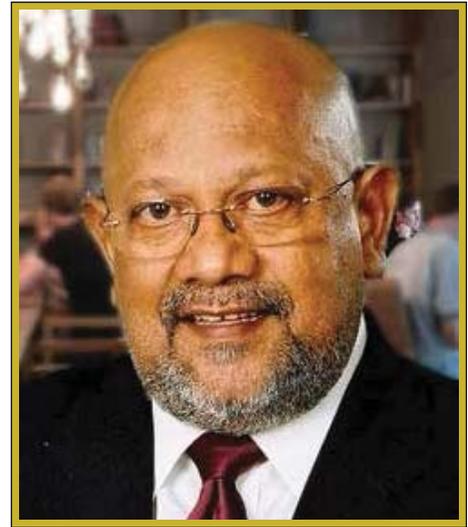


Dr. Travis Perera

Dr. Travis Perera is Senior Consultant and a Member of the Boards of Management and Study at the Postgraduate Institute of Management, and specializes in Entrepreneurship, Organizational Behavior, and Operations Management. A Designs Engineer by profession, he has worked as Engineer, Project Manager, Business Development Manager and General Manager in industry. He has been consulted in many management development programmes locally and internationally, particularly in Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, The Middle East and the Maldives. His interests include Anthropology, Music and Sport.



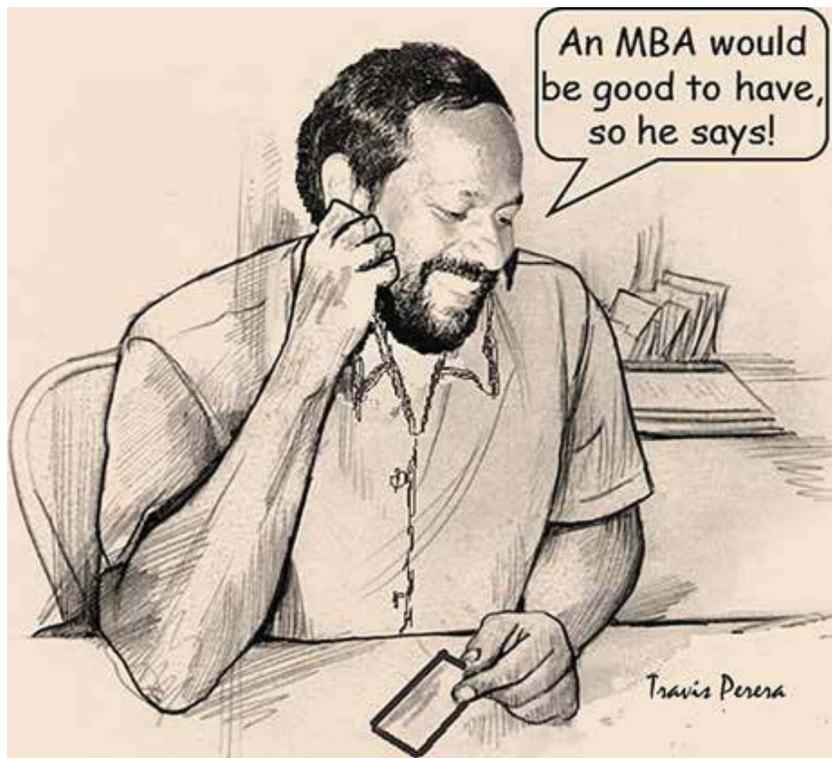
Connecting the Dots... to PIM

Something that I say to every successive MBA batch that I come in contact with is that life is a series of transformations, be aware of the present, and to look at the PIM as such an agent of transformation which you will only realize when you get there in life. Steve Jobs of Apple delivering his commencement speech to the graduates of the Stanford University in 2005 said: “That only after you’re there, can you then connect the dots. “You can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect to your future. You have to trust in something — your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever...” He

stated how he would relate the radically transformative formats of the Apple computer to his dropping out of Reed College in Oregon and dropping into a calligraphy class where he learned about what makes great typography. Of calligraphy, he said, “It was beautiful, historical, and artistically subtle in a way that science can’t capture, and I found it fascinating.”

To connect dots to my own past, in 1983 I was a mechanical design engineer working at a private sector engineering firm. One day, my boss, the General Manager introduced me to a visiting engineer from Europe, who gave me his visiting card on leaving.

Looking at the visiting card, having noted the qualifications ‘MBA’ after his engineering credentials, I asked my General Manager what this MBA was. He said that it was a management qualification and added: “good if you have it.” This statement was soon forgotten but was dormant in my mind. Later in 1987 I was busy renovating my house which I inherited from my parents. Being an engineer, I too did some work such as making changes to windows and doors. One Saturday morning I set out making a new window. After clamping some planks to a vise, and placing a newspaper on the ground to collect the sawdust, I commenced sawing the wood. The sound of the



sawdust on the newspaper made me focus on the newspaper. In large bold letters on it were the words: PIM MBA. Shifting the dust, I read that it was the calling for applications that was to close the very next Monday. Something triggered my mind, and without saying anything to my wife or kids, I took off to Sri Saranankara Road where the PIM was located then, took an applications, filled it and handed it in on the same day. That was the beginning of my long involvement with the PIM. I eventually passed the MBA with merit, moved my career from engineer to business development manager, and onwards to general manager in industry, returned to the PIM again as a consultant, and during that time earned a PhD and continued at the PIM. I could connect the dots to the subjects that I teach to the experiences in my past careers which I relive in: Operations Management to designs engineering, Leadership and Business Development, and Entrepreneurship to business development and general management.

One in five MBA graduates becomes an entrepreneur and a large percentage of CEOs in Sri Lanka are alumni of the PIM, so are many senior public sector officials connecting the dots to the PIM's unique transforming capabilities to these significant outcomes are the facts that:

- All faculty have had senior management experience in industry before obtaining their postgraduate qualifications, and this makes them eminently suitable for in-



teracting with a student base that is fast moving up career paths. The faculty is also continuously involved in consultancies with industry.

- The curriculum is delivered essentially in four forms: Telling, Showing, Asking, and Doing. A larger portion of assessments is based on individual and group assignments; and for his/her final project a student could opt to do: a Thesis, a Research, a Management Skills Project, an Entrepreneurial Skills Project; or a Field Study.
- The facility is strategically located in the heart of Colombo, making logistics for arrival, parking, and departure very efficient.
- All directors of the PIM, taking a lead from the founding director have exhibited transformational orientations; looking towards the changing needs of the market, and strategically innovating new competencies in the curriculum.

Looking to the future, what will the future PIM connect its dots to? Harvard and Yale spent that entire history continuing to build on what they had. INSEAD's ability to work with people from around the world is based on its strong network. People at the IIM Ahmedabad, and people associated with the institute work tirelessly to ensure that the envisioned level of excellence is maintained. The PIM should do likewise: leaning on and learning from the past, realizing all present strengths, working with its strong faculty, and alumni network to build global information networks, and not missing present opportunities.