

53. THE ACADEMIC RESOURCE PARK

The Director of Surprise Institute of Management (SIM) was wondering at the response of a senior faculty member of the Institute to his request for taking over the assignment of creating an Academic Resource Park (ARP). The Governing Board of the Institute had approved of establishment of ARP about two years ago, immediately before the present Director of the Institute had taken over, as a part of the perspective plan for the next five to ten years. ARP was aimed to give an impetus to the academic activities of the Institute that were almost stagnant for the last four years or so. Nothing had actually been done to achieve the targets set in the perspective plan in the last two years. A year back the Board had also asked the Director to prepare an action plan for implementing the proposals. In a recent meeting the Board members had raised an enquiry about the progress on the subject. The Director was perplexed as to how to get the ball rolling, (i.e., starting the new activities), when appointing Task heads for even the existing activities was proving to be a difficult one. The faculty members seemed to be quite reluctant to assume the Task responsibilities.

The Institute

Surprise Institute of Management (SIM) was a part of Surprise Institute of Technology, established by the government of Surprasia, a developing country in the South-east Asia, for improving the management of the corporate and the non-corporate in the country. It was expected to become model of excellence in the field of management education, training, research and consultancy, not only in its own country but even for the others in that part of the globe.

The institute was, however, not progressing well. The Governing Board was seriously concerned about the state of affairs and was thinking of the ways and means to put the Institute back on sound tracks. The Board had appointed a consultant to diagnose the factors that were holding the Institute from performing to the potential and suggest the way out. The consultant proposed the use of what he called "stream analysis" approach for the purpose, a somewhat unusual approach in that it required "catching" the organisation realities by placing secret, high- tech "bugs" at several locations in the Institute and analysing the recorded conversations for diagnosing the organisational problems. The case series describes recording by some of the "bugs". The SIT describes the recording of Gossip bug WGB1. The Case SIT (B) describes the recording of an Issue bug WGB2. This case describes recording of the Systems bug WGB3. Others cases in the series similarly describe the recording of some other bugs i.e., WGB4 etc.

It all happened on June 12, 1993 when the Director had called Dr. Joseph Bhajan for certain discussions. He lamented that the faculty members in SIM did not cooperate with him in running their own institute. "After all", he said, "it is your Institute. I can go back to the place where I came from. You know I have not left the lien on the job there. I may go even elsewhere".

To this Dr. Bhajan replied: "Why do you think we don't want to work? We have certainly been cooperating with you. But it has to be reciprocal. We are still keen to come forward, but the institute must look at our difficulties also. I feel the Institute is almost immune to the feelings and difficulties of the people who have been and are willing to stretch".

Next day Dr. Bhajan was called for continuing the work of preparation of agenda papers for the forthcoming meeting of the Board, in the absence of the secretary to the Board, who had proceeded on vacation before preparing the agenda papers. Dr. Bhajan had been himself secretary to the Board a few months back, but had resigned on the grounds of wastage of lot of academic time on a purely administrative job that could be done by an administrative officer. He was not happy at all on being dragged into the job again, but realising that the job will have to be done by the Director himself, he had agreed to help him out.

Before the discussion could start on the agenda papers, the Director told Dr. Bhajan that he had some news for Dr. Bhajan. Saying so, he culled out an office order regarding appointment of Dr. Bhajan as the Chairman of the Academic Resource Park, for a period of two years, to start the activity.

Dr. Bhajan requested the Director not to issue the same, at least not make it public till he has discussed the subject with the Director as to what all in his view is required to let the activity take off well. To this the Director agreed.

Director received a letter on June 23, 1993, that read as follows:

From: Prof. Joseph Bhajan

To: The Director

This has reference to your Office Order No. 226 dt: 14-06-1993 regarding my appointment as Chairman, Academic Resource Park. In this context, I wish to draw your attention to the following points:-

- I. The proposed activity is a new task, which requires a totally different mode of working. The Institute has hardly undertaken any activity like this during the last several years. It requires:-
 - a) An entrepreneurial mode of working, that means:
 - i) high paced decision making and action,
 - ii) coherence and simultaneity in thinking and action taking,.
 - iii) lot of innovation, involving number of trials. No evaluation of approach/ action is possible in very concrete, quantifiable terms as in the case of expansion or maintenance of existing activities, when resources are to be sanctioned for undertaking a new activity. There is, thus there is every chance of adequate resources not allocated timely.
 - b) While the blue print of how to proceed is clear to me in my mind, a lot of ifs and buts are involved with its implementation. New and novel solutions will have to be generated, which may not be easy to be appreciated by the people who have not been innovators themselves, until some tangible results are achieved. **Such activities require following an approach which others may see as "biting more than what one can chew"**. But it is a perceptual problem of others, not that of the approach. Unfortunately we have many people here who always feel like this and structurally have right to get involved in making of such decision without giving any workable solution and without assuming any responsibility of delivery of results.
 - c) The activity **can not be subjected to a bureaucratic way of working, that too without rules of the game being made clear before commencement of the game**, which I am experiencing as a practice at the Institute.

- d) The Academic Resource Park, Management Teachers Programme (MTP) and DBA Programme have a lot of synergetic inter-linkages. **It may be advisable that the same person is given responsibility for all the activities.** It is utmost necessary, however, that his intellectual and administrative competencies are thoroughly examined by the Director and perhaps by the Board also, to repose confidence in him and allow him to take necessary decisions and actions on the spot, at times even without prior consultation with the Director, which is not encouraged at present.
 - e) The resource allocation decisions in the Institute are, at times, observed to be in the hands of people who are not accountable for the task performance. The entrepreneurial tasks like creation of the Academic Resource Park, can not be left to the mercy of non-task leaders, in terms of administrative and infrastructural support, because the task head is then responsible for the results, without having resource and decision making powers to show results.
- II. The strategy of Academic Resource Park as already explained to you, banks heavily on external support, as the Institute, unfortunately, doesn't have substantial internal strengths to take up a task of this kind. To me, the task is much more than a person launching 10 MDPs or teaching 6 MBA courses or having the entire MBA administration responsibilities, if tangible results, that can create a centre of repute, are to be expected. It will require freedom to explore funding from national and international agencies, mobilizing national and international faculty support for academic work and developing an extremely efficient delivery system within the institute. **It doesn't mean that the task head should become a parallel authority to the Director.** It does, however, require that there is a clear understanding between the Director and the task head in respect of what is to be done and how, and a general sanction on that basis for various purposes be accorded for fast action by the task head. The Director should be kept informed of action being taken.
- III. While I am thankful to you for considering me for the assignment, I find myself reluctant to accept the same on account of a total lack of motivation to stretch, due to treatment meted out to me in the past, to come forward and to assume the responsibility of a new task (not an established one), which requires much greater efforts and personal sacrifices. Indeed, to me the entire reward and punishment system seems to be inversely related to the task achievement.(Do see Annexure I for illustrations).

My purpose of giving this detailed account is not to be taken as my disobedience or shirking of an important task responsibility, to which I myself have been one of the proposers. Indeed, my interest in the task can be seen from the efforts so far in this direction, despite all discouragement (see Annexure II). I only wish to give as clear a picture as possible to you regarding what may be required to be done to see that the Institute does get an extremely useful activity **started**, which means that not only engine of aircraft be started, but it gathers necessary (critical) speed to take off, to avoid a disaster.

I, therefore, submit the following:-

- a) You may please explore with all other faculty members whether anyone else is prepared to stretch to shoulder the responsibility. If yes, his proposal may be compared with mine in terms of results promised and resources required (as given below).
- b) You may kindly peruse the note enclosed critically (see annexure III) to advise me about its feasibility.
- c) The appointment should be for a period of 3 or 4 years. 2 years is too short a period to show any worthwhile results in such an activity.
- d) You should accord necessary permission for:-

- i) Exploration with the academicians and institutions of the country and abroad, regarding preparation of different kinds of educational material.
 - ii) Exploration for funding from various national/ international agencies to financing capital and other expenditure, import of technology etc.
 - iii) Registration and sharing of academic resources, and publication of material (by authors) at other places.
 - iv) Various decisions regarding design, promotion and conduction of MDPs under ARP. Only hospitality and class room arrangements to be taken care by MDP Office.
 - v) Separate accounting system for ARP activities, integrated to the Institute's accounts.
- e) You should provide me the following infrastructural facilities to start the preliminary work during 1993-94.

- i) A PC 486 for me and PC 286 for my secretary with connectivity among our PCs and with the LAN of the Institute's computer centre..
- ii) An LQ printer for my secretary, and an easily accessible if not exclusive Laser Printer. The printers and other equipments must be new and in ready condition to allow their use as and when required rather than all the time calling the Computer Centre Staff for help.
- iii) A Video Camera and a Screen Projection System (specifications will be provided in due course) with an operator
- iv) A machine (specifications will be given later)
- v) A room and furniture for visitors
- vi) A messenger/attendant for ARP
- vii) An exclusive secretary developed by me, for the task, with office attached to my office

- f) You will also provide Budgetary support as below:-

-Printing & Mailing of Promotional Material	20,000
-Xeroxing/computer stationery expenses	20,000
-Telephone and Travel expenses	30,000
-Transport expenses for visitors	20,000
-Special memento for all the participants and academic contributors to ARP activities	
-Photography/ Editing/ Sound recording of the video films for making educational films (details will be given later)	
-Computer programme development charges, if any to be paid to SIM CC for developing of computer aided learning packages.	
-Tea/Coffee etc. to the visitors. (Subject to a maximum of Rs. 500 p.m.)	

- g) You will please guarantee me appointments with you for discussions of matters related to ARP within 48 hours (for not more than 1 hour at a time) and decision given within a week, on the issues put up to you. I should not be left high and dry whenever I seek appointments for discussing academic matter. Further, no administrative staff should be allowed whenever I am called for discussion of petty routine issues, asking me to wait for hours coming to the topic and settling the issues, as has been the experience so far. Further, no advisors (especially from clerical cadres) should be called involved in the decision making in the areas for which primary responsibility is to lie with me.

- h) Restore the injustice done to me by the Institute in the past (where still possible) and assure me that no injustice will be done to me in future.
- i) Since I may not be able to devote time to consultancy work like others, after assuming the responsibility, I may be allowed to retain up to 5% of the resources mobilised/ surplus generated if I am able to do so (limited to my consultancy entitlement a year).
- j) Guarantee providing transport to my daughter to go to school/ college when needed as the Institute provides transport to only "school going children". You will realise that we don't have access to public transport system. The college going children are much more hard pressed for time as they are at the critical juncture of their career. Time is essence for them and their mobility is not to be determined by the office timings of the staff or other requirements. They can't afford to miss examination on account of non-availability of transport, as is the case today. Presently we have to keep ourselves ready for such eventualities, because we can't depend on the Institute to take care of our college going children. Unfortunately there are very few persons who have college going children and their voice is not heard in this place where political processes and personal relations make the policies rather than the rationality.

I hope you would not have any reservation in meeting my requirements above. If the same are acceptable, the above office order may please be released.

I may add here that since I already have firm prior academic commitments upto January 1994, the work can commence effectively from mid January '94 onwards only. The intervening period can at best be utilised for planning purpose.

While discussing with the case writer regarding the probability of success of Academic Resource Park, Dr. Bhajan said:

"What can be said right away? It requires lot of hard work and initiative. We need entrepreneurs for such endeavours. Unfortunately the Institute has always curbed any initiative taken by any faculty member ever since its inception. Indeed, we are very poorly organised for delivery, especially for starting any new academic activity. There are very few persons here who can see things through i.e., conceptualise, design and commence an educational programme. Presently, there is no system to identify and develop them. It may look strange to you but the institute does not have any performance evaluation of faculty despite ten years having passed since its' inception. It is thus not possible to differentiate "managers" from "non-managers". All are assumed to be managers, or (non-managers). Then we have academic decision making body full of people who would do minimum to get by. They will effectively block any move of bold expansion plans for academic activities or to do something new. They are very ingenious in thinking collectively of solid reasons as to why a thing could not be done or should not be done. The Institute has been reduced to what may be more appropriately called a MBA Institute only. If you want a research paper or course material for MDP to be Xeroxed, it may not get priority as the xeroxing department may be doing a rush job of printing some course material received late or xeroxing the students fancy bio- data etc. Then there are a increasing number, several dozens of meetings of the MBA committee and faculty council, which many feel are only self-serving type, discussing mostly problem created by one or the other faculty who will generally not be available in the meeting in which issues concerning him are to be discussed.

To add to it faculty members will be involved in so many non-academic matters which have high disturbance value and do not allow one to concentrate on anything of serious academic nature like research and course material preparation or designing effective MDPs.

If a die-hard optimist still manages time and spirit to pursue an academic agenda other than MBA, he will be administratively blocked. Everything, and I mean everything is to be approved by Director, who is rarely available for any academic interaction. Your assistant, whom you groomed will be transferred without notice with immediate effect. You will not be provided with equipment and you will be required to seek permission for everything. You will be given responsibility but no authority. The resource sanctioning authorities, who do not have academic task responsibility, will never be available to you when needed as mentioned to you earlier. The administrative staff can get off the hook all the time. Formal system or procedure are laid out in a way that no one can fix accountability for non-performance of a task on any staff and no time limits are prescribed for completion of any task e.g., you may not get advance even for attending a meeting of Board of Governors. Recently we conducted an MDP that was partly sponsored by an external agency. We had to submit the claims within ten days of completion of the programme. Despite timely and clear instructions to all concerned, the bills were not forwarded within the stipulated time for onward transmission. For everything the faculty has to chase various departments. Your claims may not be settled for months, even years. Of course, there will be post-facto reasons given e.g., as to what procedure should have been followed. And to cap it all, if one still persists, he may be badly humiliated. His increments may be deferred, he may not be permitted to undertake even usual academic endeavour he is entitled to as mentioned in annexure I.

Believe me, it requires revamping, a total overhauling of the system, the starting point being the faculty evaluation and identification of managers and entrepreneurs among faculty, distinguishing them from the faculty as an academic resource base. In my view the Board must have only one agenda item, namely, "What is the progress on academic front" for the Board meetings. All the other things should be delegated to sub-committees. There was a proposal once that in every meeting of the Board, one or more faculty should be allowed to make presentation as to what activities the Institute may take up with him as Task head. The Board could critically examine his proposal. Once a proposal is okayed and budget allocated, the faculty should be allowed freedom to operate efficiently. However, it must be biting dust somewhere.

Unless this is done it will be impossible to launch new activities. I have been proposing several new things in the past but none of them saw the light of the day. Academic Resource Park is one such example. The only thing that was accepted once, was the increase in MBA intake and I was given the assignment. We managed 3-fold increase when perceivably there was no infrastructure available. But experience shows that one should be careful in taking up such assignment as else it could involve very high personal costs in a Institute which now seems to be **cast in a mould** of low level of academic performance, in terms of 7S Archetype.

Questions:

- Q1. As the Director of SIM, what course of action would you follow?
- Q2. Identify the organisation design issues that Dr. Bhajan has raised in his communication to the Director.
- Q3. Supplement your analysis with analysis of SIT(A) case to understand the organisation design problems of SIM comprehensively.

Annexure II

- (a) When I completed my first academic year at the institute completing the assignment to start Placement Activity and having done maximum teaching load, I was selected for appointment as professor, being the only person found suitable for the position, out of four who appeared. However, not only my salary was not fixed as per usual practice of absorption at the end of deputation, even my normal increment was differed. Further, the way my absorption at the end of deputation period was handled by the institute my service were not transferred from Bank of Baroda. In the process I lost my 7 months gratuity and even my PF has not been transferred till date.
- b) When I became Chairman, MBA programme, I was to shoulder the responsibility of managing the increase in take from 30 students to 100 students. The salary revision was taking place and my pay was fixed in a way that I am drawing basic pay less than some faculty vis-a-vis whom I used to draw more, before revision of pay scales.
- c) When I accepted to conduct a training programme for NBID in 1991, on the request of the then Director, despite having taught 5 MBA courses and being MBA Chairman; Convenor, Campus Development Committee; Convenor, R & D Group; etc. I was not paid my due share of consultancy as per the existing rules. The rules were changed after I had made the commitments and applied with restrospective effect.
- d) Though I had sweated most in terms of Campus Development as compared to any other faculty member, I was ignored when the house allotment started and I was allotted from amongst the leftover house although I was very high in seniority.
- e) The institute treated my college going children in most hostile manner, including a double charge for transport. Indeed, I had to pay almost twice while others had to pay less, than half compared to what one had to pay before shifting to campus, without being given equal service.
- f) I was not permitted to attend even International Conference held in India despite my paper being included at the proceedings while some others were, although I was entitled as much as others for the same.
- g) When I sought permission to give a seminar on topics close to ARP and which is within my entitlement I don't get even reply to my request, leave alone permission, while others enjoy the facility.
- h) When I developed almost a new book in my field, it has not been given permission for publication, as is the practice any other leading management institute in the country.
- i) When I proposed to stretch to conduct 10 MDPs in a single year in 1992-93 I was constrained from doing so, due to utter indifference of MDP Chairman to let me know the administrative and policy details. The administrative support provided was also far from adequate to launch meaningful, innovative programmes.
- j) The administrative treatment meted out to me in the past (1992) at times had been so bad that I had to go without meals for taking classes, simply because I was teaching more than any other faculty member. I was not provided even my regular table to work during 1992-93 till the present director joined the institute.

- k) When I stretched out to take up research work for ESCEP conference on the suggestion of the then Director, despite having a teaching load of 6 MBA courses, I was not only deprived of the time to commit to research work, even my bills related to the conference preparation have not been settled, for which I had not taken even advance from the institute, and despite reimbursement for the same having been received more than 11 months ago. It is so frustrating especially because others are not only allowed special leave to do research project on consultancy basis at rates far in excess of what is allow to institute faculty without even furnishing details of work.
- l) Last but not the least, there is absolutely no appreciation or recognition for innovation and cost effectiveness efforts as these things are not at all part of evaluation system of faculty, if any.