Bamboozled in Bapatla

By : Juggernaut

Those staff members that spent some time abroad want to prove that they were changed, change seems to be the keyword here whether it was their accent, dress code or mannerisms. People may change with time and living in other cultures would influence this change to some extent. But if these changes were to impact adversely others, the supervisory staff should have been intervened to prevent students being bamboozled.

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â Gentlemen, take your seats,â this was the first sentence he would say in every class before he starts the lecture. The students gave him a nick name â Gentleman.â

Professor Gentleman taught in an agricultural college in a rural area. He spoke in a foreign accent, sounds more American. The professor spent some time at an American University in Midwestern United States to obtain a masters degree.

This was in mid 60â s, most agricultural teaching colleges in India implemented internal assessment system (trimester or semester system), an import from United States education system. Teaching staff from Indian universities were sent to American universities to learn American system of grading students (GPA system) and some received American degrees in their respective fields to come back to implement GPA system. Rather than one annual test in traditional system, in the trimester system, students were given several tests, as many as 10 in a quarter, and a grade were awarded by the professor that taught the class (internal assessment).

Professor Gentleman wore American clothes, mostly plaid trousers and either a white oxford shirt or a blue oxford. Only Anglo-Indian women or actresses in Hindi movies wore plaid trousers or skirts in those days. Students found hard to understand him in the class since it was neither Indian nor American accent, it was more of his own making. The Professor appeared to pay more attention to his accent; in the process the subject matter became secondary to the frustration of the students. On top of this, he subjected the students to an array of unannounced tests, so many, all in the name of American system.

The professor gentleman was a married man and yet he hung out with a single woman working on the campus, love American style. The students took everything in stride in the name of American system. It was not clear whether he victimized the students in the name of American system or himself a victim of American system he acquired during his stay in America. The students took a deep breath when they were done with his course mostly with Câ s.

Among other teaching staff that returned from the United States, for some reason, the students gave a nickname â Bullâ to a thin, tall, a very fair skin professor. Professor Bull, also spoke with accent. Again, it was more like a personal creation. The accent became person specific with their own idiosyncrasies. All the students got from his course was bull, but thatâ s not what he was named after.

The Principal of the college, a specialist in plant diseases, returned from USA with a concept that student union elections were waste of time and the student with highest GPA should be nominated as the president of the studentâ s union. In this rural town where election of any kind was a contact sport, when the students protested, the Principal instead proposed that a student from lower socio-economic class should be nominated as the president of the students union citing equal opportunity motto in the United States.

Some staff members misused the internal assessment system by favoring few students in awarding grades. Few chosen students consistently scored straight Aâ s by obtaining test papers in advance. Rumor was that these students were mascots for certain groups within the teaching staff, and each group was trying to prop uptheir candidate to maintain straight A status throughout the four-year course.

Those staff members that spent some time abroad want to prove that they were changed, change seems to be the keyword here whether it was their accent, dress code or mannerisms. People may change with time and livingto some extent. But if these changes were to impact adversely others, the supervisory staff should have been intervened to prevent students being bamboozled.These members of staff should be re-assigned to work with crops and dairy cattle not with the students.

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