Chapter 7

Anecdotes of Action Learning: Initiations of Sustainability Lessons by an Indian B–School

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this chapter is to narrate the initiations of sustainability lessons for inclusion within an MBA-IT Business Management Curriculum. This process is elucidated in a narrative style. Initiation of AL began in the year 2013 and improvised in 2014. ‘Trial and Error’ experimentation in the year 2013, with ‘out of the box’ lessons, achieved initial success with highly positive student feedback. AL was improvised in 2014 with industry visits, reflecting on corporate social responsibility and collaborations with civil society organizations. For easy comprehension of the thought process of AL iterations, it is recommended to understand Figure 1. Each AL activity is marked with year-wise sub-headings and AL reflections. For the stakeholders interested in modifying in higher education with AL, this institutional choice of sustainability and emphasis on sustainability AL is useful. Unlearning of previous social responsibility action patterns, usage of multiple intelligence, and experiential learning of social issues by IT Business students are the highlights of this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

In India, at master’s level business education programs, students are learning profit orientation on a daily basis. Business lessons aimed for the firm’s profitability usually discount the significance of triple bottom line of people-planet-profit, as a synchronized development for society, environment and economy (Elkington, 2004; Thomas, 2009). Business curricula could explore learning opportunities better (Corey, 1949; Harrison, Leitch, & Chia, 2007; Wu, Shen, & Kuo, 2015). Business students were forming habits to be ‘only-profiteers’ (Brook, Pedler, Abbott, & Burgoyne, 2016; Bowles & Gintis, 2015).
unconsciously molding their learning methods and behavioral patterns. The attitude of ‘engage in something only if there is a personal benefit for me’ rather than ‘I am a student willing to explore the unknown’ was observed. Thus, the issue of critical concern was the apathy developing within students towards the social ailments in their society. Such apathy demands perspectival changes in education, to prevent gradual degradation towards long-term harms of an insensitive society. This chapter narrates the changes attempted in an Indian IT Business School, where sustainability lessons within an MBA-IT Business Management program were incrementally included into the curriculum. Two AL iterations in two years are presented. For ease of comprehension, the developmental thought process from cohort to cohort is presented in Figure 1. Each activity in the chapter is marked with year-wise sub-headings. These experiential learning of stakeholders are shared for the benefit of AL practitioners in higher education.

- **(Year 2013) ‘TRIAL and ERROR’**: Out of the box lessons, within a course curriculum on globalization were experimented. The first AL cycle was evaluated and received high student participation and appreciations. This initial success and reflections motivated to transition to next year to include augmented social interactions.
- **(Year 2014) ‘DEVELOPING NEW ACTIONS’**: The significance of learning sustainability was comprehended better by reflections and faculty discussions. Upgrading AL with industry visits and collaborations with civil society organizations were attempted. Shortcomings and corrections were noted, followed by reflections and evaluations. These follow-through exercises helped to develop an internal capacity building environment for the AL team.