

The Outlook of Dr. Israr Qureshi



Dr. Israr Qureshi (2nd from left) and Dr. Gajavelli (2nd from right) with students of IMT, Nagpur

Dr. Qureshi is currently involved in multiple research projects that investigate various aspects of social value creation through social entrepreneurship and Information and Communication Technology for Sustainable Development (ICTSD). His intrinsic motivation to contribute to society in general and to the poor, marginalized and disadvantaged communities in particular inspired him to understand sustainability and pressing social issues from theoretical and practical viewpoints. Apart from these research involvements, he is also a dedicated and passionate faculty at the IE Business School, Madrid. Dr. Qureshi was at IMT, Nagpur and here is what he had to say to the students at IMT-N:

Q1: How is being a social entrepreneur different from being a traditional entrepreneur? How can this be imbibed in budding managers?

Ans: The basis of the two is same, you have to be innovative, see the opportunity and align resources accordingly. The difference lies in the type of problem that you are trying to solve. A traditional entrepreneur would see a business opportunity and align resources to solve it. Whereas a social entrepreneur would see a social problem as a challenge, they go by their life experiences and try to solve the problem that lies in the society through the same means any entrepreneur would do it. Inculcating this in students has to done by value creation and social realisation, as an educational institution what one can do is to arrange field trips or internships where the students actually see the problems that are being faced by others in the

society. When someone sees that they have enough and others are struggling, they would naturally help. The problem happens when you are within a boundary you can only read but you actually cannot see how deep the problem is. So this is one way the habit can be imbibed.

Q2: How has your transition been from working in the industry to being a social entrepreneur and a professor?

Ans: I have actually seen poverty upfront and closely when I was young and later when I became a geologist by visiting remote areas in the country. I have seen people struggle for basic amenities and even not getting food to eat. People being treated worse than animals because of their poverty. I always wanted to help the society, so when I became better off I started investing money in organisations and charities that take care of social issues and also started giving donations. But I always felt that my individual contribution won't be enough to solve this problem. So, as a professor, if I can inculcate these habits in my students about caring for the society then the help would be greater than just my contribution.

Q3: With the increase in demand, cost of extraction and declining resources, what change in perception should be there to ensure sustainability?

Ans: The answer to this is reduced consumption but the moment that happens the economy would go into recession because the flow of money would stop in the economy. So looking at sustainability, this should be done but then it would cause problems to current economies. This happens when a lot of developed nations ask developing nations to cut their consumptions but when the per capita consumption is compared; it is the developed nations that consume more. So it is complicated to reduce consumption but the best that can be done is to reduce wastage. A very clear example of this can be seen in restaurants where people order in excess and waste half of it. People would use air-conditioners when it is actually not required and sit inside wearing a pullover or a blazer, such practices should be avoided because not only the resources are being wasted but the environment is also being harmed due to the emissions. Avoiding wastage of resources - be it of any kind - would solve a lot of problems and ensure sustainability.

Q4: Any other piece of advice that you would like to give to the student managers of the country?

Ans: For any country the youth is the future. Anyone can work but it rests on the shoulders of people who manage to implement the right norms and policies wherever they go and whichever organisation they work for. You also need to ensure that the resources that are at your disposal are used optimally. There is no inconsistency in this concept, if you recycle or save resources you are being sustainable to the environment and helping your own self. Apart from this, you must always keep in mind to treat every fellow human in the right way - be it your colleague, your customer or any stranger you pass by. In the short-run you might win the battle by deception or other tactics but it will haunt you in the long-run, so always be true to yourself. It is an age old tradition but "honesty is the best policy" must be followed by each and every one.