

The Kick of Creativity

The Phase II of construction work of IMP Institute's campus was getting delayed so much so that only 40% progress was reported in 24 months for a project that was to be completed in just 15 months. The Phase II work included, inter-alia, a staff dining hall for 50 persons.

A new Director joined the institute. He felt that the 50 seater dining hall will prove to be too inadequate for a growing institute as could be seen from the crowd at lunch time in the students' canteen, which was being used for staff dining as a stop gap arrangement. There was no dining facility for participants of management training programmes, which were being conducted at a low key for want of hostel, dining and class room facilities.

The Director asked the Architects to increase the capacity of proposed staff dining hall to 100 persons, who regretted it because no land was available for the purpose in the campus, which was spread over two small hills and any unwarranted cutting of hills could result in land slide, which the institute was facing at some buildings under construction. He pondered over the matter for few months. One night it occurred to him that land means area, which is expressed in x and y axes. What about Z axis that he studied in geometry and building drawing? A then idea crossed his mind and he suggested to the Architects to design 100 seater dining hall, expandable to 200 (by raising one more floor), erecting pillars on both sides of the road (no more cutting of hill was required) and making dining hall above the road. The Architects designed it. The Director then requested to make it 200 seater one, expandable to 400 seats. The Architect then made a new design, which could accommodate 150 seats, comfortably, on each of two floors (including a VIP dining room on each floor). It also had a service area on each floor, which could accommodate another 15-20 seats.. The pillars on the valley side of the road were so wide that two small rooms could be carved, which could be used as a 20 seater seminar room, as room for small Management Development

Programmes or as additional dining rooms, taking the total capacity to about 400.

Rains in Kerala are heavy and the roof had to be provided with shelter to avoid accumulation of water. Very strong aluminum sheets, covering the entire roof, had to be used to withstand high velocity of winds, coming directly from the Arabian sea,. The iron rails surrounding the roof were not considered safe and hence walls with doors and windows had to be constructed to cover the sides, which converted the top floor also into a large dining hall (which could be used even for conference purpose), taking the total seating capacity of the staff dining hall to almost 600 (which could accommodate even higher number in a buffet arrangement).

The initial capacity of 50 seater staff dining hall thus went up 10-fold. The Rs. 60 lakhs estimated cost went up to Rs. 160 lakhs, but the impressive three story dining hall could meet the requirements of not only the staff even when the academic activities tripled, but also accommodated students of increased intake (till new facilities were created) but also participants of management development programmes for the next 7-8 years (till new facilities were created).

Was increased capacity a kick of creativity? Is delay in project completion a bane or blessing in disguise? Is constraint as serious a land an opportunity to grow? How much capacity augmentation could be done by Architects through creative designs, if one requests them? These questions make one ponder as strategist. More example of it can be seen in cases Is Small Beautiful (C), (D), (E) and (F).