

# Taking India to the World in Higher Education: The Case of an Indian University as PRME Champion

Anindo Bhattacharjee<sup>1</sup>, Pavana Kiranmai Chepuri<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor & Area Chair – OB & HRM, School of Business, Woxsen University, India

<sup>2</sup>Head of Strategic Initiatives & Growth, Woxsen University

## Abstract

This paper talks about the importance of leadership in higher education based on an autoethnographic study conducted by the authors. The paper presents the case study of a young Indian multidisciplinary university to show the importance of higher education leadership to achieve the SDGs through focus on responsible management education. The paper provides a 4I framework for SDG integration into management education through effective higher education leadership based on the values given in our Indian Knowledge Systems. Finally, the paper concludes showing the paradigm shift needed in internationalization of higher education institutions and the importance of implementing the PRME principles for achievement of the SDGs in higher education.

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Responsible Management, Interdisciplinarity, Internationalization, Indian Knowledge Systems, Stakeholders.

## Introduction

Managers today are continuously trained not just through on-the-job training but also through conventional MBA education or various executive education programs. Management education in its various forms and shapes have an important role to play in developing responsible managers who have a strong sustainability focus. One way to have such a strong sustainability focus is to have a strong ethical foundation and a knowledge of achieving the SDGs.

A strong ethical foundation is developed in management education through various courses that allow self-reflection and contemplation for becoming more self-aware as an individual. In fact, self-awareness has been identified as the single most primary characteristic of a responsible and ethical leader (Petriglieri et al. 2011; Collingwood, 2001; etc.). A strong sustainability focus comes through the idea of “interconnectedness” that underlines the importance of the systems-perspective and the idea of sharing, caring and collaboration.

Indian Knowledge System has been an inspirational source for many thinkers and philosophers that find reflection in modern management concepts (e.g.

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**(Corresponding Author:** Anindo Bhattacharjee, Associate Professor & Area Chair – OB & HRM, School of Business, Woxsen University, India  
E-mail: anindo.bhattacharjee@gmail.com

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Drucker's Management by Objective, Chesbrough's Open Innovation, etc.). In fact, some of the ways Indian or Oriental wisdom of thought have found their way into management education are “atman-brahman interconnectedness” from the Great Aranyaka Upanishads (Bhattacharjee, 2011), Rajarshi – spirit-centred wise leader (e.g. Chakraborty, 2011; Gupta & Mitra, 2017; Bhattacharjee et al. 2022, etc.) from Kautilya's Artha shastra, Organizing for Mindfulness (cite. Weick & Putnam, 2006), or the recent article on mindfulness as a critical skill published by AACSB (Krishnan, 2022).

In this paper, we trace the journey of a young multidisciplinary university in India to become a satellite university on United Nations SDG 8 on “Decent Work and Economic Growth” and a member of the elite global cohort of PRME Champions consecutively for two

cycles. PRME stands for Principles of Responsible Management Education and is a United Nations supported initiative that engages business and management schools to provide future leaders with skills needed to balance economic, environmental and social goals while drawing attention to the UN SDGs. The focus of the university leadership on the core principles of Purpose, Passion, Patience and People has its foundation on the core principles that have shaped Indian thought on leadership and sustainability over the years, and is a strong example of implementing a stakeholder – based approach to achieving sustainable development goals such as Decent Work & Economic Growth (SDG 8), Reducing Inequalities (SDG 10), Health & Wellbeing (SDG 3), Quality Education (SDG 4), and Gender Equality (SDG 5).

The conceptual framework and skill-based approach presented in this paper could be a good starting point for any higher education institution in India and its leadership to create a purpose driven institution with strong global outlook and internationalization with alignment to the UN-SDGs and staying well-grounded on the timeless Indian – thought.

### **PRME and PRME Champions for transforming Management Education**

Transforming management education has been predominantly a struggle to resolve the paradox of choices: techne (technique) or praxis (practice). In the

words of J Krishnamurthy – “The exclusive cultivation of technique has produced scientists, mathematicians, bridge builders, space conquerors; but do they understand the total process of life?... Technical knowledge, however necessary, will in no way resolve our inner, psychological pressures and conflict..”

Principles of Responsible Management Education, an initiative of United Nations Global Compact draws attention to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) laid out by United Nations and the implementing them not just through mere curriculum design but also through transformative pedagogies and social outreach programs. The PRME has over 800 signatories and is the largest organized relationship between United Nations and management-related higher education institutions around the world. Currently, PRME is governed by the UNGC and the main B-school accreditation bodies and regional associations: AACSB, EFMD, AMBA, CEEMAN, AABS, CLADEA, ABIS, ACBSP, EQUIS, and GRLI (UN SDG Website <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>).

PRME proposes seven principles which if implemented by the business schools will help them create responsible and transformative management education which will create people that help inclusive prosperity in organizations they work with. It will also promote freedom, justice, and peace. The PRME 7-values are given in Table 1.

**Table 1: PRME Principles**

PRME Principles	Description
PURPOSE	We advance responsible management education to foster inclusive prosperity in a world of thriving ecosystems.
VALUES	We place organizational responsibility and accountability to society and the planet at the core of what we do.
TEACH	We transform our learning environments by integrating responsible management concepts and practices into our curriculum and pedagogy.
RESEARCH	We study people, organizations, institutions, and the state of the world to inspire responsible management and education practice.
PARTNER	We engage people from business, government, civil society, and academia to advance responsible and accountable management education and practice.
PRACTICE	We adopt responsible and accountable management principles in our own governance and operations.
SHARE	We share our successes and failures with each other to enable our collective learning and best live our common values and purpose.

Source: <https://www.unprme.org/what-we-do/>

In 2013, to accelerate the agenda of implementing sustainable development goals and to create thought leadership on transformational management education, PRME piloted a cohort of institutions committed to working collaboratively to develop and promote activities that address shared barriers to making broad scale implementation of sustainability principles a reality. Over the years, PRME Champions has been globally and proportionally representative, according to the makeup of the larger PRME community (i.e. balance of regions and type of academic institution). The PRME Champions are a highly select cohort of institutions who have a mission to contribute to thought and action leadership on responsible management education and they commit themselves to -

- *Work collaboratively* to achieve higher levels of performance in transforming business and management education in five key areas: curricula, research, educational frameworks, sustainability-based partnerships, and thought leadership.

- **Serve the broader PRME community** through active engagement with existing PRME Chapters, PRME Working Groups, SIP Reporting and other global opportunities, as well as to support broader and deeper implementation of sustainability principles in the institutional context of the PRME initiative.
- **Contribute to broader UN goals and issues**, particularly helping to realize the Sustainable Development Goals.

(Source: <https://www.unprme.org/prme-champions/?section=mission#mission>)

Being a PRME Champion, the institution is recognized as a thought/action leader in the responsible management education community; a pioneer in sharing information on how the progress in the PRME agenda and take important leadership roles in the Working Groups and PRME Chapters providing strategic advice to the PRME Secretariat. Moreover, they are recognised as Ambassadors for the PRME community playing a visible role in the

PRME Working Groups and PRME Chapters. The current PRME Champions Cohort 2024-2025 has 47 member institutions out of the more than 800 signatories. Some of them are in their 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> cycle of PRME Champions.

In this paper, we would be discussing the transformative journey of a young business school in India (around 10 years) which is among the youngest schools in the PRME Champions cohort but is already in its 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of PRME Champion. We will try to present the case study of this university, viz., Woxsen University which is based out of Hyderabad. The institution presents a unique case of a high sustainability focused B-school that has not only been part of this prestigious PRME Champion cohort over the years but presents an example of the strong role that institutional leadership across the various levels play in making of a university that strives for sustainability and responsible management education. The case would provide a series of leadership approaches and practices that can be implemented not just in business schools which are part of a larger multidisciplinary university, but also the findings are transferrable to independent or autonomous business schools. Finally, we will see how this university has actually lived the ideas of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) underlining the importance of the values in IKS and their role in creating responsible management education for achieving the sustainable development goals.

### **Indian Ethos for Sustainability-focused leadership**

Earlier works on Indian Ethos and their relevance in contemporary management have highlighted the importance of “self-awareness”, “social welfare” and “interconnectedness.” For instance, the work of Bhattacharjee (2011) suggests that most of the contemporary management and leadership which form the basis of sustainability thinking in current times can be traced from the ancient Indian

wisdom. For example, the ancient Indian text of the *Great Aranyaka Upanishad* proclaims “*Aham Brahmasmi*” or “I am the Self” and is the first step towards acknowledging the grand interconnectedness between the individual (self) and the other living and non-living entities that we continuously witness around us. In other words, to be conscious of this grand interconnectedness is the essence of the “systems-thinking” which is required to create a sustainability mindset.

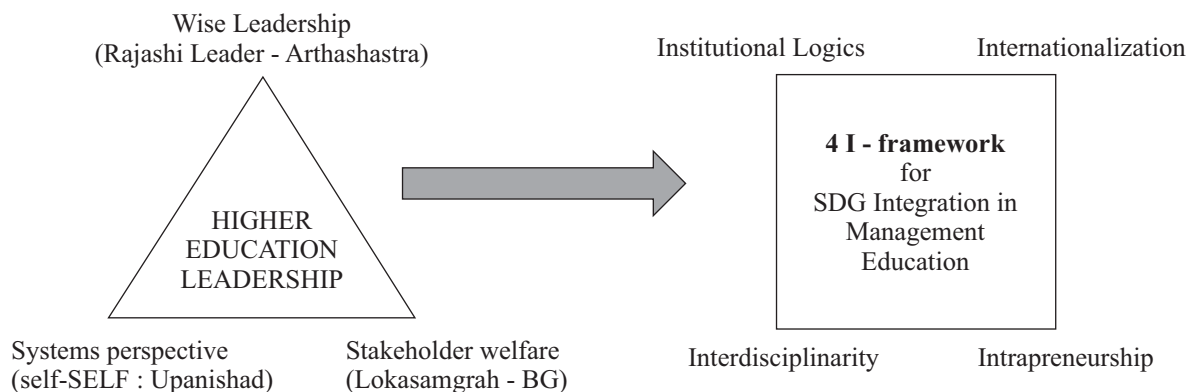
Then we have the idea of *Lokasamgraha* in the Indian scripture of *Bhagavad Gita* (BG) where the protagonist *Arjuna* is receiving instruction and wisdom from his mentor *Lord Krishna*. According to Radhakrishnan (1949) in this commentary on BG, *Lokasamgraha* stands for the unity of the world, world-maintenance, and the interconnectedness of society. *Lokasamgraha* connotes “social harmony” and “world of preservation” (Belwalkar & Vohra 2017). *Lokasamgraha* is a field of mutual care and responsibility, and it is a challenge at all levels of human gathering—from dyadic associations, institutions and movements, to the triadic and beyond, such as family, community, nation and the global order (Giri 2019). It is one of the central tenets of *karma yoga*, i.e., *work as worship* and the core of every principle-centered leadership that exists in responsible, stakeholder-centric organization.

Higher education institutions also have a responsibility to create future leaders who address the concerns of the multiple stakeholders – students, faculty members, employees, administrators, industry and society at large. Any higher education institution that has a strong focus on sustainability needs a top management team that is well grounded and possesses the qualities of a *Rajarshi* leader. In the ancient Indian treatise on political economy, *The Arthashastra*, written by *Kautilya*, a king should be “*rajarshi*” or “wise like a sage.” A sage in Indian tradition is always

“detached”, believes in performance excellence (*Yogah karmeshu kaushalam*) and possesses equanimity, i.e., neither excited nor anxious, neither happy nor sad (*stithaprajna* in BG). For

responsible management education to be a reality in practice, we need leadership in Higher Education that has a systems perspective, focus on stakeholder welfare, and is wise like a sage.

**Figure 1: The 4I – framework of Responsible Management Education based on Wise Leadership in HEI**



### HEI Leadership and Responsible Management Education

Bryman & Lily (2009) in their study on leadership in higher education identified the themes that constitute effective or ineffective HEI leaders. The findings of this study indicate that effective leaders in higher education promote unambiguous values and create a sense of collegiality; ineffective leadership creates lack of trust and integrity. In another review by Bryman (2008), based on the works published between 1985-2005, some of the qualities of an effective Higher Education Leader are:

- Clear sense of direction/strategic vision
- Preparing department arrangements to facilitate the direction set
- Being considerate
- Treating academic staff fairly and with integrity
- Being trustworthy and having personal integrity
- Communicating well about the direction

A good HEI leadership, as we will discuss in the subsequent sections, leads to the creation of the

right institutional logics through transparent performance assessment systems that not only treat academic staff fairly and with integrity but also align them to their KRAs (key responsibility areas) through a clear sense of direction and strategic vision. However, research in higher education leadership is still sparse as has been highlighted in general by earlier literature on leadership in higher education (e.g. Spendlove, 2007; Middlehurst et al. 2009; Bryman and Lilley, 2009; Dopson et al. 2019; etc.).

Spendlove (2007) in her study on the emerging role of Pro-Vice Chancellors highlighted the competencies for effective leadership in higher education. These include attitudinal competencies such as self-awareness, flexible, open, honest, etc.; knowledge-level competencies such as understanding how the university system and academic processes work; and finally behavioural competencies such as listening to others, to act as a mentor, negotiate, communicate clearly, etc.

The earlier studies on HEI leadership have mostly highlighted the importance of a wise and ethical leadership that fosters a culture of integrity and trust in institutions. The leaders in such institutions set

out a clear strategic vision providing a vision statement that gives a clear sense of direction to all the employees and various stakeholders linked to the HEI. The leaders take a systems' perspective where they have a clear sense of the various parts of the HEI interconnected with each other through interlinked processes and stakeholder ecosystems. However, responsible management education in contemporary times requires a sustainability mindset that comes through integration of the sustainable development goals into the institutional goals. The successful integration of SDGs into the management education begins depends on the existence of sustainability-focused HEI leadership that continuously strives to create a value-based responsible management education system which focuses on the 4Is –

- Institutional Logics
- Interdisciplinarity
- Internationalization
- Intrapreneurship.

### *Institutional Logics*

The term “institutional logics” was introduced by Alford & Friedland (1988; 1991) to view institutions as “supra-organizational patterns of activity rooted in material practices and symbolic systems by which individuals and organizations produce and reproduce their material lives and render their experiences meaningful.” Jackall (1988) defines institutional logics as 'the complicated, experientially constructed, thereby contingent set of rules, premiums and sanctions that men and women in particular contexts create and recreate in such a way that their behavior and accompanying perspective are to some extent regularized and predictable. Put succinctly, an institutional logic is the way a particular social world works.' Jackall's definition on institutional logics focused more on the normative dimensions of institutions and the intra-organizational contradictions of contemporary forms of

organizations. On the other hand, the Friedland & Alford's (1991) view focuses on the inter-institutional contradictions of inter-institutional systems (e.g. market and the corporation).

Institutional logics determine the degree of academic freedom, bureaucracy and transparency in the various systems and processes for creating and delivering value to its stakeholders. Limited academic freedom and institutional autonomy impede the full realisation of the potential of higher education to achieve the various sustainable development goals, i.e., SDGs; hence, HEIs should provide freedom to cultivate intellectual curiosity through education and research (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2021). Excessive bureaucracy undermines the work of teachers and often raises the ethical issues about attribution of responsibilities (Humes, 2022).

### *Interdisciplinarity*

According to Aram (2004), a 'discipline' is a term that stands for “thought-domains” – quasi-stable, partially integrated, semi-autonomous intellectual conveniences – consisting of problems, theories, and methods of investigation. Disciplinarity is what has driven the structure and evolution of higher education for many years, promoting the development of a discipline with its focus on the seven criteria according to Heckhausen (1972) such as 'the material field', 'the subject matter', 'the level of theoretical integration', 'the methods', 'the analytical tools', 'the applications of discipline in a field of practice', and 'the extra-disciplinary historical contingencies which influence the discipline'.

Brewer (1996) however argued that “Specialised views, theories and tools must be tested and applied by bringing them into interaction with views, theories and tools from different fields of inquiry” as “any method has blind spots that focus attention on highly selected aspects of a problem while

blocking it out for others.” Rosamund (2006) notes that academic conversations are, by and large, introverted and self-referential affairs”, due to which “our extant academic universe is congenitally incapable of dealing with globalisation.” And so to overcome these limitations of disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity is need of the hour for higher education in this increasingly globalized world where we seek to integrate the isolated islands of discipline. Sustainability mindset and integration of SDGs into the goals of a higher education to promote responsible management education will require embracing the notion of interdisciplinarity.

Interdisciplinarity is a means to integrate knowledge and methods in the interest of problem solving (Clark & Wallace, 2015). Nissani (1997) provides an exhaustive list of arguments that underline the importance of interdisciplinarity in contemporary higher education, some of which are

- Interdisciplinary knowledge is a prerequisite for creativity in education.
- Interdisciplinarity creates opportunities for immigrants to make important contributions to the development of a field.
- Many intellectual, social and practical problems require interdisciplinary approaches.
- Interdisciplinarity brings greater flexibility in research.
- Interdisciplinarity helps in bridging the communication gaps that exist in modern academy, thereby helping to mobilise its enormous intellectual resources in the cause of greater social rationality and justice.

The transformation that occurs with interdisciplinarity, however, extends beyond the intellectual and epistemological boundaries that limit many scholars and practitioners (Clark & Wallace, 2015).

### *Intrapreneurship*

Higher education institutions especially in current times are continually facing hypercompetition due to proliferation of many private universities. Innovation is continuously required for proactive adaptation to the change and sustainability, and so, intrapreneurship acquires special relevance in higher education institutions in current times. Entrepreneurship includes both new venture creation and intrapreneurship. Every HE institution must contribute towards economic development of the nation by being academic heartlands for the creation of new venture ideas and systemic development of entrepreneurial ventures. This requires an academic culture in the HEIs that strongly encourage faculty and researchers to engage in cutting edge research that is close to practice and providing resources supporting their intrapreneurial ventures. In other words, Higher Education Institutions have an economic and social responsibility to create academic heartlands where interdisciplinarity flourishes and intrapreneurial academicians flourish by giving “wings” to their ideas and convert them into entrepreneurial ventures. Also, such academic heartland creation will provide the much-needed intellectual support in the early stages of development of a new venture by a student entrepreneur. Focusing on innovation alone is not sufficient for sustainability in the current hypercompetitive business environment and so intrapreneurship is related to the issue of sustainability both strategically and behaviourally (Huang et al. 2021).

### *Internationalization*

One of the key attributes of any higher education institution that differentiates it from others in the pursuit of excellence, is the component of internationalization. Internationalization could mean many things to many people. But some of the dominant aspects of internationalization is *mobility* (faculty and student mobility) and *research*

*collaborations*. Also, there is delivery of *collaborative online international learning* (COIL) programs that is creating opportunities for geographically dispersed global institutions to develop and deliver joint programs seamlessly in an online mode. Such programs are intended to improve intercultural competence and transnational employability of the participants.

Knight & De-Witt (2018) argue that in the past 25 years, internationalization has evolved from a marginal component to a global strategic and mainstream factor in higher education. University strategic plans, national policy statements, regionalization initiatives, international declarations, and academic articles all indicate the centrality of internationalization in the world of higher education (Knight & De-Witt, 2018). Internationalization includes the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions—and even individuals—to cope with the global academic environment. The motivations for internationalization include commercial advantage, knowledge and language acquisition, enhancing the curriculum with international content, and many others (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Internationalization can have an *activity approach* which promotes activities such as curriculum development, student/faculty exchange, technical assistance, or international students; it can also have a *competency approach* which emphasises the development of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values in students, faculty and staff so that they become internationally knowledgeable and interculturally skilled to contribute to local and global work environments (Qiang, 2003).

## Methodology

In the current study, we used the method of autoethnography where the authors have shared their lived experiences of working in a particular

higher education institution which has a strong entrepreneurial orientation, is young and less than 10 years old, and has a strong focus on internationalization. We documented our lived experience in the form of important data points to develop the case study of this university called “Woxsen University” in Hyderabad. The university is among the youngest higher education institutions in the world to have achieved the status of a PRME Champion consecutively for two cycles and also has recently achieved a QS World Ranking in top 150 in the management, top 100 in the Business Analytics and top 150 in the Finance categories. Moreover, the institution consistently ranks in Level 5 in the Positive Impact Ratings.

Autoethnography is a complex and potentially transformative methodology for understanding higher education institutions as it illuminates the relational, often unseen, complex nature of higher education (Pithouse-Morgan et al. 2022). Autoethnography enables the researcher to reflect on their personal experience through self-reflection and they are able to show reflexivity by each researcher able to read the other researcher's account about the university and its sustainability initiatives (Godber & Atkins, 2021). Since data is captured from multiple sources, multiple departments and multiple schools in a multidisciplinary university, we are able to achieve data triangulation. By developing these multiple information which have been captured through various methods (interview, observation, audio-visual capturing of panel discussions, documentaries, etc.) we are able to present the information in the form of a HEI case study. The use of multiple methods also facilitates methods triangulation. Finally, we apply the success case method of Brinkerhoff (2005). The success case method involves the documentation of a small number of success cases which is just enough to poignantly illustrate the nature and scope of the success the programs helped to produce. Moreover, the success case method facilitated critical analysis of each of the researchers (authors) which further



ensured investigator triangulation. The programs and their focus areas are being given in the Table 2.

**Table 2: Case Study**

Focus Area	Activities / Programs	Outcome
Academic Heartland to Hinterland	Transforming Rural Youth (TRY) Program for Rural Entrepreneurship	Recently won the award by PRME Regional award. Achieving SDG 9 and SDG 8.6
Entrepreneurship	Trade Tower for Entrepreneurship Incubation	Successful new ventures. Responsible Innovation. Achieving SDG 9.
Interdisciplinarity and Internationalization Achievement of SDGs	Learner-Centered Innovation ERS Activities and Social Outreach Programs (e.g. Kalamkari Workshop) SDG 8 Satellite University activities Centre of Excellence created with International Universities and Scholars of global repute in sustainability.	Transformation of Pedagogy using the PRME i5 framework. SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDGs 8.5, 8.6, 8.9. SDG 3 (Health & Well-being) PRME Global Forum Chair for Management PRME Champions
Technology in Education	AI and Metaverse in Education	InclusiVR. Achieving multiple SDGs using innovative technologies like Metaverse, AI and Virtual Reality. SDG 4 (Quality Education)
Corporate Alignment and Intrapreneurship	Faculty Internship Program Faculty Entrepreneurship Program	Faculty are trained to bridge the gap between theory and practice and create transformative learning experience for students.
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Project Aspiration Project Hunar Apprise Activities to educate girl child from neighbourhood communities. Empowering them with life skills. Also, giving voice to the LGBT community through workshops and panel discussion to sensitize students around the subject of Gender inclusion in organizations.	Achieving SDG 5 on Gender Equality and SDG 10 on Reducing Inequalities.

### *Transforming Rural Youth (TRY) Program*

This program is an organized effort of the university spearheaded by the University senior management to conduct a series of activities to empower rural youth towards entrepreneurship and also engage the students (as young foot soldiers) towards the power of entrepreneurship for social transformation. The program involves the students in organizing various activities such as rural

entrepreneurship competition in the Government Degree Colleges of the neighbourhood areas (e.g. Zaheerabad & Buddha); supporting rural woman micro-entrepreneurs in securing financial resources and bank loans; engaging internationally reputed scholars in entrepreneurship in the social initiatives of TRY for rural entrepreneurship development, etc. The involvement of all the stakeholders of the university including the senior management (e.g. Vice President, Vice Chancellor, Deans of Schools)

in the implementation of such programs not only promotes a strong vision of the university towards achieving sustainability and rural empowerment but also communicates the appropriate institutional logics to the various stakeholders for creating a university culture of trust, collegiality and sustainability mindset. The program addresses multiple SDGs and target indicators such as SDG 4.4, SDG 4.5, SDG 8.6 and SDG 9.

#### *Faculty Internship & Entrepreneurship Program*

Our faculty internship program serves as an industry initiation program. It's designed primarily for faculty who lack prior corporate experience and need greater exposure to the day-to-day operations of companies. By immersing themselves in the operations of real-world enterprises, faculty gain valuable insights into industry dynamics and market trends. The faculty in the university that constitutes our case study, encourages their faculty to participate in corporate or social internships that the university helps to arrange. In addition, they also provide their faculty with the time and resources to pursue their own entrepreneurial ventures or to be advisory board members in leading start-ups. In both these cases, faculty can use the knowledge which they gain from such engagement through internships or entrepreneurial ventures which have a transformative impact in their understanding and this helps them enrich their classroom discussions and also sensitize the students towards important sustainability issues in practice. Through such real-world exposure, professors do not just bring authentic and relevant perspectives about business operations and entrepreneurship into the classroom, but they also become powerful examples that enrich the learning experience for students and foster a culture of innovation throughout the institution (Rodriguez & Choudhury, 2023). In addition, faculty who launch their own enterprises can choose to involve students in their venture development or include

student contributions as part of classroom assessment.

The program is aimed at SDG 4 (Quality Education) specifically target indicators 4.4 (Increase the number of people with relevant skills for financial success) and 4.5 (eliminate all discriminations in education).

#### *Inter-school collaborations for interdisciplinarity*

The university has a Learner Innovation centre led by Head of Strategic Initiatives & Growth who promote interdisciplinary collaboration between departments and schools either through Centres of Excellence or through SDG focused initiatives. For instance, the university has recently been included as a satellite university in the SDG 8 cluster of International Association of Universities (IAU). The SDG 8 cluster is lead by the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. The university took active initiatives to engage their faculty in various social initiatives and programs. For example, there was the collaboration between the faculty of School of Arts & Design with a Business School faculty to conduct design workshops for empowering girl children who have been rescued from human trafficking. Such workshops are truly transformative not just for the society but also for the faculty who engage in the delivery of such social programs. It not only makes the job of teaching more fulfilling but also such faculty members bring these experiences inside the classroom and show the transformative impact of their discipline (management or design) in making the world a better place. Moreover, such activities also specifically address the SDGs and the various target indicators. The above design workshop which was conducted in collaboration with a NGO in Delhi, specifically addressed the SDG target indicator 8.7 which is about "taking immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of

child labour.” In addition, there is the Kalamkari Workshop aimed to preserve traditional arts, resonating with UNESCO's mission to protect cultural heritage and addressing multiple indicators of SDG 8 (8.9, 8.6, and 8.3).

In addition, the school regularly conducts SDG-focused conferences, leadership development programs, workshops to promote indigenous art and culture, mental health workshops, etc. (CEEMAN, 2024). These programs are delivered through inter-school and inter-departmental collaborations promoting the spirit of interdisciplinarity. Moreover, internationally acclaimed academicians are empanelled as Chair Professors or Distinguished Professors who provide their valuable mentorship in planning and implementing these initiatives, bringing strong internationalization component into the implementation of such SDG focused initiatives.

### *Project Aspiration*

Launched in partnership with the Telangana Government's Department of Women Development and Child Welfare, the project was an initiative spearheaded by the Dean of School of Business of the university to empower the adolescent girls of standard 9-12 the Model Schools and Junior Colleges of neighbourhood areas (FE Education, 2023). It is a month-long project on career counselling and life guidance for girl children from the neighbourhood schools and junior colleges. The project aimed to empower young girls and women from economically and socially marginalized backgrounds and provide them with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in today's competitive world.

The student applied their learning in various role play and simulation activities. The project was complemented subsequently by the Project HUNAR and the Apprise Initiative. The Project HUNAR young boys from a neighbourhood

religious minority school in the surrounding area of Sadasivpet (Telangana). The program was an initiative to empowering the underprivileged individual on the marginalised communities by giving them exposure to modern educational facilities and technology. The Apprise Initiative serves as a platform for promoting gender equality and fostering a culture of women's leadership (Chepuri, 2024). This initiative embodies the university's idea of Internationalisation by spirit, promoting global collaboration through a deeper understanding of international relations (Rodriguez, 2024). These projects and events specifically address the SDG 5 (Gender Equality – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls).

### *InclusiVR Program*

Recognised by AACSB as the “Innovations that Inspire” this year 2024, InclusiVR program spearheaded by the members of the AI Research Centre of the university is an effort to redefine education and foster a brighter, more inclusive future by offering immersive virtual experiences that transcend barriers and ensure every student, regardless of circumstance, has access to high-quality learning (AACSB Innovations that Inspire, 2024). Additionally, the centre is engaged in various path-breaking initiatives to implement SDG through education on metaverse and virtual reality platforms. Through this program, the faculty members have embraced the immersive teaching approaches to enhance their pedagogical skills and promote active engagement with students. In addition, participants of this program regardless of their backgrounds or geographical locations, have gained access to high-quality education, improving their learning outcomes. The program addresses the SDG 4 (Quality education) and more specifically the target indicators 4.5 (eliminate all discrimination in education) and 4.7 (education for sustainable development and global citizenship).

### **Discussions**

Higher education institutions will create transformative learning experiences if they have wise leadership across various levels of operations who are focused on stakeholder welfare and believe in participant centred learning. That is one important theme that has emerged based on our study and the case study presented above. Another theme that emerged from the case study discussions is that university should promote a culture of interdisciplinarity through inter-school and inter-departmental collaborative initiatives. A systems perspective driving the institutional logics is the key for creating and sustaining a culture of collaboration and sharing. This is in alignment with the PRME Principles of Share, Purpose and Values. Institutional logics determine the Purpose and Values lived by the stakeholders (faculty, students) of the university; Interdisciplinarity determines fulfilment of the PRME principle of “Sharing”.

If we look into the National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) document of Government of India (Ministry of Human Resource Development), it talks about experiential learning through cross-curricular pedagogy (Item 4.6, 4.7) and introduction of contemporary subjects such as Artificial Intelligence, Environmental Education, Design Thinking, etc. (Item 4.24). The initiatives such as InclusiVR, social initiative programs (such as Project Aspiration), or collaborative initiatives for achieving SDG goals (e.g. between School of Business & School of Design), are aligned to these policies in addition to fulfilling the PRME principles of Teaching, Sharing, Purpose, Values, Practice and Research (e.g. Action research for pedagogical innovations).

The social initiatives such as “Transforming Rural Youth” or “Project Aspiration” (by School of Business) or Artisan empowerment program like Kalamkari Workshop (by School of Art & Design) not only provide experiential learning and address the PRME Impactful Five criteria for transformative education (such as facilitate active

engagement, make learning meaningful or develop supportive social interaction) but also is aligned to the NEP 2020 guidelines on incorporating the elements of Indian Knowledge System (e.g. Item 4.27 and 4.28 that includes promoting indigenous ways of learning and promoting the values of tolerance, empathy, equality, etc. through education).

All of the above programs show that an institution that has a strong alignment to the PRME Principles (Seven principles and the Impactful Five) has consonance to the National Education Policy as well as alignment to the values of leadership as laid down in the Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). The case under discussion above has resonated the leadership values of IKS such as Rajarshi (wise leadership), interconnectedness (systems perspective) and Lokasamgraha (stakeholder welfare) which should be the basis for Higher Education Leadership in contemporary times. And the university has been able to consistently achieve and maintain its strong commitment to sustainability and PRME principles being a PRME Champion.

## Conclusion

The above case study discussion and autoethnographic study of a young multidisciplinary university in India shows that the fundamental view of internationalization should change in higher education. So far, the theme of internationalization in India has been to bring the “world to India.” However, the case of Woxsen University, shows that there needs to be a paradigm shift in internationalization where through the wise leadership, stakeholder orientation, institutional logic driven by IKS, and interdisciplinarity, out Higher Education institutions should focus on taking “India to the World.” And the way to do it, it to strive to live the PRME Principles and be a PRME Champion!

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