

“Programme Inauguration and Delivery, Note by Prof. G. Raghuram (2011)”

PROGRAMME INAUGURATION AND DELIVERY

The programme was inaugurated on April 2, 2006, a Sunday, the day after the IIMA Convocation. We had our Chairman, Mr. Narayana Murthy inaugurate the programme. Our Director, Professor Bakul Dholakia and I, as GPX Chair, followed with welcome addresses. My sentiments and thoughts on the programme inauguration were expressed in my address (Exhibit 6).

There was a general sense of excitement with the new programme. To understand the classroom dynamics of this new segment, I sat through most of the sessions in the first month of the programme, in consultation with the faculty offering the core courses. Most of the teaching faculty liked the class participation, which brought in a richness based on the participants' experience. However, in some of the quantitative courses, the participants exhibited initial insecurity. A few tutorials were offered to deal with this issue.

The offer of the core courses went by smoothly, but for two courses. One of the faculty members concerned disagreed on evaluation norms, while another took objection to a last-minute change of invigilation support in the exam. The participants felt that the number of electives offered in the third term was less than desirable. In response, efforts were made to offer more electives in the fifth term, not only by IIMA faculty, but also by faculty from other IIMs and management schools abroad.

Professor Arvind Sahay and his team did their best to operationalize the international immersion, with focused efforts on sourcing projects. While the academic component of

the international immersion fell into place, the project component was less than desirable. This was partly due to the fact that there had not been enough time to explore different possibilities for 60 participants, especially given that it was a new programme.

I went to the University of British Columbia, Vancouver and to the University of Amsterdam, when our international immersion batches were present there. Similarly, Professor Venkata Rao went to the Chinese University of Hong Kong. While in Europe, I also visited INSEAD in France and IMD in Switzerland, to compare notes with their one-year programmes targeted at participants with experience profiles similar to the PGPX.

There were insecurities regarding final placements. Road shows were organized in Delhi and Chennai. Placement brochures were mailed liberally. However, the participants were always told that given their background, they must develop a focused career aspiration, and themselves seek an appropriate set of companies, for which supporting letters could go from the Institute. In spite of this, most participants implicitly preferred the IIMA brand's ability to attract companies who might be interested in their profile, with appropriate salary considerations. There were also concerns about managing placements with support only from the PGPX office, while at the same time, seeking information from the PGP placement office to reach out to companies. There was a felt competitive threat between PGP and PGPX, though it was always emphasized that they represented two different capabilities. In spite of all this, with the participants' and Professor Sahay's efforts, and thanks to a booming economy, full placement was achieved.

As the academic year drew to a close, feedback was sought from the participants in multiple ways (compilation of course feedback, overall written feedback, oral feedback in two sessions, with presentations). This resulted in some readjustment of courses to take care of overlaps, better sequencing, and match between content and number of sessions. Similar reviews have been undertaken every year, to improve the programme.

There was some discussion as to when I should step down as the PGPX Chair, as by March 2007, I would have completed two years and four months as the Chair. There was a feeling that I should see the second batch through also. Personally, I felt that the baton should be handed over, and there were at least a few faculty in the EC who were sufficiently involved and aware of the programme requirements, and would bring in fresh perspectives. Hence I decided to step down.

The first batch had its convocation along with the students of the other programmes on March 31, 2007. The gold medallist of the first batch was Mr. James Beeson, a British national, who had spent significant time in China. This seemed to augur well for the

intended international character of the programme. (This has, however, not happened in terms of growth of non-ethnic Indian participation in further programmes.)

There has been a concern as to whether the programme content has been an overload, with a dysfunctional 'pressure cooker'-like environment. While the 'pressure cooker' environment has been recognized, the issue is whether it is dysfunctional or functional, creating a positive energy. Most of the participants seem to agree with the latter view, and would not like the programme to be diluted on this count. The 'pressure cooker' environment has been humorously brought out in a book titled '*Second Degree*' by Prashant John, a participant from the first batch. A brief on the book is given in Exhibit 7.

Currently, into its fifth year, a more formal review of the PGPX, by a committee headed by Professor Ajay Pandey, is in progress. The programme appears to be well set. There has been an increase in the number of participants by stretching the class size from 60 in the first batch, to 86 in the fifth batch. Exhibit 8 gives the batch and placements profile of the various PGPX batches so far. While there is a clear demand for a second section, the faculty supply seems to be holding us back.