

## **Power of Interior Design@**

“Hey, don’t get angry with me. It is my faculty council and staff, architect and interior designer, who are responsible for it. At the most you can charge me for aligning with them to increase the intake” said Dr Tushar Patel, Director of IMP to his counter parts in other five institutions, one of whom was little upset over the increase of 80% of the required increase in the intake of PGP (Post Graduate Programme) of IMP, under the OBC (Other Backward Castes) quota.

IMP was one of the six institutes, who were given 3 years to increase the total intake by 54%, of the seats as in July 2007. IMP had increased 80% of the required 97 seats in the first year itself (instead of 15 seats, i.e. 12% envisaged earlier), while others had increased intake by 12-15% only and were to add the balance over the next two years.

Dr Patel said “In March the faculty council had met to discuss the issue of increase in the intake. I was reluctant to even attend such meeting, but on the request of some senior members, I agreed to do so. However, I had made two things clear to them. One, the Board of Governors’ decision of payment for teaching up to two additional PGP courses above the minimum of 3 courses, at a rate at par with the adjunct faculty, will be implemented only if the PGP intake was increased. The issue of additional payment was initiated by me for the Board’s approval because there was acute shortage of faculty to meet the requirement of increased teaching load, when the OBC quota related increase in PGP intake takes place. Secondly, I needed at least 3-4 months to make arrangement of infrastructure required for increased intake. “At the end of the meeting”, he added, “the faculty council resolved to increase one more section of 60 students. We got the same approved in the next Board meeting.”

Later on, however, some interesting developments took place. One, the Supreme Court of India cleared the OBC quota issue on 9<sup>th</sup> April. But the Calcutta High Court granted stay on its implementation. The Directors talked to each other and it was decided that since the admissions were getting delayed for other candidates, the institutes may send the offer in the same way as in the last year (i.e.pre-OBC quota year). “Our admission Chairman accordingly sent offer to 700 general category candidates and likewise for SC/ST students. But, instead of 140 acceptances in the previous year, 190 acceptances were received from general category students, thanks to excellent job placement of the graduating batch of 2008” said Dr. Patel. There were 3 doctoral students and 2 PGP I repeat candidates. In all, thus, 235 seats had got booked, including those of SC& ST category. None of the acceptances could be rejected. Towards end of May 2008, Calcutta High Court also cleared the stay. We were now caught in a strange situation. Even after increasing 60 seats, only 5 were left for OBC candidates. “No one would take this lightly, we felt. One full section increased in the name of OBC quota, and only OBC 5 candidates admitted?” he said.

An urgent faculty council meeting was therefore called to address the issue. Members deliberated on intake, section size etc., counting every seat in the class rooms and it was decided to allow 28 more seats for OBC candidates, taking the total to 33 seats for OBC candidates. An urgent Board meeting was also called and approval for 268 seats was taken. Thus, in all 88 seats were decided to be increased.

Due to unknown reasons, after the above approval by the Board was taken, the other institutions issued admission offers from waiting list and almost 48 general candidates withdrew admission to go there. IMP had to exhaust the entire OBC quota list. Indeed, it admitted 70 OBC

candidates, and thus almost the entire 27% OBC reservation done in the first year itself. Due to the increase of 85% of total seats, IMP was expected to get more grant from the Ministry, almost 85%, while other institutes got proportionate to the % of seats they increased, i.e., about 6-10%.

“You must have used some magic stick to do that” quipped one. “How could you accommodate 85% of the required increase in intake, when you claim that your institute has maximum constraints and requires more time, effort and money to expand?”

“No magic, but managerial stick. Little foresight, little innovation, little concern for society and little luck, did all this” Dr. Patel smiled and said to himself.

Answering to a query by the case writer, Dr. Patel said. “When I came here the Institute had gone for increasing intake from 60 students (1 section) in the 2002 to 120 students (2 sections) in the year 2003 on demand from the Ministry. But unfortunately the Phase II construction work required for 2<sup>nd</sup> section had got considerably delayed. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Classroom Complex (CRC II) required for 120 students was only half way through. There was a married students’ hostel, but since there were no married students, some rooms were occasionally used for visiting faculty. Most visiting faculty however, used to stay in hotels. A guest house and another married students’ hostel were coming up. Institute was wholly dependent on government, and funds were not coming as there was standoff between Ministry and the institutions. I requested the architects to convert the 36 seater class rooms into 60 seater and 60 seater class rooms into 80-90 seater in CRC II. They reworked and came up with a plan of 60 and 80 seater rooms. This helped us in moving fast and increase PGP intake to 180 in 2005, when the first batch 120 was passing out.”

The money earmarked in March 2004 to make stop gap class room arrangement to accommodate 120 students was saved by expediting completion of CRC II in July 2004 itself, which was expected to be ready by January 2005. With CRC I having two 60 seater class rooms and two 36 seater rooms already there, the total number of 60+ seater class rooms went up to 6 instead of 4 planned initially for the 120 students batch size. Two of the class rooms could indeed accommodate 80 students. This came handy in accommodating 280 students ( $2*80+2*60$ ) in the first year, with two 60 seater and two 36 seater class rooms available for 2<sup>nd</sup> year students. In the afternoon almost all the class rooms were available for second year students. There was a large number of expert faculty members coming from outside. The flights reached here only in the afternoon. This availability of class rooms for 2<sup>nd</sup> elective courses, thus, gelled well with convenience of expert outside faculty. It helped in overcoming an embarrassing situation that could arise, if the seats fell short for OBC quota students as mentioned earlier.

The money earmarked in 2004 for making temporary, makeshift arrangement for 120 students in 2<sup>nd</sup> year, was used for furnishing the two married students hostels and the guest house. Two interior designers were appointed, one for the guesthouse and the other for converting two married students’ hostels into 2 additional guest houses. They converted them into 2 impressive double occupancy guest houses, giving 48 beds in all the 3 guest houses put together. The design was so attractive that not only the participants of low cost faculty development programmes liked it, but even visitors coming for job placements started preferring to stay in these guest houses than in hotels in the city.

“When we increased the intake to 180, we needed two more hostels. We thought of making one hostel with 60 single occupancy rooms and other one having 42 double occupancy rooms, a little larger in size with an attached toilet, to accommodate 2 persons. It was an experiment. We had observed that all the PGP students’ hostels were used only for nine months and were vacant for 3 months. We thought of furnishing the 42 rooms hostel like the guest houses, so that they can also be used for conducting faculty development programmes in summer, at low cost. The furnishing was so attractive that the Board agreed to have next two students’ hostels (having 64 & 48 rooms) also designed the same way. The PGP students liked it so much that they requested the Institute to allow them use the double occupancy hostel instead of single occupancy ones. Just through interior design, by 2009, we got additional accommodation for 212 (2\* 106) participants FDP/MDP in summer of 2009, at no extra cost for civil work (only furnishing cost was extra), and also offer executive accommodation to PGP students, on their request. By doubling the occupancy, 106 extra beds became available for PGP students. Therefore 85 students could be accommodated to increase PGP intake, well before the regular infrastructure for increasing PGP intake could be created under OBC quota.”

“I had never realized the power of interior design, nor the fact that the constraints and environmental threats could be opportunities. It helped us grow fast. Furthermore, when we converted the married students’ hostel into attractive guest house, we started saving about Rs. 30 lakhs each year, the amount that was spent on hotels and transport for visiting faculty. A year’s saving is almost equal to the cost of furnishing them. This also helped in conducting MDP/FDPs without having regular infrastructure for the same. In three years, we achieved leadership position in FDPs. But making the students hostels attractive executive hostel, gave extra economies. The addition of 85 students with Rs 3 lakh fees fetched Rs 250 lakh (which would go to Rs. 500 lakh next year) while the incremental cost was only about Rs 100 lakhs. It also led to additional accommodation for conducting as many MDP/FDP/Conferences in summer as possible by faculty. And above all we were able to surpass increase in PGP seats required as per OBC quota, by 10%, in the second year itself, something which could have taken 7-8 years in our location” said Dr. Patel.

The case writer was little intrigued. “How much was the growth rate of the IMP? How the increase in intake took place? Is growth just a matter of choice? Was there any conscious strategy? What were the benefits accruing to the Institute due to this increase? How much benefit is due to innovative thinking/ interior design? Can one measure the monetary value of the same? What was the so called managerial stick used by Dr. Patel” he wondered.