

B-Schools' Courses Focus on Uber, Nirav Modi Cases for Lessons on Ethics

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Kolkata: As a series of scams, frauds and boardroom battles continue to rock India Inc, top business schools in the country are stepping up their focus on ethics and governance in their programmes, to help shape a generation of right-minded business leaders.

The Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), XLRI Jamshedpur and SPJIMR Mumbai are among B-schools redesigning their courses, bringing in inputs from global experts and developing cases in India and abroad, including scams involving Vijay Malya to Nirav Modi, to educate students on issues around ethics, corporate governance and corporate social responsibility.

"We hope that various courses such as corporate governance and ethics influence students to move beyond a knowledge and skill-building objective to a more purposeful existence that can bring a positive change to the society," said Padmini Srinivasan, chairperson of two-year MBA course at IIM Bangalore.

She believes that as a leading academic institution, IIMB has a responsibility to shape young minds. To achieve that the institute has tweaked its course content.

Traditionally, IIMB's course on corporate governance had focused on law and its compliance, compensation structures, and shareholder wealth maximisation. Today, the emphasis is on how companies can behave more ethically and in a more inclusive manner that involves governance, sustainability and society, even as they pursue profit. "Furthermore, the course deals with ethical dilemmas and conflicts that managers will face in their careers and provides them with essential frameworks and processes to take the right decision," Srinivasan said.

Mumbai-based SPJIMR redesigned its business ethics course last year to make it mandatory for every participant to do interviews with top business leaders on ethics as it is practised, ethical dilemmas, the role of leadership, and related issues.

Since December 2017, stu-

dents have interviewed the likes of Thermax chairperson Meher Pudumjee, TVS Capital managing director D Sundaram, Pidilite MD Bharat Puri, and Mahindra & Mahindra president (farm equipment sector) Rajesh Jejurikar, among others. "We begin our course by posing the question: 'Can ethics be taught?'" said Jagdish Rattana, SPJIMR faculty member for business ethics. "Given the way we teach it, the rich examples from industry and interaction with a range of practitioners, it is usually the participants who will look back on the journey to say that they have been impacted by the discussions and the conversations," he said.

XLRI has added more than 30 recent business cases in its ethics course "to reflect the contemporary corporate turbulent markets of today", said Oswald Mascarenhas SJ, JRD Tata chair professor of business ethics at the Jamshedpur-based B-school. They include Uber scandals that drove CEO Travis Kalanick out, the faceoff between founder Narayana Murthy and CEO Vishal Sikka at Infosys, and the Nirav Modi-Punjab National Bank scam.

"We discuss what could have been done to detect, predict and avoid," Mascarenhas said. "Preventive ethics is better than reactive ethics — that's the approach I follow. We focus on how we can prepare our students to respond ethically to current turbulent markets."

GREED IS NOT ALWAYS GOOD

But can ethics be taught at B-schools? There are experts who believe it cannot be done, and instead firms need to hire candidates with strong values. B-schools, however, feel that they have an important role to play in reinforcing the significance of ethical conduct and shaping the ethical behaviour of future managers.