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A Joint Study between NIAS and NITI Aayog



**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES**

Bengaluru, India



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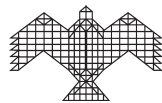
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*Report Prepared by*

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# SUSTAINING EXCELLENCE AND RELEVANCE IN AN ORGANIZATION

A JOINT STUDY BETWEEN NIAS AND NITI AAYOG

## BACKGROUND

It is seen that many organizations perform excellently in the beginning but only a few are able to sustain their excellence over long period. Generally, it is felt that most excellently performing organizations lose their shine in 30-40 years. Obviously, there should be certain factors, as some organizations have retained their excellence over centuries and this is a subject of an interesting study. NIAS and NITI Aayog (Dr. V. K. Saraswat in particular) decided to undertake this exercise of capturing all aspects that are needed to sustain excellence and relevance of an organization through a Roundtable by inviting some of the thought leaders. A concept note prepared in this regard is appended as Annexure #1.

## THE ROUNDTABLE

The Roundtable on “Sustaining Excellence and Relevance in an Organization” was organized at NIAS, with support of NITI Aayog, with Dr. V. K. Saraswat devoting full two days, on 25<sup>th</sup>, October and 26<sup>th</sup>, October 2017. Detailed program of the discussions is appended as Annexure #2.

The Roundtable was conducted in a very interactive and frank atmosphere. The team at NIAS, Dr. Anshuman Behera in particular have taken pains to go through the recordings very carefully and captured the salient points.

The report of the discussions is detailed in the Annexure #3.

## KEY FACTORS FOR SUSTAINED EXCELLENCE

### 1. THE VISION

Each organization starts with a vision, sometimes very explicit, and sometimes not so explicit. It is noted that the vision of the organization has not only to be exhibited and expressed very explicitly, the organization has to often reiterate it to its staff and also others, to embed it in the minds of youngsters, in the very beginning, a sort of putting in their DNA. Dr. Sarabhai's statement in an United Nations (UN) Conference in 1967,

“There are some who question the relevance of space activities in a developing nation. To us there is no ambiguity of purpose, we do not have the fantasy of competing with economically advanced nation in exploration of the moon or the planets or the manned space flight. But we are convinced that if we are to play a meaningful role rationally, and in the community of nations we must be second to none in the application of advanced technologies to the Problems of man and society” is repeated like a bible in Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) even today. Such

a repetitive narration of vision helps in alignment of thought processes in the employees at all levels and goes a long way in nurturing excellence.

The vision of an organization can however not remain static. It has to evolve with evolution of society itself, which includes science & technology adaptation, economic growth, place of the society in the world and associated aspirations. Hence, there has to be a periodic review and evolution of the vision itself. This brings an important issue of relevance, as relevance is time dependent. The evolution of vision has to factor relevance in the context of changing and evolving society.

### 2. THE VALUE SYSTEM

While the vision is stated very clearly before start of any organization, the value system evolves slowly and largely depends on early leadership in the organization. It takes 5-10 years and one or two generations of leadership for the value system in the organization to evolve. Most of the time, value system is not explicitly captured in words and communicated with negatives (it is not commensurate with the value system of our organization). The value system is not bound by rules and regulations, it is something beyond.

Recently, we have seen two distinct examples - conflicts between management and the founding pillars, 150 years old Tata sons and 30 years old Infosys. The management was changed because it was not adhering to the value system of the organization. Perhaps, it was a good situation that the deviation from value system of the organization was arrested in these cases. It does not happen in every organization and that may set in overall trend that may lead to long term unsustainability of excellence.

Hence, it is important that an organization is guided by an informal mechanism, a set of elders, who do not interfere in the day to day running of an organization, but, are able to interfere if there is a compromise on value system of the organization. It is an equivalent of a Raj Rishi of a kingdom, where the Raj Rishi will keep aloof from functioning of the state, but intervene if a major deviation of values takes place.

Present system of Rashtrapati (President) in India is also an adaptation of such a concept. Though many organizations do not create such a system, which is so important for sustainability of excellence for long, however, some Government of India (GoI) departments and academies have created informal mechanism for intervention by elders.

### **3. THE ORGANIZATION CULTURE**

Organization culture is something related to day to day working of individuals, interpersonal relationship, set of rules in day to day management and the related. The organization culture is also generally not captured in words but through narratives and evolves in first few years of the organization. Like value system, early leadership plays an important role in its evolution and goes beyond the laid down rules and regulations. Though all GoI organizations are governed by the same rule book, each has its own unique culture. Some of the cultural evolution is also dependent on nature of work, for example, Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) has to have much more concern for safety issues in their culture and ISRO has to have much more curiosity for new avenues of space exploration. Prof. Dhawan was very respectful for ladies in his day to day interaction and those who worked closely with him embedded that in their culture, leading it to be a part of ISRO culture.

Organization culture is, however, a very wide aspect of human behavior and difficult to capture, though some efforts are always made in respective organizations.

It is suggested that each organization should capture various aspects of its organization culture through incidents and examples, to guide subsequent generations, for long term sustainability.

#### **4. Goal/Target setting**

Goal or target setting is done by every organization as an annual exercise. GoI used to have a five-year planning, which has now been converted to three-year target setting, five-year outlook and 15-year direction setting. However, annual target setting still is an important component.

Most target setting, however, remains a deliverables, exercise, and this sometimes causes imbalance with respect to long term sustainability. Today, the evolution in S&T sector is so dynamic that the business model of any organization is changing very fast and an existing good business may become obsolete in a few years. Annual target setting, therefore, has to be more comprehensive, not just meeting the physical targets, but also preparing for the future. This may involve in-house Research and Development (R&D), acquisition of technology, developing or acquiring human resource and creating a new type of infrastructure etc.

Just an example, India is doing well in automobile and company like Maruti Suzuki having a large market share has excelled in fuel economy of the vehicles. The development of automobile engines with respect to fuel economy has seen a transformation in the last 15 years, more than 100 years of research before. However, the electric mobility will be a reality in the next decade and the company has to prepare for this major change now, if it has to retain relevance and sustain excellence. Same is true for any institution, R&D or education.

This wider view of target setting is many times lost, and is very important for long term sustenance of excellence.

#### **5. ADOPTION OF TECHNOLOGY, RELEVANT RULES AND PROCEDURES**

Most institutions, including private and public undertakings lack in adaptation of technologies like e-governance and digital online processing of administrative activity (including pay roll, purchase, stores and accounts). The (GoI) rules are almost century old. A normal purchase of equipment that an MNC does in 3-5 days may take up to six months in GoI departments. In large value items like a scientific ship



purchase, GoI procedures take about 12-24 months (even more if the IFA is not aligned with organizational values).

It is important that organizations adopt technology, as it evolves and modify rules and procedures commensurate with technology evolution.

For GoI organizations, while it is important to have a guideline book like GFR, each organization should be given autonomy to be able to form its own rules and procedures, as in case of ISRO and DAE. Unfortunately, procedures framed for purchasing a military aircraft is same as for purchasing food grains.

## **6. COMPETENCY BUILD UP IN THE ORGANIZATION AND AUTONOMY**

It is noted that building competency is one of the important factors in retaining excellence and the process starts from recruitment. The recruitment procedure should be free from any bias (family, regional language, religion or caste) and merit based. Also, there has to be adequate focus on training and retraining, as the technology upgrades very fast, management techniques evolve and social fabric changes. The HR growth has to be planned in such a way that there is always something to

look for every one (except perhaps the top most post) in their career.

The organization has to nurture leadership and for any transition to the top, there should be a few (at least five) capable persons, who are able to lead the organization.

Functional autonomy is another important factor for an organization to perform and create next generation of leadership.

## **7. Selection of leadership**

A quick analysis of failures of various organizations in the past, private or public will reveal that

- Organization had very sound vision to start with
- Organization had a very strong value system in the first evolving years
- Organization had a very robust culture
- Organization had very clear set mission, goals and targets

However, deterioration started at certain time frame, when the leadership was not committed to the vision, values and the culture. Satisfying political bosses either due to fear of losing the top job, gaining other favor in terms of extension or closeness to

power centre compromised the value system of the organization. If one top leader selection is compromised, it creates a chain reaction of selecting compromised leadership. Sometimes, it is seen that a very competent retiring leader selects a not so competent leader to succeed just to drive from back seat and remain relevant even after retirement. These tendencies start deterioration that becomes difficult to set right, and ultimately, the institution does not remain relevant and excellent in subsequent years.

Many academic institutions started by private funding have attained excellence. However, these are family run and top posts like the Vice-Chancellor (V.C.), Director are filled by family members, sometimes hardly literate. This has to be avoided.

GoI, UGC, AICT etc., have to create mechanisms that executive top posts like V.C. or Director is filled on merit without influence from family or government. Most institutions of excellence like MIT, Oxford or Stanford university have retained their excellence over centuries because their leadership selection is done by a professional body, be it a Governing Council or Senate. Selection of membership or Chair of

these bodies is also by these bodies without interference from family or government.

Such a practice, in fact, should be adopted for any institutions of excellence. GoI may dispense with present selection of CMDs for Public Sector Units or Directors of Academic institutions, as there is too much of political say. It should be done purely by professional bodies.

This is perhaps the most important factor for retaining excellence and relevant of an organization for a long period of time, because an excellent leadership will automatically nurture excellence in vision, values, culture, mission, goals and target setting, the rules and regulations, and procedures.

The Roundtable suggests that the above aspects be looked at by all leading organizations in the country, which look for long term sustenance of excellence and relevance in their organization and adopt whatever they find useful. Also, NIAS welcomes critical comments, suggestions and any other inputs that may have been missed from the focus of the Roundtable, so that a more comprehensive view can be taken at a later stage.

# ANNEXURE ONE

## CONCEPT NOTE

### SUSTAINING EXCELLENCE AND RELEVANCE IN AN ORGANISATION

Traditionally, there is a notion of bath tub curve: sustaining performance is similar to organizations like that of components. Higher failure rate in the beginning, like what happens to start ups, decay in the performance in sustaining the organization for 20-30 years with good and improving performances. Beyond conventional wisdom, we have true stories of building and sustaining excellence in academic, research and industry over long horizons exceeding 50 years and even a century and beyond.

A few of organizations, Trusts and Foundations have discovered the elements, blocks and complete system integration to drive and sustain excellence as a tradition and indeed culture. Thus, we need to discuss theoretical underpinning and best practices that influence the performance, enhancement, sustain vision and relevance of an organization in changing times. Good organizations are also based on core values, commitment to

purpose and, passion for continuous and disruptive improvements. The selection of a leader in addition to vision and core values is one of the important factors, but not the only driver of excellence and relevance of an organization.

Knowing well that complex human issues are intertwined in a non-linear and uncertain manners and modes, there are no straight forward road or topology maps for building and sustaining an excellent and relevant organization. For example, focusing on leadership selection itself, the present leader could be a key person in the selection process to identify the next leader in strategic departments like space, DAE and DRDO. This can be a mechanism for academic institutions and Foundations too. Over the years, GoI and those vested with responsibility to select leaders are not objective and thus, GoI and many organizations have taken out the role of present leader. Theoretical

underpinning points to the deduction that nobody knows attributes of eligible candidates better than present leader, unless the present leader has been off the mark of performance and, meeting moral standards and aspirations. Thus, irresponsible behavior by a few has deprived this great advantage of the leader selection process to the disadvantage of many organizations. And yet, many organizations do involve credible leaders to choose the new leaders with great success.

There are many attributes for the leader; technical competence to command respect, ability to work hard, ability to take equals along (everyone takes boss or subordinates along), ability to judge right and wrong, decide on future directions creating innovation ecosystems, ability to take expeditious decisions (not to lose opportunities), interact with related entities in India and worldwide, overall administrative capability and to build on the core organization values. Though all the attributes are important, but how to select one from the possibilities while appreciating the fact that every individual has different proportion of each of these and a few deficiencies.

There is nothing static about core values as well. Technological changes force directional changes. Foresight in anticipation and consequently, business models are changing with shrinking time constants and increasing investments. The agility and adaptability are key factors in excellence and relevance of an organization. Being dynamic is an important attribute of any organization. Conflict resolutions that often arise from factors like visibility, profitability and values, which sometimes need searching for some golden mean at a given juncture is another important aspect of sustained excellence.

Vision of Founders, capacity to change (continuous and disruptive), culture, foresights, relevance, business models, innovation ecosystems and above all leadership, which communicates with oneself as a role model and motivates across the organization along with linkages among number of elements, blocks and systems need to be studied and captured to develop understanding for growing excellent organizations of future, which can stay excellent and relevant over a century and beyond.

NITI Aayog and NIAS have been dialoguing and studying some of these important aspects, fully knowing that there are no unique solutions. Successes and critical analysis of the past are done with passion, but purpose of this Roundtable can lead to directions and

outcome is indeed a motivation and purpose to organize this unique Forum. To understand and propagate excellence in an organization, NITI Aayog and NIAS propose to organize a two day Roundtable meeting at NIAS.

## ANNEXURE TWO

### PROGRAMME OF THE ROUNDTABLE

<b>Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017 (DAY ONE)</b>	
930-1000	Registration
10.00-10.30	<b>Welcome Address</b> Prof. Baldev Raj <i>Director, NIAS, Bengaluru</i>  <b>Theme Speaker</b> Dr. V. K. Saraswat <i>Member, NITI Aayog, New Delhi</i>
1030-1100	<b>TEA BREAK</b>
1100-1300	<b>First Session</b> <b>Chair: Dr. V.K. Saraswat</b>  <b>Speakers</b>  Dr. Girish Sahni, <i>Director General, CSIR, New Delhi</i> Prof. K. Vijaya Raghavan, <i>Secretary, Dept. Biotechnology, New Delhi</i> Dr. S. V. Ranganath, <i>Former Chief Secretary, Govt. of Karnataka</i> Prof. Anurag Kumar, <i>Director, IISc, Bengaluru</i> Dr. P. S. Goel, <i>Raja Ramanna Chair Professor, NIAS and Former Secretary, MOES</i> Mr. S. S. Bajaj, <i>Former Chairman, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, Mumbai</i> Mr. K. Venkatramanan, <i>Larsen &amp; Toubro, Mumbai</i> Dr. Alex Thomas, <i>President AHPI, Bengaluru</i>
1300-1400	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>

1400-1530	<p><b>Session Two</b></p> <p><b>Chair: Dr. S. Banerjee</b></p> <p><b>Speakers</b></p> <p>Dr. S. Banerjee, <i>Former Chairman, AEC &amp; Secretary, DAE, Mumbai</i>          Prof. Indranil Manna, <i>Director, IIT Kanpur</i>          Prof. J. B. Joshi, <i>Former Director, ICT, Mumbai</i>          Dr. Gurmeet Singh, <i>Global R&amp;D Director, Unilever, Bengaluru</i>          Prof. P. Radhakrishnan, <i>Director, PSG Institute of Advanced Studies, Coimbatore</i>          Mr. Ricky Kej, <i>Grammy Award Winning Composer</i>          Dr. Mustansir Barma, <i>Professor Emeritus, TIFR Centre for Interdisciplinary Sciences, Hyderabad</i></p>
1530-1600	<p><b>TEA BREAK</b></p>
1600-1800	<p><b>Session Three</b></p> <p><b>Chair: Dr. S. Ayappan</b></p> <p><b>Speakers</b></p> <p>Dr. S. Ayyapan, <i>NABARD Chair Professor, NDRI Southern Regional Station</i>          Prof. Alok Dhawan, <i>Director, CSIR-IITR, Lucknow</i>          Prof. Baldev Raj, <i>Director, NIAS, Bengaluru</i>          Dr. R. K. Tyagi, <i>Former Chairman, HAL &amp; Pawan Hans Helicopter, President, Aeronautical Society of India; independent director on board of Air India &amp; Mentor director of DILA</i>          Dr. Sanjay Chandra, <i>Chief R&amp;D and SS, Tata Steel, Jamshedpur</i>          Dr. R. D. Raveendran, <i>Chairman, Arvind Eye Hospital, Coimbatore</i>          Prof. Meenakshisundaram, <i>Visiting Professor, NIAS, Bengaluru</i></p>
1845 Onwards	<p><b>DINNER</b></p>

<b>Thursday October 26, 2017 (DAY TWO)</b>	
930-1100	<p><b>Session Four</b></p> <p>Dr. Anil Kakodkar, <i>Former Chairman, AEC, &amp; Secretary, DAE, Mumbai</i>                      Prof. Sandip Trivedi, <i>Director, TIFR, Mumbai</i></p> <p><b>Panel Moderators</b>                      Dr. V.K. Saraswat                      Prof. Baldev Raj                      Dr. Sandip Trivedi</p>
1100-1130	<b>TEA BREAK</b>
1130-1300	<p><b>Session Four (Contd.)</b></p> <p><b>Panel Moderators</b>                      Dr. V.K. Saraswat                      Prof. Baldev Raj                      Dr. Sandip Trivedi</p>
1300	<b>Lunch &amp; End of the Roundtable</b>



## ANNEXURE THREE

### REPORT ON DISCUSSIONS DURING ROUNDTABLE

The Roundtable on “Sustaining Excellence and Relevance in an Organization” was jointly organized by NIAS and NITI Aayog at NIAS, Bengaluru on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> October 2017. Several distinguished scientists, academicians and professionals of Indian Science and Technology arena made deliberations on the vibrant theme of the roundtable. On the first day of the Roundtable, Prof. Baldev Raj, Director, NIAS welcomed the speakers and participants, and encouraged everyone to share their experiences that can be a beacon for others in their journey for achieving excellence. Prof. Raj highlighted the relevance of such a deliberation that could collectively impart pragmatic and progressive knowledge to the aspirations of India in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Dr. V.K. Saraswat from the NITI Aayog highlighted key aspects of the theme. He expressed confidence that such an extraordinary collection of experts shall lead to key beginning and evolution of right policies. Dr.

Saraswat echoed the concerns of the Prime Minister with regard to the scientific community of India for meeting national priorities. The total output by the large pool of scientists in India is seemingly falling short of the national expectations. The research in India is predominantly ‘Incremental’ in nature. The research often revolves to improvise or develop the pre-existing research instead of following an innovative approach right from the stage of the inception of an idea. The incremental approach in research is not a right path to meet essential needs and expectations of the common citizens, who are unable to appreciate science, as they are not able to connect with science and scientists. The scientific progress that begins with ideation and that continues to the stage of implementation by a strong leadership is desired at current juncture of India’s development. Dr. Saraswat highlighted the relevance of ‘Total Productivity’ that measures various desired outputs of knowledge and labor. The output

of organizations significantly depends upon the productivity of its human resources. Most of the organizations have only 10-20% of their workforce who has commitments. Significant work forces are followers. A few percentage of the work force also fall under the category that pulls down an organization. Often the success of an organization depends upon its leadership. Strong leadership with strong values nurture an organization, whereas a weak leadership can lead to the collapse of an organization. Understanding the dynamics of the work force with relation to the success of organization, and equipping them well will be crucial for India's development. Dr. Saraswat highlighted the relevance of 'Quality' and 'Quantity' in an organization's performance: 'Quality' which transforms the organizations from incremental researchers to developers and 'Quantity' which understands the relevance and commercialization of research. Dr. Saraswat also emphasized the relevance of a shift in outlook from looking at lower cost of labor to labor productivity. Low cost of labor is meaningless if the productivity of labor is low.

The first session under the chairmanship of Dr. V.K. Saraswat

comprised of Dr. Girish Sahni, Dr. S.V. Ranganath, Prof. Anurag Kumar, Dr. P.S. Goel, Mr. S.S. Bajaj, Mr. Venkatramanan, and Dr. Alex Thomas.

**Dr. Girish Sahni**, *Director General, CSIR, New Delhi*

Dr. Sahni spoke about the mandate of CSIR, which is to provide scientific and industrial research that aims to maximize the economic, environmental and societal benefits for the people of India. He highlighted the progress CSIR had made with regards to the number of patents it had filed in India and abroad in the last few years. CSIR is high ranking among the various government organizations in world. This attribute is a result of the value that the organization adheres to. The creation of value from science is achieved with the alignment of individual, organization and national demand. The focus on commercial offerings of private goods for the industry, creation of value for citizens through societal goods, and the focus to strengthen the national security through strategic goods have been incorporated in the value system of CSIR. Along with its strong value system, the excellence in CSIR is achieved through strong human resource development that incorporates strong sector and industry specific

skill development. The organization has matrices that measure excellence in a cohesive manner. Scientists are recognized beyond their publications along with those of professionals, who contribute silently in the background.

**Dr. S. V. Ranganath**, *Former Chief Secretary, Govt. of Karnataka.*

Dr. Ranganath spoke about the factors that are likely to hinder achievement of excellence by an organization. He expressed that the organizations of today, even though have 21<sup>st</sup> century aspirations, they are slowed down often by their 20<sup>th</sup> century processes and procedures, and even riddled by their 19<sup>th</sup> century mind set. He argued that excellence should involve the whole organization down to every department, every single activity and to every single person at the entry level. Excellence can be achieved by capacity building that consists of encouragement, training and imprinting the 'Big Picture' in each worker. Dr. Ranganath highlighted the need to focus on prevention of undesired outcomes through rigorous vigilance from the very beginning. Understanding the customer, use of the data that is high volume, high velocity and high variety

towards scientific and sustainable decision making is the need of the hour. The data alone needs to be machine readable and cost effective, and should be used to set development standards. He argued that the organization needs to clear themselves of the fear of CBI, CAG, and courts. The organization needs to streamline their procedures and processes with adequate remedial measures such as peer group reviews and pre-audits. Use of technology and good relations with stakeholders along with ability to take care of the weakest links define the success of an organization.

**Prof. Anurag Kumar**, *Director, IISc Bengaluru.*

Prof. Anurag Kumar spoke from his experiences abroad, and about the IISc as the director. He emphasized that the institute is able to continuously achieve an excellence in enhancing performance due to the high quality of faculty members. The faculties get autonomy to decide how they function within their departments. Start-up grants are provided to motivate faculty members to conduct research. The faculties are administrated under a tenure system which annually monitors

their performance. The international peer review of the faculty members is conducted by the institute. Often it is important to consider a faculty's five best papers over his possible hundreds of papers. The quality of paper needs importance over the quantity of it. Rigorous procedures are adopted for the selection of students, and the student receives mentorships only from those faculty members who are experts in their field. Faculty members and students are constantly evaluated, and this evaluation is visible in their behavior as faculties tend to respond to the way they are evaluated. He argued that in the era of inter-disciplinarity, the silo thinking i.e., only thinking about one's department needs to be challenged. The silo thinking not only separates departments within an institute, but also separates institutes from each other. Prof. Anurag Kumar highlighted IISc's constant endeavor to engage with the industry through contracts, consultancy and start-ups.

**Dr. P.S. Goel**, *Raja Ramanna Chair Professor, NIAS*

Dr. P. S. Goel expressed that all organizations are created with a long-term vision, core values and culture.

The problems that lead to the collapse of an organization are often manifested after a few years or decade of existence. The real problem is the degradation in the quality of leadership. Often organizations which had prominent and effective leaders performed better. The absence of strong leaders results in collapse of organizations. The problem of leadership arises when nurturing of possible leaders is not done. The leadership skills often are not passed on to the younger generation. At time, the leaders in order to secure their positions post retirement deliberately impart mediocre leadership skills to their successors. The role of psychologist needs to be explored to identify and nurture leaders from a beginning stage.

**Mr. S.S. Bajaj**, *Former Chairman, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, Mumbai*

Mr. Bajaj spoke about the experience in nuclear power industry in general and AERB in particular. He highlighted that the nuclear industry is predominantly functioning around a 'Safety Culture', where safety gets priority, and all processes and procedures are developed around the priority. AERB has periodic reviews to ensure all mandates are adhered

to. The organization's systems are strongly influenced by international best practises as codified by the IAEA. The AERB has functional independence, high level technical expertise and a well-established system of codes. The organization is subjected to external scrutiny, audits and peer reviews. The core technical competency is made available in-house through recruitment and training. Mr. Bajaj expressed that for creating and sustaining excellence, a conglomeration of departments is required at an industry-wide level. Within individual organizations, emphasis needs to be given on culture of excellence. Organizations need to take full advantage of industry wide facilities and infrastructure available for benchmarking the organization's systems and practices against best benchmarks. This includes inviting periodic peer reviews and audits. Periodic reviews of organization's systems and practices need to be done in light of stakeholder feedback, new developments and changed environment etc. A formal robust system of learning from experience needs to be established not only from events within the organization, but also from any significant events elsewhere

in the industry. An 'Operational Experience Feedback' is utilised to learn from outcome of events not only in the country, but also from a global spectrum.

**K. Venkatramanan**, *Larsen & Toubro, Mumbai*

Mr. Venkatramanan sighted his experiences from the industry, where Larsen & Toubro is very active and is often successful in obtaining high profile contracts. He argued that recruiting good people is important for an organization to achieve excellence. The leadership needs to be nurtured, and the teams need to be given incentives in the form of bonuses for the profit they make from their projects. Having human resource systems that respond and change as per the competition is important to retain leaders in any organization. HR benefits in the form of 'Hardship Allowances' are needed to motivate people in challenging and remote environments. The appraisal system is reviewed often and modelled such that people with poor rating are facilitated to leave the organization. Engineers and work force, who show potential as leaders are nurtured and trained to become managers, and are

promoted to higher responsibilities with a fast track movement.

**Dr. Alex Thomas**, *President, Association of Healthcare Providers of India, Bengaluru*

Dr. Thomas highlighted that AHPI regularly monitors the quality in its institutions. The teachers are regularly accredited. The institutions which impart knowledge are also regularly accredited. Excellence is desired through performing activities that spread awareness in the society. Along with accreditation of teachers and institutions, excellence in the field of medical education is achieved through leverage of technology, where online education and webinars are utilized. The systems are integrated to provide greater access. He proposed that the government should create a national level think tank that holistically can address health issues. To maintain excellence, Dr. Thomas argued the relevance of a combination of government, research institution, academia, industry community and international agencies.

The second session of the Roundtable was chaired by Dr. S. Banerjee. Other key speakers of this session were Prof. Indranil Manna, Prof. J.B. Joshi, Dr. Gurmeet Singh,

Prof. P. Radhakrishnan, Mr. Ricky Kej, Dr. Mustansir Barma.

**Dr. S. Banerjee**, *Former Chairman, AEC & Secretary, DAE, Mumbai*

Dr. Banerjee introduced this session to the audience by speaking about the general competency in India with regards to the industry and technology. He expressed that the indigenous products are not getting the importance that it deserves. As an example, he contended that the fibre optic technology, which was developed in India a few decades back has not been harnessed with full benefits. The same technology was imported from outside for use. He stressed on sustaining excellence with examples of transparency and imagination in DAE through challenges, human resources and governance.

**Prof. Indranil Manna**, *Director, IIT Kanpur*

Prof. Manna expressed that excellence is relative and is not time independent. To attain sustainability, a continuous effort is warranted. Keeping society as the pivot, the factors of science, engineering and technology can be visualised as a perpetual triad. The

ability to understand and accommodate the needs of the society is crucial to attain excellence. The need of the hour is to look beyond the silos of one's comfort zone with regards to department and institute. India needs to consider the balance between its positive factors of size, expanse, population, age, GDP and progress against the odds placed by its diversity, poverty, unemployment and health. The desired target of self-reliance, sustainable and inclusive growth can be achieved by relevant engineering education. The engineering education needs to be strengthened by addressing the policy enhancing ecosystem.

**Prof. J.B. Joshi**, *Former Director, ICT, Mumbai*

Prof. J. B. Joshi expressed that sustainable excellence means a creative ambience for well-being of the society. Excellence related to the outstanding or exceptionally good performance in all aspects of life including arts, literature, sports, education, research, agriculture, industry, service sector and many others. He contended that excellence is sustained only when the grassroots' level of any organization are also participants to the activity, and enjoys the rewards.

To achieve sustainable excellence, the need exists to create success stories, where the "inclusiveness" is achieved through right balance between cutting edge science, innovations and implementation. The central government's policy which suggests all the educational and research institutions to earn 10% to 30% of their budgets will improve the innovativeness. He argued that it is important to establish 'excellence' as a top virtue in our society in general, and research and educational institutions in particular. Performers in an organization should be rewarded, and job promotions should be based on merits. The leadership of such institutions needs to be chosen based on past performance. The society needs to understand that 'excellence' is the most important virtue in the system. The money spent for creating excellence needs evaluation to understand whether it is put to right use.

**Dr. Gurmeet Singh**, *Global R&D Director, Unilever, Bengaluru.*

Dr. Gurmeet Singh addressed the factors of mission, vision and values that an organization utilises for attaining excellence. He expressed that every organization needs to understand



their three main phases: Input, Process and Output. Each phase has certain parameters, which can directly influence the success of an organisation. At input stage, the expertise of the work force, skills and capability combines to form the talent. The processes need to understand even the importance of small things as “small things make the big things occur”. The output needs to understand the customer and constantly innovate with science that need not be mundane for the imagined mundane products.

**Prof. P. Radhakrishnan**, *Director, PSG Institute of Advanced Studies, Coimbatore*

Prof. Radhakrishnan highlighted the performance excellence framework of a higher educational institution. The operations within an organization are influenced by continuous strategic thinking and planning, customer satisfaction, knowledge internalization, quality and commitment of personnel, and the leadership, which monitors the contributing factors. Excellence is achieved in core values, where excellence itself is customer focused. Apart from customers, an organization needs to value its people. Ensuring that the compliances and regulations are met; the organic growth of an organization

ensuring ethics and transparency is ensured.

**Mr. Ricky Kej**, *Grammy Award Winning Composer*

Mr. Ricky Kej spoke about his passion leading to choosing a career in music. He expressed how excellence can be achieved when one understands the surroundings and response of people to each trigger. He expressed how music is a tool to reach out to people to instil the idea of nature conservation into the mind of the people. His personal experiences in creating worthy networks and, support individuals and organizations were narrated.

**Prof. Mustansir Barma**, *Professor Emeritus, TIFR Centre for Interdisciplinary Sciences, Hyderabad*

Prof. Mustansir Barma spoke about TIFR constant endeavour to advance research by venturing into newer areas and focusing on people development. He expressed the need of interdisciplinary approach to understand problems and develop solutions. The organization excellence is depended upon the quality of people.

The third and final session of the day one was chaired by Dr. S. Ayappan. The other panellists for this session



were Prof. Alok Dhawan, Prof. Baldev Raj, Dr. R.K. Tyagi, Dr. Sanjay Chandra, Dr. R.D. Raveendran, and Prof. Meenakshisundaram

**Dr. S. Ayappan**, *NABARD Chair Professor, NDRI Southern Regional Station*

Dr. Ayappan expressed that it is important to look at the mechanism of excellence that is present in other nations. Internal mechanisms need to be brought with right intelligence to understand the national and international standards and competition. He insisted on the relevance of strong mentoring, which can contribute towards the sustainability of excellence.

**Prof. Alok Dhawan**, *Director, CSIR-IITR, Lucknow*

A system of feedback has a significant contribution in achieving excellence. Engaging directly, empowering people, enabling ecosystem, equality and ethics are important steps towards attaining excellence. The focus should be on goals. Constant feedback is relevant to understand the direction of progress made. Forecasting is important to predict the outcomes. The work force right from the top management needs to show integrity. They should inspire and

understand the need of interdisciplinary along with innovations. The top leadership needs to be nurtured and motivated. Institutionalizing excellence makes it relevant. The relevance should focus on society. It is important for an organization to have third party evaluation to obtain usable feedback.

**Prof. Baldev Raj**, *Director, NIAS*

Prof. Baldev Raj talked about the relevance of autonomy for an organization. He expressed that the autonomy is to be provided only with accountability. The integrity and values of a team determines its success. An organization needs to identify the gaps in performance and functioning through the mechanism of 'Gap Mapping'. Organization can achieve excellence if they have right leaderships at different levels who deliver autonomy of functioning with accountability and continuous building of competence and attitudes essential for sustained excellence. He gave examples from his personal experiences in building Fast Reactor Technology and Closed Fuel Cycle to achieve excellence. He mentioned about excellence in national and international forums through setting clear objectives and motivating

individuals with importance of the objectives for meeting the mandate of the organization.

**Dr. R.K. Tyagi**, *Former Chairman, HAL & Pawan Hans Helicopter*

Dr. Tyagi expressed that leaders' work and contributions should be measurable. In technology, the measuring should be in the form of the number of patents filed. He expressed that the top 50 of a company are important to define the success and longevity of a company. In HAL under his leadership the number of PR filing increased from 9 in 2012 to 1075 in 2015. He expressed the importance of peer review and the need for a strong industry-academia partnership for the success of an organization like HAL. Under the outline of 'Shangshaptak' (Warriors in Mahabharata who are expected either to win or die), responsible leaders in the organization are chosen between the age of 48-52yrs, who have a performance rating score of 85 and above. Integrity component of the people are taken to be important. The training program is set for a one year period. The program is assessed by a board headed by former CMD and Directors. Dr. Tyagi gave an example, where an organization's top management can bring a change in the

people by working by high work ethics at various levels and responsibility sharing.

**Dr. Sanjay Chandra**, *Chief R&D and SS, Tata Steel, Jamshedpur*

Dr. Sanjay Chandra expressed the need for an environment that can accommodate the needs of research and development at an industry level. He insisted the need to move out of incremental research. Collaboration with all stakeholders is relevant for the success of an organization. The HR systems in the organization should conduct assessments every year. The 'Key Result Area' should be identified and developed. In order to avoid all people to be rated high. Mandates of the organizations should consider effective rating system. Dr. Chandra argued that people needs to be rated on a bell curve by the appraisers.

**Dr. R.D. Ravindran**, *Chairman, Arvind Eye Hospital, Bengaluru*

Dr. Ravindran expressed the need to promote industry wide best practises and benchmarks. The best practises developed by each organisation needs to be shared so as to raise the standards of an industry. The problems from the community need to be identified, and ownership of these problems needs

to be taken to develop solutions to address these problems. It is important for an organization to build values and systems around the vision. The support of the community needs to be taken in order to attain success. A frugal mind set is required in handling of resources so that the wastage can be avoided. An organization needs to self-reliant with regards to its finance and HR development. The human resources need to be valued and developed internally through the pool of resources available. This is to prevent the loss of time in hiring and training new entrants.

**Prof. S.S. Meenakshisundaram,**  
*Visiting Professor, NIAS, Bengaluru*

Prof. Meenakshisundaram focussed upon the relevance of sustainability and excellence. He expressed that an organization needs to improve its communication with the line departments in the government. A success of an organization depends on how well it can involve the people. Problems need to be identified from the society and, a system appropriate to suit the challenges and requirements needs to be developed. The design of a system is important to bring out the strength. Through his past experiences, Prof. Meenakshisundaram

argued that a collective effort of an organization is able to reach out to the government than an individual. His organization functions to resolve real world problems in domains and geographical areas, where the members of the organization have expertise. The organization strictly prevents any family member of the board members in the organization. The pay scale of the top person in the organization is kept at maximum of three to four times than that of the person at the lowest level in the organizational pyramid. The corpus of the organization is never used, and only a portion of the interest is used for staff support, or for unplanned events. The values of organization differentiate itself from the activities, which pull down the organization in meeting the endeavors. The organization is structured to be actionist.

The second day of the Workshop on 'Sustaining Excellence and Relevance in an Organization' saw discussions mostly centred on the theme of sustaining relevance and excellence across time. The panel discussion had as its primary discussants, Dr. Anil Kakodkar (Former Chairman, AEC, and Secretary, DAE, Mumbai) and Prof. Sandip Trivedi (Director, TIFR, Mumbai). Dr. V.K. Saraswat (NITI

Aayog) and Prof. Baldev Raj (Director, NIAS) were also present at the session, as panel moderators.

Dr. Kakodkar delivered the first address of the session, where he pointed out the need to continuously reconfigure the Government's position on what he identified as the Four Pillars of a Competitive Society – Technology, Institutions, Infrastructure and Incentives. According to him, excellence in organizations is of key relevance for the country. If well organized, then these institutions have the potential of maintaining a high standard of excellence for a long time. Therefore, the true test of excellence, according to Dr. Kakodkar, lies in whether an institution stays relevant over time. For instance, educational institutions such as Cambridge, Oxford, and the University of Paris have all managed to align themselves with the changing requirements of the time, and have been able to evolve in accordance with the same to stay relevant, even today.

Dr. Kakodkar then went on to elaborate on the key elements that define an institution. He pointed out the need for a clearly defined mission or a purpose, which the institution

embodies, along with an intrinsic value system, which should be developed and periodically reconfigured in a manner that is consistent with delivering on expectations.

The autonomy of an institution needs to be respected by the stakeholders. Ideally, the system is managed by itself, where the accountability system is driven by a peer-motivated framework. This would ensure the maintenance of consistency of the vision of the institution, along with the values it embodies, both within and outside of the institutional framework. Autonomy, therefore, has to be built into the structure of the organization itself, with effective leadership at the helm, functioning as the custodian and protector of the same autonomy.

It was also identified that maintaining excellence while a particular institution is on its growth path is easier than sustaining the same growth after the first thrust of growth subsides. Therefore, the same efficiency and excellence in functioning have to be maintained in order to sustain the same rate of progress and development that the institution achieved in its initial stages of operation. Finally, relevance in the context of changing track of

development and innovation with regards to reconfiguring organizational priorities and programs, with the same resources that are available for usage needs to be maintained.

The primary impetus is to be on the leadership as well as the members, who constitute the organization or institution. The leadership is to be entrusted with the protection of accountability, alongside maintaining accountability to stakeholders. Additionally, commitment towards the organization's stakeholders as well as to the values that the organization embodies needs to be managed effectively. The kind of leadership structure in operation will be contingent on the nature of the organization's goals and objectives. However, regardless of the form, a steady balance of harnessing efficiency and creativity needs to be maintained, which will come with variations in the structure created by the leadership, that is, whether hierarchical or horizontal. In all, a stable combination of all these aforementioned factors should be configured according to the nature of the objectives that an organization pursues, such that the ultimate objective of delivering on the same is ensured across time and in accordance with shifting priorities.

The discussions that followed the main address added to the deliberations on the aforementioned theme and arrived at a consensus regarding certain steps that could be taken to ensure the management of excellence and relevance in organizations. Participants mainly emphasized upon the need for critical thinking as means of sustaining the relevance of an organization, alongside reconfigurations of its organizational framework and a marked emphasis on critical/creative thinking. These changes are necessary as a way of ensuring commitment to a singular vision, the means of attainment of which may undergo changes over time.

The entire process of delivering on the organization's stated objectives should maintain a steady balance between essential activities, which determine the overall process of translation of objectives into outcomes, and essence activities, which include the means by which the entire process of executing these objectives are managed. According to Prof. Sandip Tiwari, emphasis on the recruitment of faculty members should be placed in order to ensure the selection of individuals, who will drive the research process. Individuals should be assessed regularly in order to ensure that areas of research

are constantly re-evaluated in a manner such that relevance is maintained. Excellence on the other hand can be both derived from individually driven projects as well as institutionally driven research programs. Thereby, ensuring autonomy of research within such organizations is also maintained without compromising on the larger institutional objectives.

An important point that was raised in discussion was the need to sensitize bureaucrats regarding the requirements for a particular endeavor, such that expenditure oriented evaluative process is counterpoised by a more outcome oriented evaluative framework. One way of ensuring this would be to facilitate exchanges of personnel between Educational institutions, Government labs as well as autonomous institutions attached to Government nodal departments. This would create a substantial difference in the manner in which the chain of progression in which basic science is translated into industry is viewed, such that sensitivities

regarding time and expenditure as well as stated outcomes are more sensibly assessed.

Prof. Baldev Raj stressed on the necessity of defining relevance with the utmost clarity, matching with changes in aspirations and capabilities over time. The relevance of leadership, according to Prof. Raj should also be assessed by creating next generation leaders and shaping the mandates of the organization to international benchmarks, meeting national challenges and creating harmony and purpose in the organization. In conclusion, Dr. V. K. Saraswat stated that mobility between different research avenues should be encouraged in an effort to breach certain silos, thereby necessitating the need for much more intense and deeper interactions between every constitutive element engaged in research, development and deployment as a process, both internal and external, which is necessary in order to ensure the sustenance of relevance and excellence in Indian organizations.



