing in MBS, Balachandran will use his global academic connections to bring on board the MBS the best teaching faculty from around the world. "The current crisis will re-engineer the way management education is carried out. The MBA curriculum will change to teach why compassion is important for any manager," says Balachandran, who is an advisor to US President-elect Barack Obama.

Balachandran admits to the fact that many who graduated from Kellogg are responsible for the global financial mess, one of them being the former chief financial officer of Enron, Andrew Stuart Fastow, presently serving a

six-year prison sentence for financial irregularities.

"I can teach ethics to an MBA student, but he could become a crook. Teaching ethics and being ethical are different. Ethical values have to come from childhood. Unfortunately, today everything is about getting ahead," he says.

According to him, what schools like Great Lakes and MBS aim to provide are values from the beginning to build lifelong relationships. "Relationships are not transactions. You give me money and I give you a degree, you get a job and I am out," he says. "Why not have a lifelong relationship and make a change in the attitude of the student."

He is quick to warn. "Don't expect a change overnight. But a difference can be made. And it is already happening in India and soon B-schools in the US will follow the Indian model.