

Student Strike in the University of Khumaar: A Case Study in Organisation Behaviour

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It was a lovely Monday morning when Aumkar reached his office. It has been around a year and two for Aumkar to be associated as a Lecturer with University of Khumaar, India. University of Khumaar is a State Private University set up by State Legislature of India. During this brief association, he had his own shares of ups and downs, pushes and pulls. He felt the morning was lovelier that day as the weather was relatively warmer. In past few days, the entire nation was engulfed in cold Al-Nina breezes.

After his first session that begins at morning nine IST (Indian Standard Time), he was able to log-in to his corporate email. To his surprise there were three mails waiting for his attention. These mails were dated the last Saturday-a half working day when one can call it a day at half past one noon. One of these emails was send at evening five IST and was subjected as: 29 January.2012 Working Day-Message from Administrative department of the University. With his heart pumping at an extra ordinary pace, Aumkar opened the attachment (a *.pdf file) with this mail. The attachment read something like this: 'In view of the prevailing situation tomorrow 29 January 2012(Sunday) will be observed as working day for the University. All may please note.'

It wasn't late for Aumkar to admit that he has just now lost at least a day's productivity. Productivity lost not as a result of unable to make it to office on Sunday but that of today and days after when he will have to run from pillar to post to justify his absence from workplace. As he was busy rubbing his forehead, Aryan, a colleague to him approached him. Aryan, 'Aumkar, there has been a call for you. Our Head of Department (HOD) wants to see you.' Aumkar could make out the reason for which Ravish, his newly promoted HOD wanted to see him. After a while, rather than visiting him, Aumkar called him in his office. Ravish, 'It is obvious for you to know the reason of looking for you. See if you can talk to the Registrar/Dean and sort this out.' Aumkar ended the call with a 'yes-boss' attitude. By the time, Aumkar looked into this watch; it was eleven in the morning.

He was about to start preparing for his next session at one in the noon, when a new email flashed in his inbox. This mail was subjected as: Message from the Administrator: Notice for leave application dated 29 January 2012. The attachment with this mail read something like this: 'In view of prevailing situation, 29 January 2012 was observed as full working day. Those faculty and staff members, who were absent and not marked their attendance in biometric system, are requested to apply for leave, otherwise ABSENT will be marked for the day as above. Above is requested by evening five on 30 January 2012.'

Perplexed, Aumkar immediately left to have Ravish sign off his leave. Though a Technical University established in the twenty-first century, The Leave Management System (LMS) was a paper driven application form to be in-person approved at two levels (HOD and Dean-Academics) and then submitted to the Administrative office.

During this brief meet, Ravish cut all corner to ensure he and not Aumkar has his say in this and some other burning matters at that point of time. Ravish was from those old schools of autocratic style of management. Burnt, he immediately proceeded to the Dean's chamber. He needed him as his second and final level of approval. It was around half past eleven by then. He found Mr. Zain, the Dean-Academics busy on a call. Aumkar was requested to be seated as the call has to be supplemented with a mail. By the time these acts were done, it was twelve in the noon. Mr. Zain, a veteran sanctioned the leave with his own unique style of 'ifs' and 'buts'. In Mr. Zain's office, Aumkar also happened to have met few of his other colleagues who were considering themselves as victims of this practice. Through his persuasive communication style, the Dean tried diluting the effects.

By the time Aumkar was submitting the leave application to the Administrative Department; it was already half past twelve noon. He realized he is already late for his planned lunch at quarter past twelve noon, which now has to be put off after the session at one in the noon. As he reached his desk, he quickly grabbed an Oreo-a tiny, chocolate flavored, creamy layered pack of biscuits; gathered the handouts he had prepared for the class and started off for this session. This session on Human Resource Management (HRM) with his graduate students ended at around two in the noon.

Thereafter he began his lunch (even though he has lost his appetite by now). All that he was then doing was galloping the food and brooding on the proceedings. He realized, during last few days, events have been more tipsy curvy. This Friday, 27 January 2012, there has been unrest in the students' hostel. There was a severe fight among two groups of students from second and third year of B.Tech program, leading to a massive disorder. The strife was so intense and wide spread that more than six students were suspended and vigilance was strengthened to control the situation. The vigilance team included more than 200 security staff and faculty members observing the entire campus round the clock. On Saturday, 28 January.2012, the student fraternity demonstrated its unity and discontent in the form of a strike which began as a mock march; followed by a Dharna and then by another violent discord paralyzing the entire campus. The Administrative body considered faculty members as of prime importance in nullifying this situation as past experiences show that they had the student's trust.

Incidentally, 30 January is observed in India as Martyrs' Day-the day when the loving father of nation-Mahatma Gandhi; the living symbol of peace, freedom and non-violence was heartlessly assassinated.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Analyze the different feelings Aumkar had gone through as this incidence occurred.
2. What kind of organisational culture you see prevailing in the University of Khumaar?
3. With this mindset, how far will the University of Khumaar be able to achieve its aim of being a centre of excellence in quality education?
4. Suggest some initial exercises (if required) for the Promoters of this private University to initiate a fruitful change.