

Pathways to Effective Leadership in Education: Insights from a Case Study on Responsible Practices

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Abstract

The case study revolves around Indira School of Business Studies, a B-school that is a signatory of Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME). And in light of the principles that are associated with PRME, the institute wanted to launch new initiatives to become a more advanced signatory. In light of this objective the institute formed a student committee (PRME Ambassadors) to drive the implementation of the ideas.

Introduction

The Steering Committee for Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) at Indira School of Business Studies (ISBS) was sitting in front of the students who were PRME ambassadors. The Deputy Director had just shared the PRME initiatives that the institute wanted to execute and asked the committee to take some time to chalk out the implementation plan for the same. The committee asked them to present an implementation plan for each Principle within a week and also identify potential challenges they may face. The meeting was adjourned after the task was assigned.

The PRME Ambassadors had called a meeting today to make a plan for implementation. They had taken 5 days to individually come up with plans for implementation. They had decided to finalize the plans soon because they had a meeting with the Steering Committee in 2 days to share the plans.

When the meeting began one of the members gave the context of the meeting. He explained that ISBS was a signatory of PRME and was looking to take this association to the next level. The top management at Indira Group of Institutes (IGI) formed a steering committee which included the top management of the institute. Their purpose was to identify ideas and implement them in line with the principles of Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) (Principles are explained in annexure 2). The institute had been a signatory at PRME for almost a decade and wanted to take things a step forward by taking their commitment to PRME further. In line with this the institute decided to take a more structured approach to ideation and implementation of PRME related initiatives. In view of this, Board of Directors (BoD) at Indira School of Business Studies (ISBS) called for a session with the faculty of the institute. In this session, the Group Director first gave an orientation to the faculty about PRME and the principles of PRME. Then the Director and Deputy Director briefed the faculty on the initiatives undertaken in this regard. The faculty members were encouraged to gain a more profound understanding of the philosophy of ISBS as well as the principles of PRME. After these points were put across the faculty was given time to ideate and then the steering committee evaluated the ideas and picked some ideas for implementation in the ongoing academic year to increase their commitment to PRME.

The next step was to discuss the Principles of PRME (Annexure 2) to get more clarity on the outcomes they were expected to achieve based on the principles and the philosophy of the institute. Then they recapped the initiatives the institute had selected for implementation (Annexure 4) and their criteria they had used to better understand the expectations. They also looked at what the institute had done in the past (Annexure 3). And with this they began the arduous task of chalking out an implementation plan and identifying potential challenges.

What you need to know

1. ISBS:

Indira School of Business Studies (ISBS), Pune, was set up under the aegis of Shree Chanakya Education Society (SCES). Shree Chanakya Education Society began as a trust in 1994 with the explicit vision to provide sustainable impetus to the corporate and entrepreneurial abilities in the youth.¹ Unrelenting initiatives by the Management team at Indira led to the creation of multidiscipline such as Management, Information Technology, Pharmacy, Commerce, Science, Engineering and Architecture. SCES has grown steadily and today boasts of several Institutes, having more than 9000 students, from all over India, pursuing multi-disciplinary, graduate and post-graduate programs. The Institutes managed by SCES have maintained high academic standards and have successfully provided trained manpower to the diverse industry sectors of the country. The leaders at Indira have been responsible for all the growth that the B-school has seen over the last two and a half decades ("About ISBS | Indira School of Business Studies", 2017).

Indira School of Business Studies (ISBS) was established as a professional school to meet the growing needs of the business sector with the explicit vision to provide sustainable impetus to the corporate and entrepreneurial abilities in the youth. In a short span of time, the programs of the Institute were approved by AICTE and ISBS established its presence in Pune as a premier business education institute ("About ISBS | Indira School of Business Studies", 2017).

The curriculum design, methodology utilized, including study tours abroad coupled with sensitizing towards society and environment and technology for teaching keeps the students abreast of the trends in the field of business and assures greater articulation of the same as well as making them responsible in the direction of serving the community.

ISBS believes that the emerging global environment requires professional graduates to be armed with the sufficient knowledge and confidence of facing tough and competitive scenario and aware about the environmental challenges and limitations. The current global economy has created an environment where managers have to face greater situational challenges and need to overcome the trial of the scarcity of natural resources; predict and handle the vagaries of the market and provide better quality products and services without compromising on environment friendly practices. Such an environment requires professional graduates not only armed with the necessary knowledge but also confident of facing extremely competitive scenario and sensitivity towards society/community to keep abreast of the trends in the field of business ("About ISBS | Indira School of Business Studies", 2017).

The management has a philosophy that management education should be based on experiential learning and learning should be outcome based. The programs at ISBS have been designed in a way to ensure that the students get exposure to classroom teaching as well as hands on field experience/learning so that they get an opportunity to fine tune and reinforce in class learnings. One of the endeavors at ISBS has been to keep abreast with the industry expectations from future managers so that the students can be exposed to experiences that help them develop this skills. With this in mind, the institute constantly scans the environment for relationships that can be beneficial to the students ("About ISBS | Indira School of Business Studies", 2017).

2. ISBS and PRME

The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) is a United Nations-supported initiative that began in 2007 when an international task force of sixty deans, university presidents and official representatives of leading business schools and academic institutions came together ("PRME - About Us - History", 2010). The aim of this initiative is broadly stated as to embed business education in international values such as those portrayed in the Global Compact framework on Human Rights, Labour, Anti-Corruption and the Environment.³ Fundamentally the idea is to ensure that the issue of sustainability get visibility in schools around the world so that the students of B-schools are in a position to lead and deliver the change. The initiative is open to higher education institutions willing to engage on sustainability topics. The voluntary initiative has about 683 signatories across the globe making it the largest organized relationship between management educational institutions and the United Nations ("PRME - About Us - History", 2010).

3. PRME initiatives at ISBS:

ISBS is a signatory of PRME since 2008 ("PRME - Participants - Signatories -", 2010) and every year the institution has initiated ideas that are aligned with the principles of PRME and executed them. As the signatory of PRME the institution is required to implement initiatives in accordance with PRME principles and report the progress to all the stakeholders so as to with PRME principles and report the progress to all the stakeholders so as to ensure effective exchange of ideas in this area with other academic institutions via Share Information on Progress (SIP) report ("ISBS Progress Report", 2016). This report needs to be submitted every 24 months.

ISBS signed up with PRME on 21st October, 2008 and submitted its last Progress report on 28th April 2017.

The approach of the institution has been to address all the principles at the same time. By beginning with very basic ideas and then moving on to the more complex initiatives.

1. Selection of Initiatives for Year 2017-18

Before the steering committee began the process of identifying ideas for selection, they looked at the environment and the constraints that the environment placed on the institution. As they looked at the ideas that the faculties had recommended and they found the need to develop criteria for short-listing and selecting ideas.

One criteria for selecting the idea was the resources required in terms of faculty and student time and economics of the initiative. In this era of competition (from national and international B-schools) there is increased competition for students and faculties. And in order to maintain competitive advantage the B-schools spend a lot of time and resources in this area reducing the resources available for other activities. The B-schools have also increasingly adopted a market orientation and this paradigm shift has caused an increase in accountability towards corporate concerns as compared to social concerns. Thus a lot of resources and energies are focused on increasing organizational efficiency, cost reduction, etc. and these can act as a hindrance to the adoption of social concerns. Also B-school performance is measured in terms of their economic impact. Thus it is important that the ideas should require only moderate resources in terms of student time and other institutional resources while having good social impact.

The institute also functioned in a regulatory environment that mandates that institutions provide certain facilities and that they follow pedagogical requirements. This takes up considerable faculty time for pedagogy implementation and also institutions need to ensure certain hours for each academic activity (for example in a number of colleges a 3 credit course has to involve 45 hours of class interaction). On the other end a number of initiatives which involve working with external stakeholders (like NGOs) require a more long term commitment especially in terms of time. And given the institutions are not in a position to make long term commitments in terms of faculty or student time B-schools face even more limited options to choose from. Also most B-schools follow a semester or trimester system so the students need to have a focus on academics and this means the students as well as the faculty face time pressure for syllabus completion. This also means that there is more time spent on evaluations and other academic activities annually then in a yearly system. So it is important that the initiatives are flexible and allow the institution to implement the initiatives around its academic activities.

The purpose for implementing social and sustainable initiatives is to develop the students into responsible leaders. Thus it is very important that the students are directly involved with these activities and learn from them. Thus student participation is critical to the achievement of the aim of PRME initiatives. But students are often driven by economic pursuits and choose programs or initiatives that help them develop marketable skills or enhance their employability. In such a scenario it becomes critical that the initiative deliver instant results for the students to experience instant feel good, as an alternate reward, so that they volunteer for such initiatives. So the initiatives need to be simple but impactful.

Based on these criteria the steering committee selected a handful of initiatives. The committee categorized the initiatives into On-going, Reactivation and Innovation (details of categorization are in annexure 3). And using the criteria above, they identified a list of initiatives (given in annexure 3) under each category for implementation in the current academic year.

Teaching Notes

Target audience: Post graduate students of a Business Program, Students in an Education Management Program

Learning Objectives:

Though inspired by real events, the case represents a specific situation in an existent company. The learning outcomes are:

1. Getting sensitized to the fact that environmental constraints play a very important role in decision making.
2. Appreciation of the unique characteristics of the education industry.
3. Understanding the challenges faced when executing ideas (related to non-academic) activities in business schools.

Pre reading material/ Conceptual understanding:

- Cultivating Values How business schools can plant the seeds of change By LayalHasrouni – Beirut
- Murray, K., &Montanari, J. (1986). Strategic Management of the Socially Responsible Firm: Integrating Management and Marketing Theory. *The Academy of Management Review*, 11(4), 815-827.
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Time Required: 2 Hours

Discussion Questions

- What is your evaluation of the initiatives that the institute has undertaken in the past? What more could they have done to achieve the objective of developing responsible leaders?
- What are some of the other environmental challenges/constraints the institute faces when executing such ideas? What are some factors that will affect the execution of the ideas mentioned?
- Do you think corporates face the same challenges when executing social initiatives for their employees? What are the similarities and differences in this area that educational institutes and industries face?

Methodology

The facilitator may introduce the case by raising the first question

Q 1: What are your views on the initiatives selected by the institution? Do you think they help to achieve their objectives?

The students may answer by highlighting some initiatives which they think are better than the others. They may also show how the initiatives are linked to the PRME objectives that ISBS wants to achieve. They may also highlight some issues with certain initiatives.

At this stage the facilitator may guide the discussion towards how organizations have objectives and goals and how environment constraints influence goal fulfillment. The facilitator can also use this opportunity to highlight the complexity of decision making in organizations.

Q 2: How do you think the constraints on idea execution?

The students may point out the impact that the environment has on the different implementation strategies. They may point out that the institute could opt for a phased idea implementation (implementing ideas Principle-wise or category-wise).

At this stage the facilitator may explain the concept of Universal Social Responsibility (Parsons, 2014; Vasilescu et al., 2010)

Q 3: If you were a member of the steering committee what are some of the challenges you foresee in the implementation of the ideas?

The students identify some challenges like time constraints, getting a buy-in from students for such activities, etc.

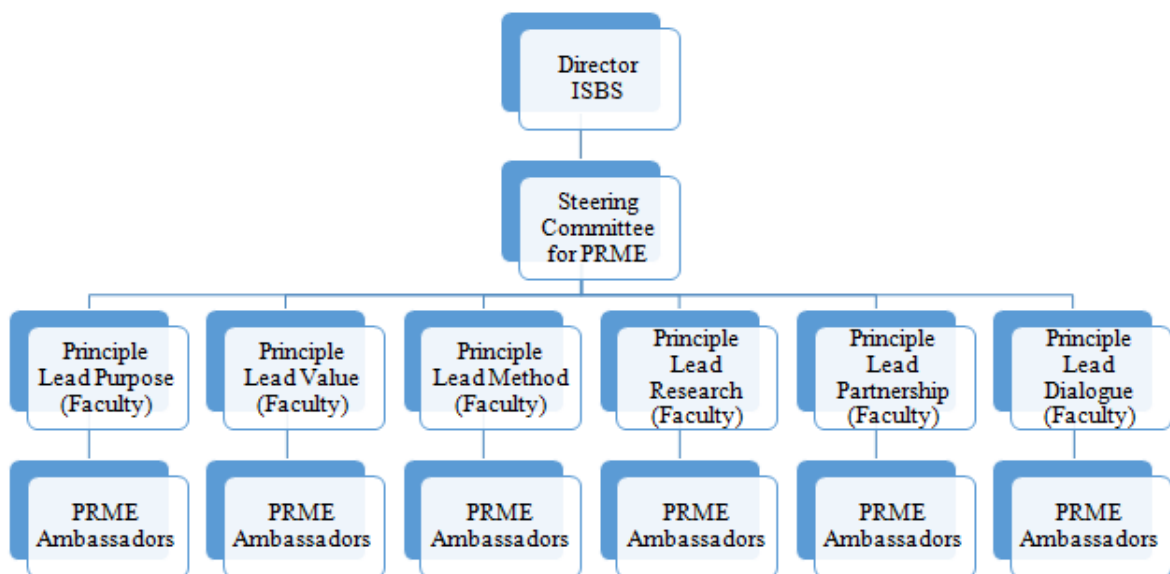
At this stage the facilitator can ask them to identify ways in which such challenges can be avoided and outcomes obtained.

Q 4: What responsible leadership skills will the PRME ambassadors learn? What responsible leadership skills will the other students who execute the ideas learn?

The students will share their experience with similar initiatives (if they have experienced it) and also will share the impact, perspective and learnings from such activities and initiatives. The facilitator can explain the philosophy of responsible leadership

ANNEXURES

Annexure 1 Hierarchy for PRME initiatives at ISBS



Roles:

Position in Hierarchy	Important Roles
Director (ISBS)	Executive role, forming the Steering committee, Steering committee reports progress to Director
Steering committee	Identifying faculty leads and student PRME ambassadors, Selecting initiatives for implementation
Principle Leads	Responsible for ensuring initiatives under their Principles are carried out in letter and spirit Reporting progress annually
PRME ambassadors	Deciding how to execute the initiatives, Executing the initiatives as identified by the Steering committee related to PRME in general and their respective Principles in particular.

Annexure 2 PRME PRINCIPLES

The six Principles for Responsible Management Education are based on these values and aim to dramatically impact the learning and educational practices that take place in business schools ("PRME - About Us - Six Principles", 2010):

- Principle 1 | Purpose: We will develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.
- Principle 2 | Values: We will incorporate into our academic activities, curricula, and organisational practices the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact.
- Principle 3 | Method: We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership.

- Principle 4 | Research: We will engage in conceptual and empirical research that advances our understanding about the role, dynamics, and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value.
- Principle 5 | Partnership: We will interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges.
- Principle 6 | Dialogue: We will facilitate and support dialog and debate among educators, students, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organisations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability

Annexure 2 PRME initiatives implemented as ISBS over the years

Year	Principle 1 Purpose	Principle 2 Value	Principle 3 Method	Principle 4 Research	Principle 5 Partnership	Principle 6 Dialogue
2017	Full grade course in Sustainability <i>Indiapreneur</i> B-plan competition organized by “Arohan” entrepreneurship cell, ensured that B-plans for sustainable businesses are included.	Social Responsibility Council for deliberation on how students can become responsible managers Tie up with NGOs like Savali, Navkshitij, Pragati foundation, etc	Offering Business Sustainability, Ethics and CSR conducted as full credit courses Starting a Certified Course on Innovation Management and Sustainability at ISBS	Conducting a National conference ‘Abhinavan’ on the theme “Sustainability & Green Innovation” in 2016	Membership with associations like MCCIA, EPSI, etc.	a case on Pursuit of Responsible Management Education presented at PRME summit in Goa
2015 ("ISBS Progress Report 2015", 2015)	Full grade course in Sustainability <i>Arohan</i> , the entrepreneurship cell ran a bio-waste to compost project	Full credit courses on Business Sustainability, Corporate Social Responsibility, Ethics and Innovation Social Responsibility Council	Faculty completed PhD in the area of CSR	Collaboration with corporate bodies		
2013 ("ISBS Progress Report 2013", 2013)	Inclusion of Sustainability in different courses <i>Arohan</i> , the entrepreneurship cell ran a bio-waste to compost project	CSR cell ‘Pehel’ drives awareness programs Full credit courses on Business Sustainability, Corporate Social Responsibility, Ethics and Innovation	National Conference on “Sustainable Strategies in Dynamic Business Environment” in March 2013	Collaboration with corporate bodies		
2011	Collaboration	Full credit	Certified	Documentation	Partnership with	

("PRME Report s", 2011)	with Confederation of Indian Industries- Young Indians (CII-Yi) for social responsibility projects <i>Arohan</i> , the entrepreneurship cell ran a bio-waste to compost project Social Responsibility Council	courses on Sustainability Social Responsibility Council	Course on Innovation Management	n of case studies- Elimination of Child labor for YASHDA	corporate bodies	
2009 ("ISBS Progress Report 2009", 2009)	<i>Arohan</i> , the entrepreneurship cell ran a bio-waste to compost project Formation of Social responsibility council "Breath" is an anti-smoking campaign was launched for the students Sankalp is a commitment for helping those who are rendered helpless.	Full credit courses on Business Sustainability, Corporate Social Responsibility , Ethics and Innovation	Lecture Series and Workshops by Globally Acclaimed Domain Expert Certified Course on Innovation Management Collaboration with Global CEO Clubs Pte. Ltd. Singapore, to ensure International Exposure to students, both in terms of Curriculum and Best Global Practices.	CSR research projects like Comparative study of rehabilitation packages, Documentation of case studies- Elimination of Child labor, etc. were taken up	initiating dialogue with several corporations to engage in understanding the challenges these organizations face in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to Meeting these challenges.	Real time interaction with Globally Acclaimed Domain experts Publishing Articles about Responsible Management Education Social Awareness Drives

Annexure 3: PRME initiatives selected for 2017-18

Ongoing: Initiatives that ISBS has been carrying out.

Reactivation: Initiatives that were previously conducted but later discontinued. These need to be restarted at ISBS.

Innovation: Initiatives that have not been implemented at ISBS before.

PRME Principle	Ongoing	Reactivation	Innovation
Purpose	Inclusion in Syllabus	Interdivision Competitions on Green Business Environment friendly activities in campus	Sustainability Week “The Sustainable MBA –The Manager’s Guide to Green Business” Book Review
Value	Tree Plantation Paperless Evaluations	“How I saved natural resources” Essay competition - Awareness Drive within campus about PRME and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals	Students/Faculties to take free sessions at corporate schools Zero Waste Case Study Competition
Method	Sustainability themes for Conference	B-Plan Competition on Green Start ups	Sustainability themes for Conference
Research	Indira Blog (papers on Sustainability) Encouraging faculty to write papers on Sustainability.	New section of papers on Sustainability in Conference Proceedings	- Giving E-certificates for FDP - Proposed National conference by MBA under SavitribaiPhule Pune University can include some part on Innovation and sustainability theme
Partnership	Sending students for Marathons related to social issues	Each One Teach One Programme for Rural Kids	Tie-ups with organisations like MCCIA, FICCI can be used as a platform to encourage dialogues with Corporates, Educators, Students
	Tie up with NGOs	Panel discussion between different stakeholders on the how can companies be more sustainable.	Sharing of information with other educational institute on Employment& Entrepreneurship
Dialogue	A Panel discussion (on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability) in Abhinavan	PPT presentations amongst division regarding social issues like Poverty, child labour, empowering of women “Kalpavruksha”	- MDP Cell can help undertake - Research Projects SIPs in startups

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