



Pramod Kumar Gupta

"We are very optimistic and confident that Pramod will be selected as the Deputy Director of the Education Department." , said Dr. Bhushan Punani

Background

Pramod Kumar Gupta, 33 years old had completed his Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati (MDS) University, Ajmer in 1999. He is the second of three sons from a business family. The family business; run by his father trades in marble tiles, clothes and grocery items. His elder brother is a Chartered Accountant, settled in Delhi and the younger one is a medical practitioner with the Government of Rajasthan¹. His uncle is also an industrialist and an entrepreneur. After his graduation in Science in 1995, Pramod had joined his father's business. A year later, he decided to go for his MBA. The family wanted him to rejoin the business after that but he was not keen, he was also not interested in being a part of the corporate world.

Association with BPA

At the time of his MBA summer project, one of his professors suggested that the social development sector might be a good area for his work. Pramod himself had no knowledge whatsoever about the sector but was adaptive to the idea of towing a different line. He finally landed at the Blind People's Association (BPA) headquarters in Ahmedabad². He worked on the *Vision and Mission* statement of BPA and had the opportunity of working closely with the charismatic Dr. Bhushan Punani, the executive director. After completion of his summer training, Dr. Punani said that he would like him to join them once he completes his MBA. BPA was in fact looking for a person with a management qualification, who had the inclination to teach.

Pramod went on to join BPA as a Documentation Officer on a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) sponsored project under Dr. Punani. The management in general and Dr. Punani in particular were impressed with Pramod. In the words of Dr. Punani,

Since we were all busy with administrative matters and the like, we badly needed a person who could take over some of our responsibilities. We believed that Pramod would be the best candidate - he is very honest, punctual, dedicated, dependable, had no ego, with good values and virtues even though he is not very strong and aggressive.

Aby Tellas (Lecturer, D C School of Management and Technology, Kerala, India), Himadri Barman (Lecturer, Centre for Management Studies, Dibrugarh University, Assam, India), and Umesh Singh Yadav (Lecturer, Management Campus, Pokhara University, Nepal) have prepared this case as a basis for class discussion. This case is not intended to serve as an endorsement, a source of primary data, or illustrations of effective or ineffective management / decision making.

¹ A western Indian state

² The largest city of the western Indian state of Gujarat

On completion of the UNICEF project, he was offered a post in another Non Governmental Organization (NGO) much larger in scale and resources. Pramod refused the offer and said that he would like to work with BPA. Convinced that Pramod was serious about BPA, the management offered him the post of Education Manger which he accepted happily. Education Manager was a special post created for convenience. Basically, he was a teacher (special education) supported by the Government of Gujarat with the additional responsibility of managing the routines and tour programmes of other teachers with BPA (21 at the beginning which increased to 28 later on and who reported to him), review their performance, do research and data compilation, liaison with the respective Government departments and other donor organizations as well as handle money matters at the local level. For the extra work, he was given a separate allowance. As part of the arrangement, Pramod had to complete a Diploma which was equivalent to a B. Ed. (Special Education)³ degree, which BPA offers on its own.

The initial period for him was one of excitement and enthusiasm. The work culture at BPA was very positive in outlook, there was constant encouragement from the seniors to work creatively and think and work independently. Work interference was minimal and initiatives for adding value to the organization were always appreciated. Pramod had this to say,

I was asked to present a paper in a national conference in Delhi, hardly a few months after joining. In spite of being unaware of the technicalities of paper presentation and insufficient knowledge, I was cajoled by my seniors to go ahead. I finally made the presentation with the help and guidance of my seniors

But after the initial couple of years, he was losing motivation; the work was getting monotonous and the excitement was not there. The fact that he had no exposure to the corporate world as an MBA was also there somewhere at the back of his mind. Another issue that frequently bothered him was that he was not part of the strategic decision making process at BPA. He finally resigned in 2003.

Dr. Punani partly blames the system for Pramod's resignation as there is a role ambiguity between being a teacher and a manager. He believed that Pramod will be able to manage both the roles successfully but gradually began to notice that Pramod more of enjoyed the managing and training the teachers role rather than the teaching responsibility. This was something which he was finding difficult to appreciate. The reason was that first of all, he was a Government special education teacher which made BPA accountable to the Government. This accountability necessitated some minimum hours of teaching and other associated works expected of a special education teacher. Dr. Punani was absolutely clear that there can be no compromise on his role as a teacher. Thus, he told Pramod very clearly that the priority is to look after academic issues first and then do the other works. He also opined that being a very straight forward person; Pramod is having problem in dealing with people who are not as straight forward as him and also lacks Machiavellism⁴, which he feels is an important requirement for a manager. This in no way meant that he was not satisfied with or he did not want Pramod as an employee.

As far as Pramod was concerned, he loved training the teachers more in comparison to the managerial role but he needed a M. Ed. (Special Education)⁵ degree to become a formal trainer, which he didn't have. He also admitted that he was having a tough time dealing with people who are not straight forward. There was however an immense satisfaction for the way he was instrumental in changing his subordinate's career, the training courses and feedback mechanisms he developed as Education Manager at BPA.

³ Bachelor of Education

⁴ The political doctrine of Machiavelli, which denies the relevance of morality in political affairs and holds that craft and deceit are justified in pursuing and maintaining political power

⁵ Master of Education

Life after BPA

His father was happy with his decision of resigning and hoped that now at least he will put a hand on the family business and in fact they pressurized Pramod for that. Fortunately for him, his wife was very supportive; the resignation decision making her unhappy notwithstanding.

The decision to resign was a particularly hard decision for him to take since he had a lot of things going for him. He reflected back on the ample opportunities to develop himself, freedom to work and take initiatives and above all the satisfaction of being able to do something for the under privileged sections of the society. When he compares himself with his MBA classmates, he thinks that he has achieved much more in terms of handling people. He is proud of the fact that he had a regular opportunity of interacting with top Government bureaucrats. These were some of the reasons that even after resigning, he felt that BPA was too close to his heart and he decided to come back to the organization in some capacity. BPA was considerate enough to hire him as a Consultant (Inclusive Education)⁶.

During the period November 2004 to May 2005, Healthlink Worldwide⁷ sponsored three roundtables at Malawi, India and Cambodia to look at how to move forward on linking disability policy and practice. Pramod acted as a Moderator in the India Round on Mainstreaming Disability. He also moderated the electronic forum (e-forum) discussions for this particular round table. This international exposure not only gave him recognition as an expert in the field of disability but also helped him in getting selected for the EU Commission Scholarship for MA (Special Education) by Roehampton University at London.

As consultant, he is currently handling four projects for BPA. Apart from these, he is also acting as a Consultant & Trainer for three other NGOs, of which two are in Gujarat and one outside. He has recently been assigned to prepare a concrete plan to open a Regional Rehabilitation Center for the blind and people with impaired vision in Western Rajasthan at Jodhpur by a Dutch Foundation - Stitching Shared Vision. He is being paid Rs. 1,000 per day of exclusive time spent on it. BPA has also nominated him for the post of Deputy Director in the Department of Education, Government of Gujarat to handle schemes on integrated education. He is a strong contender for the post. He also has the option of joining an affiliate of BPA, V S Gandhi Charitable Trust as full time Director at Kaparganj, Gujarat in case he is not selected for the post of Deputy Director.

Now being at the verge of taking a decision, Pramod ponders on what he needs to do? How should he redefine his career with BPA and the other opportunities that are coming his way?

⁶ A consultant is not a regular employee

⁷ Healthlink Worldwide is a specialist health and development agency based in London. It works in partnership; with over 50 partnerships in more than 30 countries

Exhibit 1: About Blind People's Association

A group of blind persons got together in 1954 and decided to start a Recreation Club for the Blind. This small club is now a large multi- faceted agency providing a wide gamut of services- from prevention, to education, to counseling, to rehabilitation and employment, to multiple disability and advocacy. Today, BPA is one of the largest voluntary organizations in Asia in the disability sector.

The BPA's name is a misnomer. It does not work only for the blind, as has been mentioned earlier. On the contrary!! It works and provides services to all categories of disabled persons- but it began for the blind and the name became too well-known to be changed!!

It's stated Mission is "Promoting comprehensive rehabilitation of persons with all categories of disabilities through education, training, employment, community based rehabilitation, integrated education, research, publications, human resource development and other innovative means."

It is working steadily to provide services for persons from all categories of disabilities and to empower and encourage the disabled to be self-reliant. It is also extending services for the aged in the slums of Ahmedabad. BPA has received the following awards for its services in the field of disability management:

- 1982: Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) Award for Outstanding Placement of the Disabled
- 1982: State Award for the Placement of Persons with Mental Retardation
- 1991 International Golden Award for Community Development Services Overseas from the Help the Aged International
- 1995: National Award for Outstanding Performance in the field of Handicapped Welfare
- 2003: Most Outstanding Organization Award from Rehabilitation Council of India
- 2003: National Award for Barrier Free Building (KCRC)

BPA has also availed of the following recognitions:

- As a Scientific and Industrial Research Organization by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Govt. of India
- As a training institute by the Rehabilitation Council of India, Govt. of India for the training of the teachers and for conducting the orientation of the PHC Medical Officers
- Zonal Agency of the Rehabilitation Council of India, Govt. of India
- As a Nodal Agency for Scheme of Assistance to Organizations for the Persons with Disabilities by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India
- As a Nodal Agency by the Department of Social Justice & Empowerment for the implementation of State Level Community Based Rehabilitation Programme
- As a relief organization by the Director of Voluntary Agencies, Govt. of Gujarat
- As Information Centre under the National Trust for person with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and sever Disabilities

Source: <http://www.bpaindia.org>

Exhibit 2: Profile of Dr. Bhushan Punani

Dr. Bhushan Punani is the Executive Director of BPA and has been associated with it since 1979, after he completed his Post Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM), which is equivalent to an MBA from the hallowed Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. He completed an Advanced Vocational Rehabilitation Course from Haifa University, Israel during 1983 and his Bachelor of Laws (LLB) from Gujarat University in 1986. He did his Ph. D. in "Management of Educational Systems for the Blind" from Gujarat University in 1995. BPA owes a significant proportion of its growth and success story to the hard work, ingenuity and charisma of Dr. Punani. It is due to him that this field became attractive to other young qualified professionals.

He is associated with several international organizations like the Deafblind International (Member of the World Council), Council for the Education of People with Visual Impairment, Sense International India (Member of the Advisory Committee), Sight Savers International, Christoffel Blindenmission, the Rehabilitation Council of India Committee of Professionals in the Field of Visual Impairment, General Council of the National Institute for the Visually Handicapped, Dehradun, General Council of the Institute for the Physically Handicapped, New Delhi and a host of other Committees. His achievements include the Helen Keller Award and the R. M. Alpawalla Award, to name a few. He has presented more than 85 papers in national and international conferences, published over 85 articles in reputed journals and has authored eight books.

Sources: <http://www.krcrbhuj.org>; *Visual Impairment Handbook (Bhushan Punani & Nandini Rawal)*

Exhibit 3: Visits Abroad by BPA Staff during 2005 – 06

DESTINATION & PURPOSE	DATES	SPONSORED BY	EXPENSES (IRs)
Dr. Bhushan Punani, <i>Executive Director</i> & Mr. Pramod Gupta			
Third International Round Table on Disability at Cambodia	01-08 May '05	Healthlink Worldwide	96,627
ICEVI ExCo Meeting, U.K.	01-02 Mar '06	ICEVI	51,866
Evaluation at Ghana	04-07 Mar '06	Sight Savers International	42,695
Workshop on Inclusive Education, Pakistan	27-28 Mar '06	ICEVI	26,640
Mrs. Nandini Rawal, <i>Project Director</i>			
Workshop on Inclusive Education, Pakistan	27-28 Mar '06	ICEVI	26,640
Dr. Bhushan Punani, Nandini Rawal, Vimal Thawani, Abha Bhatnagar, Krupa Velani, Kinnari Desai, R. S. Jadav, Kaveena Khatri, Rishi Shah (Deafblind)			
Second Dbl Asian Conference Dhaka, Bangladesh	29-1 Jan '06	Sense International	34,275

Source: Annual Report 2005-06, BPA