



PRAKASH JADHAV



## 'Well-rounded education in management'

The department of management studies, University of Pune, is better known on and off campus as PUMBA – that's how even the telephone is answered. C.M. Chitale, dean of the faculty of management and a veteran of the army, corporate life and academia, tells Sekhar Seshan how he has seen – and helped – the department grow over the years

### The first thing everyone surely asks you: what is your placement record?

We are an academic institution, not a placement agency! Our task here is to give our students a well-rounded education in management sciences. Placement is only a by-product. That said, the department's record has been quite good: 90 to 95 per cent of our graduates have got good jobs. Of course, there was a drastic fall last year because of the global economic slowdown – only about half our students were placed.

### Why is PUMBA so low-profile?

We are not, really. Those who matter – our students and the corporates that give them jobs – know us well. We have more than 40 eminent visiting faculty members from industry, banks and venture capital firms: senior people, with experience in different disciplines. We also have two research guides for Ph D students and two readers, as well as external guides like Ganesh Natarajan of Zensar Technologies, and Santosh Bhawe of Bharat Forge. The armed forces know us well, too: we used to conduct an exclusive army batch for 40 officers before the services introduced the 'study leave' concept, and before the government took over the MBA admission process. Right now, we have a serving lieutenant general working on his Ph D, on integrated logistics for the three forces.

We also get 24 or 25 foreign students every year, from China, Korea, Iran and other countries. There is a research student from Germany. People from Japanese industry also come here for training. And foreign universities are looking at us as a good marketing hub for their own courses.

### Is it more difficult being a part of a larger whole, rather than a dedicated B-school? How do you cope with image problems?

Of course, there are problems. Admission is a long process; so, we can start our first semester only on 15 August – two months later than the private institutes. But the university academic council has passed a resolution under which we'll conduct our own entrance tests. We must start by 1 July if not 15 June, to attract the serious students.

There is also the requirement of 50 per cent reservation; and we get a large number of students from rural areas too. But working in the university is a unique experience – there is no employer-employee relationship or bossism. And we've grabbed autonomy! We decide our own programmes. Anyway, we don't really want to compete with the 133 institutes in Pune that offer MBA courses: we are not a commercial hub, profit is not our objective. We don't have the so-called management quota seats, and we don't charge anything over and above the Rs40,000 fees (for which we have just been sanctioned an increase to Rs65,000). But we are still generating a sizable surplus for the university coffers. Our students can use the university library, but we've also built up our own library with 12,000-plus books and some 80 magazines.

### What changes have you seen here over the past decade?

PUMBA's real growth began in 1991-92, when the department got its first full-time head. Over the years, we have added sectoral specialisations and launched an MBA biotechnology programme, which is the only one in the country. When the university opened its first foreign campus, in Ras-al-Khaima, ours was the first department to start – we launched the MBA executive programme there in May 2009. We have 14 full-time faculty at RAK on a permanent contract basis.

We also participate in a global faculty and student exchange programme through Erasmus Mundus.

### And the future?

We're trying to create a more corporate environment, with the 180-seat air-conditioned auditorium. All the professors' rooms are AC, the other faculty will be next. Everyone must think like a manager before becoming one!

The great thing is that teaching as a career has become quite attractive, thanks to the increased salary after the implementation of the Sixth Pay Commission's recommendations. The trend of globalisation is developing. We are considering including a term abroad as part of the course: three students have gone abroad, let's see how they perform. ♦