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In a leading management institute of India, an exercise of perspective planning was being undertaken to prepare a plan for the next 10 to 15 years. One day in the tea club, some young inquisitive faculty members asked the senior colleagues sitting there, to share their experience/ views on how to manage the task of giving fillip to the academic activities of the Institute. Prof. Chidambaram, one of the senior colleagues, narrated the following story.

“Some 20 years ago I joined this Institute to see how a national level institution is built. I studied at a leading management institute of India, which was already established, so were other others. Not sure of my interest in academics as a career and future of the institute, I came here on deputation. On coming here I observed that the institute had every function that we have in industry; marketing (placement), finance (getting and utilizing funds), human resource management (faculty and staff), operations (running PGP and other programmes), project management and so on. You could engage in any one or more without being as much under pressure as in industry. After two years I gave consent for permanent position.

I was teaching three different subjects in three terms to 1st batch of PGP; Business Policy (now called Strategic Management), Management Control System (which was typically taught by Finance area elsewhere) and Management of Change and Creativity (normally taught by Behavioural Science area). I was given placement responsibility also. Our director used to meet us from time to time. One day he asked me if I was facing any difficulties. I expressed my problem “unless I have conviction that what I teach can be done, I find it difficult to teach”, Director smiled and nodded” Dr. Chidambaram said.

The faculty council resolved to ask him to develop case material for his first course. Since there were not many companies in Lucknow, He developed a 3-part case study on Scooters India Ltd. and was stunned to find all that he was taught in his doctoral course in management did not explain the case situation. “How can a company be mismanaged in all functional areas and still last for close to 16 years making losses (not able to cover expenses)”, he was intrigued.

The Institute was banking on central government even for salary. “By second year I started shivering whether we were also going the same way” he said.

“I did not know how to get over the problem, but was convinced there must be some way out. Is there no solution in subjects I teach?” he wondered. “By chance I had developed a report “Shaping the Future” as a member of the “Committee on Future Directions”, which was formed on an impromptu suggestion by a faculty member while waiting for tea in a faculty council meeting. It was an 84 page report, 12 pages devoted to what “we would like to be” and 72 pages on “how to be that”. Being “too bulky” the members did not find worth reading it as some expert members felt that “perspective plans should not be more than 1-2 pages long”. Though I had drafted the report as a serious student of Business Policy, I was sure whether things will really work out the way proposed” he added.

“By the end of second year I happen to take up writing a case on Apollo Hospital Enterprise Limited. On returning from data collection, I was increasingly getting convinced that we must grow to reduce dependence/ drain on exchequer, “If Apollo can do it all by itself, why can’t we do it. After all conceptually challenges are same. When I found that on 30 July, 1988 our salary was not credited in the account because of delay in getting cheque from the Ministry, I felt perhaps time was running out” said Dr. Chidambaram. The Institute was in infancy stage, say about four years old. There were

very few faculty members and little, borrowed/ rented infrastructure. The government funds were sluggish to come to create infrastructure. Because of unbalanced faculty lot, some were heavily loaded and some others very little, gave time to latter to engage in bickering also.

“A new Director joined in August 1989. I admire her tolerance for bearing my harsh words -Why this institute can't increase intake in its PGP from 30 to 100. Honestly I would have got irritated if a faculty member had tormented me by repeatedly asking question like that. But she tolerated it. However one day towards end of January 1991, her patience gave way and she told in a faculty council meeting that she was going to appoint me as the next PGP Chairman as that was the only way she thought possible, to shut me up” said an amused Dr. Chidambaram. Within next few days, the office order for appointment of new PGP Chairman was issued, which normally used to be done in mid-April. On July 1, 1991, there were 105 students in the 5th batch of PGP, instead of usual 30.

Lot of things were to be done. Rearranging class rooms (special, small chairs were designed to accommodate increased batch size), hostels, dining facilities, computer centre, arranging faculty, and so on in 4 months' time. But at the end everything settled down. Seeing construction of a 120 seater class room in 25 days square was a life time experience. Both the summer and the job placements also went well despite increased batch size.

There were lot of other things happened. PGP fees was rationalized, increased from Rs. 5000/- to Rs. 10650/-, to cover the costs and ensure that when the batch size went to 180, the Institute would not need any recurring grant from the Ministry, which was followed by other institutions. Costs were reduced. Prescribed reading books were not reduced but given on returnable basis so that cost is covered in 2 years. PGP hostel cost was reduced from Rs. 800 per month to Rs. Rs. 300 per months and charged as per the actuals, instead of Rs. 150 per month earlier. Convocation fees was introduced to cover convocation expenses instead of financing through Ministry grants. Placement fees was introduced in consultation with companies (to generated resources for capacity expansion), which other institutions also introduced later.

Apart from parents and companies, other stakeholders' contribution was also increased. Faculty council suo- motto resolved that every faculty member will teach at least 2-3 courses every year, which became a practice in other IIMs. No increase in staff was made despite 3-fold increase in PGP intake to contain staff cost. From 5 day classes, 6 days classes were introduced in PGP to rationalize scheduling and give PGP students adequate free time. New faculty members joined, some of whom became shining stars later.

While the batch size was increased, the library and identity cards were issued on the spot at the time of registration, which used to take weeks. Registration form was reduced from 16 pages to 4 pages to expedite registration. PGP manuals were introduced from next batch. Formatted acceptance forms were introduced and acceptance for being kept on waiting list were also introduced. Acceptance fees was enhanced from Rs. 100/- to Rs. 500/- to overcome problem of drop out related underutilization of capacity. Customised admission offers were sent for the first time instead of cyclostyled letter with names pasted.

Many unexpected things also happened. Xeroxing was introduced for course material to take care of load and reduce cost. Computers were introduced in PGP office and later in other offices. Instead of having additional data entry operators, secretarial staff was offered incentive to switch over to computer based working instead of typing. Faculty members also got personal computers from the next year. When the batch passed out, most staff members got promotion or special increments. With improved load, bickering among faculty also reduced.

Pleased with the increased batch size, the Ministry released substantial funds to complete the campus construction and the Institute could move to newly built campus for 120 students' batch size, from

7th batch. All this was very gratifying, though working for 18-20 hrs a day seriously disturbed my metabolic system and he literally collapsed at the end of first year.

One day a little upset Director phoned Dr. Chidambaram “You have been creating problem for me. Did not I tell you not to increase intake. Now you answer the AG office auditors (doing 5 year comprehensive audit) query, who are saying our placement is OK, we have increased intake from 30 to over 100 in 5th year successfully and asking why did not we do it earlier?”

Dr. Chidambaram was also upset at this way of appreciation of painstaking efforts, but on second thoughts he also wondered why other leading institutions had not added even a single seat in last 15 years, why the Institute also did not do it earlier and when could the institute go far next leap?

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