

Case of Intellectual Shoplifting

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It was the afternoon of August 2nd2014 Around the round table of the Star Institute of Management Research sat Dr. Pandya, Dr. Shah and Prof. Aline Gomez whose gazes were fixed on the silver haired man who must be in his early sixties. He was in some deep contemplation. After an hour long discussion, everyone in the conference room was waiting for the decision of the Director, Dr. Oberoi. He had to give his final verdict for the case of Prof. Aline Gomez.

I. About the Institute

Established in the year 1997, Star Institute of Management Research was one of the most reputed business schools and was the pioneer in business education in Northern India. Thus, it enjoyed good and strong alumni base which was in and around Delhi. The institute ran Masters' degree programmes which were affiliated to University of Delhi and also a few autonomous Post Graduate Diploma programmes duly approved by AICTE. During the weekends, it ran programmes for working professionals that gave a Masters degree in Business Administration with specialization in different functional areas such as Marketing, Finance, Human Resources and Information Management. It also had more than 95 fulltime faculty members facilitating these programmes. The institute is certified by the ISO and worked towards getting one of the highest international accreditations such as EQUIS.

This educational institute has a green eco-friendly campus which was more than 100 acres big. Additionally, it was encompassed by state of the art facilities which included a tennis court, gymnasium, table tennis room, yoga room, squash court, volley ball ground, cricket ground and also the football ground. Business school building was the most prominent among all the others because of its aesthetically pleasing architecture. Even after such luxurious amenities, it was one the cheapest colleges to pursue a career in Management.

Promoted by a group of prominent educationists, the institute has a vision to provide the best education to the aspiring students at an affordable fee. It was prominent among the recruiters as it ranked one of the top five private business schools in India. The management of the institute were liberal and helpful. They created a corpus for the purpose of providing medical treatment to needy patients at cheap prices with the support of the neighbouring hospital.

II. Background of Prof. Aline Gomez

Prof. Aline Gomez joined this institute in the year 2008 as an Assistant Professor in the department of Finance. She had secured her post-graduation degree in MBA from the United States of America and was pursuing her doctoral degree in Delhi University under the guidance of Dr. Shah. She was a jovial and an outgoing person who loved to dance and party. She presented papers in International conferences in U.S. and in Singapore sponsored by the institute. Aline was married with two kids aged two and six. She was an average teacher but was very good in her people's skills. She was appointed by the predecessor of Dr. Oberoi-Dr.Ahuja. Dr. Ahuja thought very highly of her as she had got her Master's degree from the United States.

III. Background of Dr. Oberoi

He was a handsome and an intelligent man with a wide experience of more than 20 years in various reputed business organizations including Tatas. He was an engineer with MBA in Operations Management. He came into academia after 1990 and had worked with three other business schools before joining Star. After Mr.Ahuja's retirement he was the first preference of the management as he not only had leadership qualities but also people's skills. Thus, he took over the office in 2011.

Significant changes were made after he was appointed. Before 2011, there was a lot of ambiguity and decisions were taken on ad-hoc basis. Dr. Oberoi made standard operating procedures for various processes and formed the decentralised way of working. He started delegating powers to the registrar and to the area chairpersons. He was the initiator of all the HR policies and also changed the performance appraisal system (PMS). There were only fifty faculty members when he took over in the year 2011 but the strength was more

than 95 by 2013. Faculty members were struggling to keep pace with the changes. The new leader definitely had a clear vision and planned to bring the institute close to the international standard. He also recruited more than ten administrative staff to assist the faculty members.

IV. PMS at Star management

Based on their teaching ratings, administrative involvement and research and publications, the faculty members were promoted or given increments. It was competitive. For publications, they were encouraged to write in top categories of journals classified as A,B, C and D included in Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) and Journal of Quality Listing (JQL). They were encouraged to make the necessary efforts to realize the institute's vision. PMS introduced performance orientation and suitable actions were taken against faculty members whose performance was sub-normal.

V. Aline's PMS form:

The problem had started in the month of July in 2013 when the PMS forms were submitted to the area chairpersons along with the documentary evidence. Dr. Pandya was the Area Chairperson Finance department and while going through all the documents he came across Aline's self-assessment report stating therein the details of a research paper written by her under the guidance of Dr. Shah. It was published by a 'Journal of Applied Research in Finance', USA which was considered the best publication among the academicians in the area of finance around the world. Dr. Pandya was astonished and inquisitive. He started reading the paper which he found to be very conceptual in that particular field with a very high level of research involved. As the ACP he was reasonably aware of the level of the faculty members in his department and till then none of the faculty members were able to go as close to something as publication in the Journal of Applied Research in Finance. Dr. Pandya immediately opened the Ebsco research site that the institute had subscribed for and was aghast to see the same paper with the same content word for word except the author's name. He sat down overwhelmed; head in his hand and was totally numb. He was encountering such a situation for the first time in his life and neither had he heard about such a thing happening anywhere. He enquired with Dr. Shah to find out, but to his dismay Dr. Shah knew nothing about it. He left the office and decided to sleep over the matter. Even his peers in other business schools were not of any great help. He knew the financial position of Aline and also about the loan she had taken for her house. At that juncture the job was very important for Aline. This thought made him more nervous.

On one fresh Monday morning, Dr. Pandya called in Aline to his cabin and asked her in case she liked to give any clarifications about her research paper mentioned in the PMS. Aline said firmly, "No". Upon hearing the overconfident answer, Dr. Pandya made up his mind and discussed the issue with Dr. Oberoi in the next couple of minutes. Dr. Oberoi called Aline and asked her to apologize but that was of no avail as Aline refused to do so and there was no sign of guilt on Aline's face. Later, though she apologized for the incident to Dr. Oberoi, he doubted if she actually meant her word.

Dr. Oberoi who was always a pillar of strength for his faculty members was now in a state of indecisiveness. He looked out of the window seeking some sort of a divine intervention.