

Rewards Galore@

Introduction

“In the past twenty five years the Institute has conferred several rewards on me. Some people call it severe penalties. Some directors even tried to strangulate academic, perhaps inadvertently, sometimes on advice of anxiety marred professors, who were less keen to promote academic than politics. But I don't take it that way for if it was so, how did I last here for 25 years, the first faculty member to achieve the feat. In any case the so called penalties did not pain or deter me from academic path. What pains me, however is the Institute missed so many wonderful opportunities” told Dr. Ahibans Chatterjee to a friend, reminiscing his 25 years journey at the Institute.

PHASE I: THE FIRST THREE YEARS

DrChatterje was working in a public sector company, conducting senior executive training, in-house consulting, introducing new concepts like Quality Circle, and tools like computer which was a new thing in companies in early eighties

He was selected in the first lot of faculty. However, since he was offered Associate Professorship in the pay scale of Rs.1500-2000, while he was already in a higher scale of Rs. 1800-2250 in the company with various perquisites, the salary offered by the Institute was coming to almost half, which he could not afford. A year later the company agreed to relieve him on deputation at the request of the Institute, provided the Institute allowed him up to 3 months to do assignments in the company, like setting computer center for training and computer training for officer and executives, which the Institute agreed. The company agreed to bear the difference in salary and he was relieved on deputation to the Institute for 2 years on 31st December at 5.30 p.m. he took the first train at 8.00 p.m. and after 42 hrs journey reported on duty at 9 a.m. on 2nd January.

He started preparing for course from scratch as the first batch of PGP was going to be in 2nd year in 6 months. There were few books in library, but no other course material. He was to teach three different courses of three different disciplines in the three different terms (IV, V & VI). The first course was compulsory, but the two others were elective ones, and had highest subscription by the students. In the summer, he was to do 4 computer training programmes in the company. In term break period he also conducted MDPs. Like others, he too had to shoulder the test centre coordination and interviews for PGP admission. No faculty member had taught three difference courses. Indeed many did not teach even one. No faculty in any similar Institutes had taught 3 courses in 3 different areas in 20 years of management education in the country. Above all he was asked to engage in case writing (no other person was asked to do so), and assume sundry responsibilities like guiding students projects, convocation, and a bit of project management here and there. Besides that he was also made the first Chairman (Placement). “There were no telephones, no guest house or institute transport facilities, available for the purpose. We were able to place all the students in 12 days when all other leading institutions were keeping 1-3 months for getting the students placed, even if it meant disturbing the classes of the last term which we refused to do” said Dr. Chatterjee.

Since the Director had told him at the time of selection that the basic hitch in offering him full professorship was that he did not have teaching experience, after one year he asked the Director whether he had any more reservations in my teaching and other abilities in view of the overall workload and the feedback he got from students. He was asked to apply again and in the next round of faculty selection, he was selected as full professor being the only one out of 4, one each from different areas who had applied.

The first reward followed. While appointing him as professor his normal increment was differed by eight months (from January to August, the month he was promoted as Professor). His salary was also not fixed as per the rules applicable for absorption at end of deputation period. The penalty was not to be only for the period of 23 years he served the Institute thereafter, but for the whole life, even in his post retirement period, as he retires just one increment short of reaching the top of Professor's grade. The increment would be due on 1st July, just a day after his retirement on 30th June of the year. If the increment date was kept at January, he would have got one increment in July of previous year and his pension would have been fixed accordingly.

The other rewards besides promotion was a plaque presented by the first graduating batch that mentioned "Achievement is not to be measured so much in terms of material position to which one has reached, but in terms of number of hurdles he has overcome in trying to do so. The gift remains cherished possession for him and has been a guiding factor for my rest 25 years of journey" said Dr. Chatterjee.

PHASE II: THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Life continued like this, till the new director joined. Prior to joining the Institute, she was head of management school of a century old reputed university. "She pushed him to assume responsibility of PGP Chairmanship to see through 3.5 times rise in the PGP intake, achieving the feat in the 5th years for which other similar institutions took 8-15 years" said Dr. Chatterjee. Partly it was due to detailed work that he had done in developing a perspective plan for the Institute about a year ago. "We had to face as many as 10 daunting tasks (see the Case Fun of Case Writing- B). However, we were able to do it" he said. Besides teaching 5 courses alongside PGP Chairmanship, he also had to bear administrative responsibilities as earlier. He also continued to engage in case writing (which was given importance of a research work and special request was made by the Faculty council for that) and other course material development. Several innovative practices were introduced by him. He was also requested to assist in campus construction work.

Several rewards followed. His salary after pay revision was fixed in a way that he started drawing 2 increments less than the professor who was drawing 3 increments less than him before pay revision. She also changed the rules to deny him honorarium for a sponsored training programme, for which he had realized full payment. The other faculty members who conducted similar programmes, but not realized full payment, got the honorarium. The third reward she gave was denying him visit to a European institution under Exchange Programme, despite being selected by host institution. "Perhaps because she was unhappy with me due to my refusal to complain to her against Chief Administrative Officer to let the latter's services be terminated" said Dr. Chatterjee. The dream of starting a Management Centre for Developing Countries (even before SAARC was formed) was also shattered by her. Working over 18-20 hours for whole of the year damaged his metabolic system and one day he literally collapsed and confined to bed for a week.

PHASE III: THE NEXT TWO YEARS

The next two years were quite tense, but academically more rewarding. A new acting director, who had been an officer in the state government including a short tenure as IAS officer, joined the Institute. “He agreed to my request of not being laden with any academic administration responsibility” said Dr, Chatterjee. This helped in devoting to academics full time. Thus despite being away for 9 months during the two years period, he was able to teach 9 PGP courses, and finish an exciting 3 part case study on Mergers during his visit abroad. Its teaching note turned out to be a research paper and was presented in a special session designed for the purpose in a important national conference. He also presented the case study in an international conference. Over and above this he designed and launched the first MDP and PGP course in the country on Merger and Acquisitions. He also organized the first follow up round table meet with other sister leading institutes. All of them were first initiatives at the Institute. New innovative practices in reducing the size (and thus the cost) of course material were also introduced by him. Two weeklong sponsored MDP were conducted on the campus first time by him.

However, the proposal to set up a Euro-India Management Centre with \$ 3 mn funding was scuttled. He was also not allowed to launch PGP course in the 1992-03 on a technical ground that he was not present in area meeting to approve the course outline. He was physically in Europe, sent by Institute under the European Exchange Programme. His college going daughter, who was eldest of children in the campus, was also denied Institute transport for being dropped and picked from college on way from schools of children, on the pretext that Institute transport can be given only for school going children, although there was no public transport to city which was 12 km away. “Even attendants’ children were not given this kind of treatment” said Dr. Chatterjee. He was also denied the opportunity to choose the newly built houses when we shifted to campus, by putting the last date for application, just a day before his return from Europe where he was sent by the institute. “It pinched, as I was the only faculty who had helped the previous director in expeditiously completing phase I of campus construction” he said. “You can’t expect a house of your choice when you are humiliated by being asked to accept a smaller table of assistants, because your table could not enter the office room. How similar tables of other Professors could enter similar rooms, or even my table could enter the same room just a day before the day newly appointed regular director took charge, is a different story” said Dr. Chatterjee.

PHASE IV: THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

The period was a mixed bag for the Institute as well as for him. “The new Director came from an IIT, which have well laid out systems, policies and procedures for running the affairs, along with a joint consultative council. At times he found a little difficulty in appreciating the entire spectrum of academic activities of a management institute. Hr also faced problems in pushing development of infrastructure and policies and rules for new initiatives’ said Dr. Chatterjee. On the flip side of it, the first year was perhaps the best year for him academically. He taught 6 PGP courses (a record among similar Institutions), could conduct 5 MDPs of which 2 were week long sponsored programme, and 3 open programmes (one week long and 2 three days). The income generated by MDP itself covered total salary paid to him by the Institute. He also presented two major research papers in closing seminar of Euro India Exchange programme. Responding to the Institute Board decision, he also engaged in case material development, in which 40 PGP students out of 84 joined him, a marathon exercise

first of its kind. The first three days MDP on Strategic Management was also organized by him to conduct trial run of the cases prepared. This culminated in the first Case Series of the Institute. Two research papers also came out of the experience of students' case writing.

This peak academic performance, which no faculty member has ever been able to emulate, fetched commensurate rewards. The Director refused to bear the cost of Xeroxing and binding the first Case Series of the Institute. Dr. Chatterjee had to conduct first open MDP on Strategic Management to generate surplus to get the copies made. It is different matter that all the copied remained locked Director's cupboard. Neither the companies nor the students who wrote the case, got a copy and none of those connect with it were seen in the photograph with the Honourable Minister of HRD releasing the first case series.

The Director scuttled the first collaborative research project with European and Indian Institutions. The Director did not allow even the payment of travel expense out of the \$1000 sanctioned by external agencies for Dr. Chatterjee (even though the reimbursement was claimed and realized) towards the 1st International Collaborative Research work with four leading Management Institutes of U.K, France, Spain and Netherlands. "Shocking, is not it? But by now I was accustomed to pay the price for academics and Institution building" said Dr. Chatterjee. "The denial of transport to my daughter continued. She suffered the pain and agony and one day she drained out badly and fell sick, bringing down my academic performance to 1/3. This was perhaps because I had done maximum that year academically, which was not to be tolerated by my younger colleagues who were in-charge of transport services" he said.

He even refused permission to publish a casebook, in which some case were those prepared by students (whom Dr. Chatterjee had promised to publish if possible) on the pretext that all the cases prepared by him were Institute's property (not all the case were prepared during Dr. Chatterjee's service at the Institute is a different matter).

The Director also did not permit registered office of the only professional in the country body floated by Dr. Chatterjee for furthering the cause of strategic management education. "He was so upset with the first conference organized by me at the Institute that first he tried to scuttle it, and when he failed to stop it, he gave such a stinker at the end of the Conference that he could not take meals for two days" said Dr. Chatterjee.

He also did not implement the perspective plan which the Board of Governors had approved, which could have taken the Institute to commanding heights, in terms of size, new initiatives to meet growing requirements of the country, research, faculty development and internationalization. For example if he had implemented the plan in letter and spirit, the Institute would have been grooming at least 25 doctoral students, which is more than required for starting a new IIM every year. It would also have trained at least 15 faculty members of universities and other management schools under its M.Phil. Programme, besides developing 10 in-house management trainers in management for large corporate training establishments.

Its Academic Resources Park would have developed high quality course material to meet most of the requirements of course material for MBA programmes in various management schools.

The International exposures would have been given to all the faculty members in 10 years' time to help joint Training Programmes/ Conferences with partner foreign institutions for

mutual benefits and let the faculty take up serious research projects to help true and meaningful internationalization of not only the Institute but also industry and business. The multiplier effect would have benefited other management schools also internationalise their thinking.

Finally, he earned a great honour of having the first strike at the Institute in which both faculty and staff joined to throw him out. The strike fizzled out and faculty became indifferent to him to let him do whatever he felt like. He had great expertise of retrogressive HRD, to which a prominent Board Member once commented “You have such a great competence that even if we give you Cabinet Secretary, you will reduce him to a clerk”.

“The new initiatives proposed by us would perhaps have materialized if there was a strong Planning and Development, which focused exclusively on shaping the future of the Institute, without any engagement whatsoever in day to day routine matters” said Dr Chatterjee reflecting on the reasons for missed opportunities.

Prof. Ahiban’s friend wondered how many penalties, if any Prof. Ahibans Chatterjee has been given and for what? Did Institute lose something? What? He also wondered if anyone else was in place of Dr. Chatterjee, would he have behaved in a different manner?

He also wondered who was responsible for it? If he were member of the Board of Governors of the Institute, what action he would have taken? Above all if he was in the Ministry how would he look at the issues contained in the case? What can be done to avert the same in other upcoming institutions?