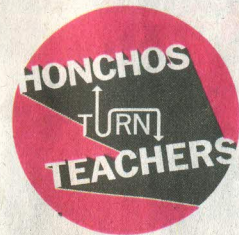


# Bringing innovation to the classroom



A laboratory is not a familiar concept in management institutes. But Kaustubh Dhargalkar, an engineer, has set up one at Welingkar

**Pallavi Smart**

When Kaustubh Dhargalkar decided that he wanted to do something really big, he started by selling off his 15-year-old company which manufactured automation and production enhancement machines.

"Influencing people from the families of some 60-70 factory workers did not give me any satisfaction. I wanted to do something bigger," says 45-year-old

Dhargalkar, who holds a BTech in electrical engineering. "Although I hadn't decided what I was going to do after selling my company, I was clear about taking a year's break to study yoga scientifically."

After selling his company seven years ago, Dhargalkar, spent a year visiting places across India where yoga is

taught. As a corporate professional, Dhargalkar used to visit management institutes to give guest lectures and was (and remains) a member of the admissions panels of several institutes.

Around six years ago, he was interviewing students at Welingkar Institute of Management for their newly launched course, Business Design and

## PART 3 OF A 5-PART SERIES

Innovations. The course immediately grabbed his attention. "I had done it and I

knew I could guide others. I had an answer to my aspiration of doing something on a much bigger level, and I took the opportunity," says Dhargalkar.

Dhargalkar started teaching twice a week, but found that it wasn't enough. That was when he introduced a new concept at Welingkar Institute - the innovation lab. Generally, a labo-



Hemant Padalkar/DNA

### Prof Kaustubh Dhargalkar

**Before:** Owned a company that manufactured automation and production enhancement machines

**Now:** Teaches Business Design at Welingkar Institute of Management

ratory is not a familiar concept in management institutes. But coming from an engineering background, Dhargalkar understood the relationship be-

tween innovation and labs. The lab is now a think tank from where several start-ups have been nurtured.

"These are two important

things for any business to flourish. Understanding what consumers are uncomfortable with and what their aspirations are is integral," he says. The innovation lab holds several competitions to encourage entrepreneurship.

Six years into teaching, now Dhargalkar is excited about creating curriculum that, in his own words, will "ignite curiosities and innovative mind-sets."

He is also a guiding member at the National Entrepreneurship Network, where different start-ups from across nation are guided. He is also associated with IIM Ahmedabad's Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship.

Dhargalkar says, "Education gives me a broader platform to reach out to cutting edge talent which is refreshed every year. This does not happen in a regular job."

Elaborating on the industry-academia gap, Dhargalkar says, "Industry needs to associate itself with academics. This association was lacking in India, but the picture has just begun to change. However, there is a lot more that can be explored. Most importantly, institutes need to probe alumni with a strong connect."

Dhargalkar also points out that entrance exams for management courses need to undergo certain amendments. Agreeing that students from an engineering background have an edge when it comes to clearing these exams, he says, "Some ideas should be implemented to encourage candidates from a humanities background to enter the management field as well, for they will bring in creativity into the field."