

### Case Code 36

#### 36. Is Small Beautiful (G)?

The selection Committee for Dr. Geetha Chandran, an Assistant Professor was wondering what way to resolve the deadlock, caused by one of the members, Dr. Gogi, threatening to walk off from the meeting to record his dissent to the candidature of Dr. Geetha Chandran.

As per the procedure, the Selection Committee had four members. The Director of the Institute, two eminent experts working in leading Management Institutes of the country listed in the panel recommended by the respective functional area faculty members, and a Professor of the Institute from the same discipline. In case there was no Professor available in the area, a Professor from another area was requested to join the selection Committee. The Director, who had joined the Institute about a year ago, had introduced the new composition of the Committee with due approval of the Board of Governors. (which was followed even when Dr. Gogi had appeared as a candidate for Professorship) to bring more transparency in the selection process, which had several steps as described below.

1. All the applications received from external candidates were forwarded to various functional 'Area' Chairpersons to get the views of the 'Area' members about the suitability of the candidate, to decide whether a candidate should be called for interview. No such screening was done for internal candidates, who were free to apply. Director neither promised selection, nor advised anyone for or against applying.
2. On the basis of recommendations of the area/his own volition, the Director invited the potential candidates for interacting with the faculty, give a Seminar and attend interview with the Selection Committee. The Director could invite any other candidate or reject any recommendation, but he had to put the reasons in writing. The Director, however, had rarely used his power to go beyond recommendations of the 'Areas' for inviting the candidates.
3. In the Seminar presentations all the Faculty members (as also the external experts) were invited to attend. After the presentation, an oral feedback was taken on the presentation made from the faculty members in presence of the external experts. Internal faculty was exempted from Seminars.
4. The Director generally did not ask any question but briefed the Committee on parity with the existing faculty members to help the selection committee give precise recommendation on pay and scale to be offered. He also used to advise the internal faculty member also not to ask questions but leave it to experts, (especially in case of internal candidates), because often the internal member was not a Professor from the concerned area (there were very few Professors in the Institute).
5. After the Seminar, a personal interview was conducted. The final recommendation regarding selection/ non-selection, position to be offered, including the basic to be offered, was written by the Internal Faculty and signed by two External Experts and then countersigned by the Director. The recommendations were written only if all the members agreed on the same.
6. The recommendations were forwarded to the Chairman for his approval. On receipt of approval the Senior Personal Officer drafted the letter of appointment to be sent by the Director. The Director did not disclose the result of selection until the approval from Chairman was received. He had also instructed his office not to do so for anyone.

The Selection Committee was quite impressed by the performance of Dr. Geetha with large number of publications, number of courses he was teaching and his teaching feedback, his association in organising Conferences, conducting MDPs etc. The Internal Faculty, Dr. Gogi, also agreed with the quality of work and his performance. Before the Committee could frame the recommendation for Dr. Geetha's appointment to the next higher post, he requested that the Selection Committee that the Committee should also consider the behaviour of Dr. Geetha, who was very irresponsible.

Dr. Gogi: "Sir, I would like to bring to your notice the fact that Dr. Geetha is very irresponsible. He quarrels with everyone and creates problems for all. He is beyond redemption. Two years ago, our then Director was conducting a course with him, in which the Director had to take 8 classes out of about 30 classes. In the examination, conducted by the Director there was mass copying. The Director cancelled the examination and the faculty council resolved to call the students two week before the end of the summer vacation (before the beginning of the next academic session) to conduct classes and fresh examination. Dr. Geetha sent an embarrassing email to all the faculty and students questioning director's wisdom. He also questioned the validity of it as the Director had taught only 8 sessions and he had taught rest of the 30 sessions of the course".

Director: "Yes. It is true. This was not proper. But similar acts were being done by many faculty members. But after I joined, I am advising them not to do so. I had told Dr. Geetha not to do so and he has refrained from doing such things. Isn't it?"

Expert 1: "These things are not uncommon in our kind of system. But these should not be brought in the process of selection, which is based upon the fair evaluation of the candidates' performance. I find he has outstanding performance in terms of publications. He has taken fairly high teaching load and still the student's feedback is very good, occasionally better than others in the area. So I think he ought to be given an opportunity to improve his behaviour, which may worsen if he is denied next higher position despite superior performance"

Dr. Gogi: "I find it difficult to accept his selection because of his behaviour. It would send a wrong signal. You know this year he did not cover the entire syllabus of a course as per the course outline approved by the area. The matter went to faculty council, which resolved that if it happens in future, suitable action be taken against the errand faculty member"

Director: "Yes. That was shocking to me. But on investigation I found it was as much a systemic failure as individuals'. I came to know of it when PGP Chairman called on me to inform that some colleagues have brought to his notice that Dr. Geetha has not taken all classes of the courses. I called a faculty council meeting. In the meantime, wanting to know the gravity of the situation I sought outlines of all the courses from PGP office. PGP office informed that outlines of all the courses are not available, especially those conducted by the Adjunct Faculty (which is a fairly large number). PGP Chairman agreed with me that there is a need for streamlining the whole system which has evolved over time. Anyway, in the Faculty Council meeting Dr. Geetha explained that he altered the course outline because he wanted to bring the inputs at par with other leading IIMs and certain topics did not belong to the course on quantitative methods but to operations research. He was asked to complete those sessions. A faculty member however raised a point of order as to why the matter was not brought to the knowledge of PGP Committee (which is responsible for all academic matters related to PGP). Director, who was Chairman of Faculty Council, expressed his dismay at the failure of the system that the PGP office did not know whether the Instructors were covering all the topics. Dr. Geetha's case has only highlighted this

systemic failure. Even now I have yet not been informed by PGP office that this has happened. The students have passed and gone. How to get the classes done now? If this issue is to decide candidature of Dr. Geetha on this ground, we have to institute an inquiry how this failure had taken place, and necessary action will follow. We can keep his candidature in abeyance until then. It may have other ramifications like not confirming a person selected and on probation, if he has indulged in similar behavior. But we perhaps can't reject till the probe is over."

Expert 2: "It is not proper for us to entertain these issues for deciding the candidature of a person through open selection process. Look, if you (Dr. Gogi), for some reason (say being away on tour) were not a part of the selection committee today, these concerns would not have been a factor to be considered. In any case these can be taken care at Institute level. We can't consider them as we have no knowledge of facts of the case".

Dr. Gogi: "Well, I have presented my views on the candidate. If you do not want to consider, it is okay with me. I will walk off from here and you people decide whatsoever you want."

Director: "Prof. Gogi, don't get upset. If there are behavioral problems, we can sort out internally at Institute level. There are many such things happening every day and we sort them out. Remember, the case of a faculty who awarded a candidate one letter grade higher for honesty of the candidate to bring to the Instructor's notice that there was an error in the result given by the Instructor. There is no provision for honesty grades, but faculty member indulged in this behavior which could have created serious problem. You did not get upset on that and raise the issue. Did not we take appropriate corrective action as the matter came to my notice? I have to attend all such errand behaviour of faculty so that Institute activities do not get adversely affected. We will jointly try to correct his behaviour, if that is the problem."

Expert1: "I think Director's suggestion is welcome. If he gets what is due, his behaviour may improve. You may also try to do some mentoring as he is a junior colleague in your area"

Dr. Gogi: "But he does not permit me to do so. I have almost as many papers published as him. My ratings are also more or less same as his rating. He thinks I have got more than him (professorship) and he reacts like this."

Expert1: "In that case it is all the more necessary to give him what he deserves on merit. This will give a positive signal to him to listen to you. Not only he will be happier on getting what he deserved, but he will also be grateful to you that you did allow personal relations to come in the way of his selection. I suggest we must give a chance to him to improve".

Dr. Gogi: "He will not improve. He does not cooperate with any one. He comes forward to assume a responsibility and then backs out. Once he accepted the responsibility of coordinating a training programme and then backed out. Recently he was to go on admission duty, but last minute he said he can't go as he has been called for hearing in the court for the accident (in which he was hit by a bus)"

Director: "Look, in the first case on the receipt of the email from another member of their area that he has backed out, I called Dr. Geetha to explain. He said Dr. Gogi and the other Faculty member in the area asked him to assume responsibility of coordinating a six days management development programme. When he came forward, they said they can't commit to anything and he has to arrange the faculty for the programme. So he backed out. Regarding the other matter, I have nothing to say".

Experts then convinced Dr. Gogi to help out the colleague as they could not accept rejection of Dr. Geetha on behavioural considerations. Dr. Gogi agreed but added in the recommendation that the Internal Faculty Member and Director refrained from asking questions to candidates. The experts also recommended to the Director that the system needed modification in that there should be no internal faculty in the interview process, especially for internal candidates, notwithstanding his concern for the transparency.

Talking to the case writer the Director said “I have often noticed aspersion being cast on the Directors for favours in selection process. If an internal person is selected he feels it is due to merit, if he is rejected he blames the director for disliking him. Whether the grievance was genuine or not, is a different matter. But lack of transparency gives rise to such perceptions. When I came here, I thought to overcome this by inducting an internal member who has the responsibility of writing the recommendations of the selection committee. I expect him to explain to faculty members in case anyone questions selection. We have two external experts (as in case of sister institutions) from the panel made for each area based upon the recommendations of the respective areas. I refrain from asking the questions for two reasons. Firstly, I can’t be expert in all the areas and secondly there is no need for asking question for the heck of it. The same is true in the case of the Internal Professor who is brought with specific purpose. His presence has a check on the director and if director is putting himself to check he can’t allow other to influence fair selection on extraneous considerations. This has potential to create a bit of acrimony which has to be attended to, but that’s a small price to pay than facing question on the integrity of the director and the system. We can’t allow the provision of selection process to be used to play politics by faculty members against internal candidates. If Dr. Gogi had not agreed I would have kept the selection in abeyance and requested Chairman to get an enquiry by a Board committee to take necessary action. But after the modifications brought in process, there has been no case of people casting aspersions or asking for change in the process”

- Q1 Why Dr. Gogi is objecting to the selection of Dr. Geetha Chandran.
- Q2. Is he correct in doing so?
- Q3. To what extent the issue of behavior will be resolved, if the selection committee agrees with Dr. Gogi and rejects the candidature of Dr. Geetika?
- Q4. What will be implication of rejecting Dr. Geetika on behavioural grounds?
- Q5, Should Director change the procedure of selection as recommended by the experts?
- Q6. What are other issues that need to be attended to?