

Design Thinking prepares MBA grads for user-centric innovations

Unique traits such as empathy and the ability to learn from failure is the biggest takeaway of this subject

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In the past Design Thinking (DT) primarily dealt with product design, but its role gradually expanded to include innovative approaches to problem-solving and resolving issues arising out of disruptions like the Covid-19 pandemic. Consequently, B-schools in India have begun training BBA and MBA students in DT to enable them to acquire user-centric insights and develop the ability to include user feedback to frame problems better. IIM Bangalore conducted a Design Thinking online programme last April to encourage right-brain thinking, process view of DT and challenge framing and ideation techniques.

IIM Kozhikode's Design Thinking and Innovation Management course aims to equip learners to build a systems approach to innovation in products and services. The programme was developed in collaboration with the Laboratory for Innovation, Venturing and Entrepreneurship at IIM Kozhikode (IIMK LIVE), a business incubator and entrepreneurship development centre set up with the support of the Department of Science and Technology.

"At a basic-level design thinking probes into unstated needs of the consumer, through a systematic process. Consumer insights are about motivations that may not be explicitly stated by consumers," says Ramesh Kumar S, professor, Marketing, IIM Bangalore. He adds that DT is about transforming consumer insights into products/service specifications that will appeal to the consumers.

In the past 15-20 years, the DT approach to problem-solving found its application in solving a wider set of problems. "Essentially, this app-



roach went from product design to being applied to a variety of unstructured and semi-structured problems," says Ranjan Banerjee, dean and professor, Marketing, BITS School of Management, Mumbai (BITSOM), where DT is a compulsory course. "Essentially, DT helps create a rapid prototype that allows students to get to an iterative, user-centric approach to innovation and arrive at a solution faster," he adds. With the technical growth, the world is becoming more interconnected, so fewer problems fit in silos. MBA students need to understand demand, business and communities, and DT offers the approach and

toolkits. The DT toolkit includes user-centric insight, ability to include user fe-

edback to frame the problem better, creative ideation and diverse teams, rapid prototyping, continually iterating the solution with the user to arrive at the right solution faster, says Banerjee, who is also associated with IIM Calcutta's Leadership programme that also includes DT.

Christopher Abraham, CEO and head, Dubai Campus, professor, Leadership, Design Thinking and Organizational Behaviour, S P Jain School of Global Management, says, "By default, Design Thinking trains students in developing traits such as empathy, and helps them in understanding prototyping, brainstorming, failing and in learning fast."



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