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## Innovation in Sustainable Development and Management Education in India

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### Introduction

While India tries to balance economic growth with inclusive development, Indian businesses are facing unprecedented challenges to comply with government regulations and civic society responsibilities.

The need for land acquisition to develop industries is creating increasing tension around the process and procedures, in terms of fair compensation for those displaced and adequate actions for resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) of displaced people.

The Indian government is implementing regulations and guidelines aimed to ensure community development and long-term sustainability for industrial projects that impact the population. Two new regulations have particular relevance: the Land Acquisition, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (LARR) Bill and the mandatory guideline on corporate social responsibility (CSR) for public sector companies. The new regulations aimed to ensure sustainable industrial and social development are creating emerging challenges related to knowledge capacity and delivery that concern stakeholders. This is largely because there are a few educational programs in India specialized to train leaders and managers on various aspects of R&R and CSR.

An Indian public sector company, IHPC Ltd (acronym/name changed for reasons of confidentiality), with a long history of environmental protests and legal battle around its hydro-power projects in the Himalayas, sensed the need for long-term training in knowledge building of its executives. The company hired Xavier Institute of Management Bhubaneswar (XIMB), a leading Indian business school run by the Orissa Jesuit Society, to develop a one-year program on management for resettlement, rehabilitation and corporate social responsibility (MRRCR).

The first Indian course specialized in MRRCR started in November 2010 at XIMB and ended successfully in September 2011.

The objective of this study is to assess the impact of the drivers, processes, and principles behind the design, development, and delivery of this program, and the lessons learned have potential to help other Indian corporations and academia.

The chapter is organized in seven sections. The first section explains the relevance of this initiative in relation to the social and economic context in India, the organizational context of the teaching institution and the public sector organization. The second section presents a review of the literature and existing discourses on sustainability and business education. The third section discusses the methodology used in this study. The fourth section discusses course details. The fifth section discusses program details. The sixth section is focused on key findings of this initiative. The seventh section addresses limitations of the study. The concluding section summarizes findings, discusses limitations, elaborates on learning, and provides possible guidelines for future research.

## **Relevance**

The relevance of this study comes from uniqueness and context. The course was conceptualized in mid-May 2010, at a time when India was implementing the first mandatory CSR guidelines for public sector companies (April, 2010). The guidelines asked public sector organizations to contribute 2 percent of their net annual profit to CSR-related projects. The focus was not only to promote the idea of CSR but also to use a systematic strategy to foster community development. India was the first country in the world to attempt such a mandatory approach to CSR and these guidelines need to be analyzed within the context of the Indian government's goal for inclusive development.

To foster economic growth in India will require intensive use of land to develop projects in the steel, power, ports, roads, mining, and other industries. Land acquisition to expand industrialization in habitable and farm lands has proved to be increasingly problematic for industries, largely because families who live in those lands opposed giving up ancestral land ownership that has provided for them livelihood and identity for generations.

Legislation on land acquisition for industrial development, resettling and rehabilitating of project-displaced people is gaining considerable importance and the Indian government is focusing on modernization of a century-old regulation deploying new guidelines in the proposed LARR Bill 2011, which is set to be passed in the Indian parliament in 2015.

As a consequence of eventual changes in land acquisition, civil society protests related to R&R of displaced people are deterring a considerable amount of important large-scale industrial projects. For instance, Tata Motors was forced to abandon plans to manufacture low-cost cars (branded Nano) in Singur, West Bengal. South Korean steel company Posco's plan to

build India's largest steel plant in Orissa faced road blocks when affected villagers refused to give their land. Mining multinational Vedanta's plan to mine bauxite in the pristine Niyamgiri Hills drew flak from international stakeholders. These projects and protests are symbolic of the challenges to foster industrial development while ensuring social justice to the people losing land and livelihood as a consequence.

CSR has gained significant prominence as a model for "new governance" (Steurer, 2010) often facilitated by government guidelines and policies (DPE, 2010). R&R projects that affect people posed a challenge to corporate executives in terms of knowledge and best practice norms. CSR's role in sustainable development in India is clearly articulated in the Department of Public Enterprise Guideline.<sup>1</sup>

To support managers and executives training in the course on R&R and CSR, "Advanced Program in Management of R&R and CSR" was designed to help middle-level executives address an urgent need for knowledge and capacity building in areas of CSR and R&R.

As discussed above, knowledge of CSR and R&R is aimed to educate and make managers aware about stakeholders' needs as necessary condition to advance growth and sustainable development. To our knowledge, this is the first time a comprehensive one year executive education (EE) program was offered covering and linking two emerging and problematic issues in modern Indian industry. This EE initiative assumes relevance considering India's economic ambitions and the increasing global footprint of its organizations.

XIMB ([www.ximb.ac.in](http://www.ximb.ac.in)) was founded by Orissa Jesuit Society in 1987 at the invitation of the Government of Orissa, a state in Eastern India. The institute was mentored by Xavier Labor Relations Institute, one of the oldest and best business schools in India. XIMB's motto was to connect business and society to ensure social justice and service with love and faith.<sup>2</sup> This humane face of the institute was reflected in its work in remote and poverty stricken areas of Orissa through different outreach programs. In the spirit of fostering sustainable development, XIMB agreed to undertake the challenge to conceptualize, design, and deliver the program on MRRCRSR in 2010.

In 2013 the Government of Orissa, in consideration of XIMB's sterling performance in the last 26 years, allowed the Orissa Jesuit Society to set up Xavier University, the first Jesuit University in India.

## **Review of literature**

Teaching sustainability in business schools is a relatively recent phenomenon. Top business schools in Europe and America have started integrating sustainability issues in the curriculum (Moon and Orlitzky, 2011) in different forms and formats. But generally speaking sustainability appears to be still less integrated in the business school curriculum (Wright and Bennett, 2011) and higher awareness is required to introduce it

using teaching methods like experiential learning or learning by doing (Christensen et al., 2007).

McKenna and Biloslavo (2011) argue that young managers need to understand global sustainability and its relation to economic sustainability inter-linked with flourishing of human nature. Here lies the need to introduce sustainability in business school curriculum for a different kind of education that can stop degradation of social and natural resources. The ideological and theoretical approach to such integration or introduction of sustainability is contested. For some it is the “business case for sustainability” while others question if sustainability makes sense in the context of the capitalist model that traditional business school curriculum espouses (Springett, 2005). One way of theorizing such “education for sustainability” paradigms is to look at them through the lens of strong and weak sustainability (Tania and Lamberton, 2011).

Roome (2005) discusses course design and issues of teaching sustainability to students of an international program with a focus on supply chain management. Pesonen (2003) focuses on the challenge to integrate environmental sustainability in the business school curriculum in Finland including the importance of institutional commitment for these courses, understanding business implication of sustainability topics, and interdisciplinary approach in teaching, integrating sustainability issues across courses.

In terms of education, the main challenge is to help students understand the complexity and interconnections of sustainability issues (Kearins and Springett, 2003). Other issues involve the orientation of sustainability courses and how to translate such orientations into practical lessons and classroom exercises (Collins and Kearins, 2007). Gundlach and Zivnuska (2010) argue that an experiential learning approach can be more useful than traditional classroom lectures.

The review of existing literature shows that there is limited information on issues and challenges of teaching sustainability in business schools in developing economies like India. Every year, around 353,000 students enroll in more than 4,000 institutions offering graduate degree education in business and management in India. CSR and sustainability are yet to find a niche among the top tier Indian business schools.

Considering the growing need to embrace the paradigm of sustainability as a necessary condition to attain sustainable development, managers will benefit significantly in understanding how people, planet, and profit can be balanced in the pursuit of growth with progress and people well-being.

The challenges of teaching CSR/sustainability/sustainable development to *public sector* middle managers are significantly different given their *long exposure to business*. As they move on to take leadership roles in organizations, sustainability education is critical for such managers. It is here that this chapter contributes to the knowledge and understanding in the field and tries to inform institutions and actors involved in the process of

integrating CSR and sustainability issues in business schools in developing countries.

## Methodology

This section discusses the methodology adopted in this chapter and the methodology of the program offered. A qualitative research approach was used to conduct this study following the best strategy “for discovery... exploring a new area” (Miles and Huberman, 1994). We use the case study methodology. Yin has defined it as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between object of study and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2013, pp. 13–14). Eisenhardt (1989, p. 534) says this methodology is appropriate where “the focus is to understand the dynamics present in single settings”. It is found useful where “research and theory are at their early, formative stages” (Benbasat et al., 1987, p. 369). Our research is particularly amenable to this tool as sustainability education projects are new in India.

The current research is aimed to be practice oriented. The study is exploratory in nature and both R&R and CSR are evolving concepts in India. No literature exists on the challenges of designing and offering such a course.

The course was offered by the institute where this author works, so primary data sources were available at the institute and with program participants. The author was closely involved throughout the project as coordinator and faculty, teaching modules on CSR. To evaluate effectiveness of the course/module participants were asked to (i) reply to a structured feedback form designed by the institute at the end of the each module, (ii) write how their learning compared with current approaches in IHPC, and (iii) give suggestions for module/course improvement. They were also asked to draw pictures to depict their state of mind, before and after the course, following the soft system methodology of “rich pictures”.<sup>3</sup> Senior managers of IHPC and course administrators from XIMB were interviewed to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the course.

## Course details

Given India and China’s rates of population growth, as developing countries both present high potential to have increasing impact in the global economy. Therefore business schools in these nations have a critical role and responsibility for the education and training of present and future business leaders and managers on issues related to sustainable development and inclusive society.

Issues related to land acquisition and displacement need immediate attention to fairly compensate displaced people and ensure R&R to land losers.

On the CSR front, the government's guideline requires public sector companies to undertake responsibility for an increasingly structured professional approach to community development using reliable pilot studies to assure successful deployment of baseline surveys, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. This need requires immediate capacity building efforts for managers in R&R and CSR in the public sector in India.

IHPC developed the MRRC CSR program to educate a cadre of managers sensitive to the need to integrate social and environmental issues with business operations and strategy.

After visiting many educational institutes in India, the public entity IHPC approached XIMB with the purpose to request the design of a program to train sustainability oriented leaders for the company. While the regulatory context demanded more concerted action from Indian companies, IHPC went beyond compliance in line with the company's future strategy to expand operations, go international, and possibly diversify operation (to thermal power generation, for example). IHPC was clear that the MRRC CSR program would be unique in terms of quality. The organization shared and discussed issues related to program design and delivery and became closely involved in the process to complete course design and select contents.

**Curriculum:** The courses included in curriculum were designed in consultation with IHPC, maintaining the company objective in the development of middle management leadership well versed in issues related to R&R and CSR. The EE program was planned for one year with class sessions during seven months and five months for projects, field work, and self-study.

The curriculum included the following seven modules: (1) understanding development and displacement; (2) community mobilization and participation for sustainable R&R projects; (3) planning for R&R; (4) implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects; (5) leadership and team building for effective management of R&R projects; and (6) two modules on CSR (Table 8.1).

Based on the suggestion of the IHPC management, two basic non-credit courses on effective communication skills and information technology were added in the first module.

## Program

**Participants:** IHPC selected 16 middle managers to participate in the program. The participants were drawn from different functional areas including human resources, civil engineering, legal, and social works. Their level was middle management and average age was 45 years. Most had over ten years of experience working at IHPC, and 14 had never travelled beyond the state where they lived. All received special paid leave for one year to attend the program. During the sensitization training for the course, which was held at

*Table 8.1* Curriculum outline**Module 1: Understanding development and displacement**

Analysis and understanding of rural households, society, and their economy

Development vs. displacement

Laws, legal issues, and practices of land acquisition and compensation

Effects of displacement of vulnerable groups of people

Impoverishment risk reconstruction model

Assessment of impoverishment risk – socioeconomic survey

Participatory rural appraisal

Goals and objectives of R&R policy and practice

Understanding community resistance

**Module 2: Community mobilization and institution building**

Definition and dimension of community

Community mobilizers

Facilitation in community

Institution building

Publicity and public relations

Formulating media strategy

**Module 3: Planning for R&R**

Decentralized, multi-stage, multi-level planning

Micro-level planning

Planning process with stakeholders

Sector specific planning

Settlement and spatial plan

Planning for social development

Monitoring and evaluation

**Module 4: R&R projects issues and challenges**

History of land acquisition legislation

Consent award and land acquisition bill 2007

Politics, NGOs, protests in land acquisition

R&R in India since 1947

Good practice principles

Project management principles

Human aspects of project management

Livelihood-stakeholders, finance, training

Participatory monitoring and evaluation

**Module 5: Leadership and teambuilding**

Creativity and innovation in managerial roles

Group dynamics and effectiveness

Leadership styles

Transformational leadership

Building high performance teams

Managing change

Emotional intelligence

Negotiation and conflict management

**Module 6: CSR I**

Ethics in business

CSR definition, standards, and concepts

Stakeholder theory, corporate governance  
 Sustainable development and sustainability  
 CSR policies  
 CSR ratings

**Module 7: CSR II**

ISO 26000  
 Defining metrics for social impact  
 Inclusive business models  
 Micro-finance and livelihood  
 CSR implementation, issues, challenges  
 CSR and climate change  
 Creating shared value  
 Global reporting initiative

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*Source:* Author.

the company headquarters, many participants showed apprehension about the year-long program for family concerns.

Online classes were excluded for lack of technical infrastructure at IHPC. To address the family-related concerns IHPC decided to let participants attend four modules of the program at XIMB and three modules at the IHPC headquarters in North India.

**Faculty:** Program instructors were from XIMB in the fields of economics, organizational behavior, marketing, rural management, and operations management. The interdisciplinary nature of the program required a blend of disciplines and instructors' expertise. Since the scope of R&R and CSR was comprehensive and practice based, a large number of guest lectures were arranged inviting people from government, NGOs, and business corporations to present diverse management scopes and develop problem-solving skills of the participants based on practical issues presented by guest lecturers and practitioners.

**Teaching Methodology:** A mix of teaching methods was used along the duration of the program and based on content depth and background of the participants. The focus was experiential learning in line with practices adopted by top global business schools (Christensen et al., 2007). Lectures were used to present theoretical contents. Case studies were included to analyze in-depth issues and highlight the complexity and connections between the firm mission and strategies in relation to social investments. Films were used to illustrate execution problems of government projects in India. Participants visited companies in different industries and sectors to prepare field trip reports as part of the course performance assessment.

**Evaluation and Feedback:** IHPC agreed to follow XIMB's academic policy manual for the duration of the program. Nonetheless, at the end of the program there was considerable discussion on participants' grade issues and



how to convert students' grades to standards compatible with IHPC annual appraisal. Finally it was left to the company to interpret the grades in a manner suitable to them.

XIMB collected participants' feedback at the end of each module using a questionnaire. At the end of the program, a comprehensive questionnaire surveyed general assessment. In addition to courses and program, assessment questionnaires, participants had to draw pictures to express their feelings before and after the program. This methodology helped to confirm thoughts and feelings at the beginning as a group and at the end, when they individually expressed their feeling in a drawing. The use of rich picture methodology helps students express thoughts and experiences.

## Findings

The findings of the study are assessed from four dimensions: course, participants, IHPC and XIMB, and two main themes: academic and administrative. This chapter is focused mainly on academic aspects and organizational issues are discussed where relevant.

**a. Program findings and limitations:** This program was the first of its kind in India therefore the nomenclature was the first issue. While the program was named as "Advanced Certificate Program in MRRCSSR", IHPC and participants wanted to include the word "diploma" but this was not possible given the existing accreditation system in India. XIMB, an autonomous institution, can offer a diploma of its own. And getting a new program accredited by the regulatory agency is a long and cumbersome bureaucratic process in India. This was a major issue from the beginning until the end of the program because it had implications for promotion of these managers as IHPC policy requires executives to have a postgraduate qualification in order to be eligible for promotion.

Finally, the title "One year postgraduate program in MRRCSSR" was agreed upon to satisfy IHPC's human resource policy. In the future, the newly formed Xavier University will be allowed to give a diploma for similar programs as per norms of private universities in India.

**b. Program design:** First, two important factors influenced the program design: a practical focus and the length of time of classroom sessions executives had to attend. To address practical focus the program was divided in seven modules (detailed in Table 8.1). The program length was divided into seven months for attending classes at XIMB for four modules, and five months at IHPC headquarters for three modules to facilitate participants to spend more time with their family. Second, the relative balance between the two main components R&R and CSR was discussed and decided. Third, since the program was new not much academic debate took place to decide structure and contents of the modules and a brief meeting was sufficient to get consensus on the topics.

**c. The participants:** They came from different functional areas, so initial bonding among participants took some time. Inherent organizational hierarchy continued to play an important role among participants that was evident in their discussions and work style. This dynamics was more obvious during group exercises and field work, but barriers significantly decreased towards the end of the program.

A comparison of rich pictures drawn by participants before and after the program demonstrated fundamental improvement in the way they assessed issues of R&R and CSR.

At the end of the program participants understood the developmental challenges in rural and urban places and the need for inclusive development and empowerment through R&R and CSR. Rich picture analysis showed improvement in perception among all participants in empowerment and development in multiple pictures. XIMB was shown as a change driver and improvement agent in many pictures.

**d. Participating organization:** IHPC is a public sector company with a long history of protests over one of its biggest projects, to build a hydroelectric power plant in the Himalayas. This antecedent ignited the need to find a comprehensive program to train 16 middle managers and provide them paid leave for a year, which implied a significant investment in leadership and management development manpower. Given the fact that program participants lived far from the XIMB program provider, IHPC solicited to deliver part of the one year program at XIMB University and another part by the instructors at IHPC headquarters.

The program was originally promoted by one of the general managers, but XIMB did not perceive much support or expedite communications from top management, apart from program approval. XIMB felt that continuous communication and regular meetings would have contributed and facilitated development and learned that such agenda will be helpful to deliver similar education initiatives in future.

The program providers assessed that the selection criteria of participants was not communicated to all participants, which caused some sort of initial resentment. Nonetheless, it is rare to find much commitment to educate sustainability focused leaders among Indian corporates in both the public and private sector.

**e. Teaching organization:** The main challenges for the teaching organization, XIMB, were the following: to define, design, and deliver this new program from scratch. A core team of three faculty members was formed gathering expertise in R&R, CSR, and development studies, to coordinate the program and decide on contents and schedule. Enforcing quality standards based on existing XIMB policy manual was another challenge. Additionally, not much literature in the Indian context was found, so the teaching organization had to rely on internal resources to create contents. This involved using the experience of faculty members in different

consulting projects, their network of stakeholders, and course materials they had developed.

Funding was a significant challenge for the teaching organization. The project was undertaken as part of XIMB's commitment to expedite stronger connections between business and society, so it was executed on a cost basis. Faculty members agreed to be paid half their salaries to teach sessions in the program. The lesson learned here is that unless client organizations pay full price to cover all expenses of program development and delivery costs of executive programs it will be not feasible to replicate in future. An alternative is to offer and sell shorter courses or programs.

After this program was delivered, XIMB has not offered this or similar programs. One of the core team members, expert in R&R, went on leave for a year for medical reasons.

Later on, a change of leadership (new director) and vision (getting a university status) implied that the effort put in the program remained fully leveraged. However, initial discussions have started between XIMB and IHPC to have a refresher course for the participants in 2015.

To summarize, a human centered EE program in India faces numerous challenges including teaching organization, client organization, students, and program-related issues.

Yet, the program achieved its goal of educating middle managers of the public company IHPC on the value of being humanistic and socially responsible and the program participants valued learning about CSR and R&R projects run by other companies, like Tata Steel.

To make programs like this sustainable requires top management support as well as strong industry-academia collaboration to jointly develop contents and case studies of best practices. Innovative teaching methods will be required along with customized courses on information technology and communication skills. Short-term training programs could be useful for executives who cannot take long breaks from work.

## **Limitation**

While the findings of this chapter add to the understanding of mainstreaming sustainability education in business schools, it has limitations. The author's views are based on subjective understanding of the issue and may vary from his colleagues and other stakeholders. However, the author was involved in this project from the beginning and is in a position to assess effectiveness and constraints in the dynamics of running a program.

The case describes the experiences of the stakeholders involved in the MRRCSR. The description is based on perceptions of the educational institute that offered the program as well as the program participants, who were 16 middle managers of a public sector company.

This program assessment could not include the perceptions of people in the communities adjacent to the company's projects and neither that of senior officials, a major shortcoming as a learning experience.

The discussion of issues and challenges related to sustainability education in a business school in India suggests that these institutional issues may be very different from regular MBA programs which have, among other things, a younger student population and profile.

A longitudinal study on the impact of the program could provide more comprehensive assessment of impact and results, for the analysis presented here is considered a baseline for future studies.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter documents the issues of creating sustainability centered programs in India and the challenges associated with delivering human centered management for EE to expand capacity building. The MRRCSSR program was successful in terms of delivering the main objectives. However, such programs need to grow in number and improve in quality increasing collaboration between the productive sector and academia.

Indian business schools need to be proactive to create courses for industries and be efficient financing these projects to make them sustainable. This will require leadership support in all institutions. Indian industry will benefit from customized EE programs in R&R and CSR, as mainstream concepts in the business discourses at national and global level.

More projects will need to address and solve social and environmental hurdles. And this can be accomplished when executives and managers improve their social skills to attain human based sustainability.

Educating managers in human centered management principles and practices are essential to help companies increase productivity and become competitive in local and global markets and in turn contribute to strengthen the well-being of people and society. This implies a national commitment to invest in people and human capital to develop an inclusive cadre of leaders and managers sensitive and aware of people needs and the benefits of sustainable development.

Sustainability and CSR are dynamic fields with new concepts and models getting tested by industries. Increasing regulation requires companies and managers to be cognizant of the issues and challenges while developing their R&R and CSR strategies. These will require dedicated, customized effort on the part of Indian business schools to develop strategies to collaborate effectively with business leaders. As a leading Indian Jesuit business school committed to the ideal of social justice, XIMB is well poised to take up this challenge of connecting business and society through cutting-edge sustainability education in a business school environment.

## Notes

1. [www.dpe.nic.in](http://www.dpe.nic.in)
2. <http://w3.ximb.ac.in/about-us/vision-mission> Accessed on January 14, 2015.
3. Rich picture is a pictorial depiction of one's experience or perception of a given problem. Participants are asked to describe with a drawing their feelings about the program. The first sets of drawings were drawn in October 2010 and the second after the program completion in October 2011.

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