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Speech of  
Professor Samuel Paul,  
Director of IIMA,  
at the 13th Annual Convocation of the  
Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad  
on April 1, 1978

At the outset may I offer my congratulations to the new graduates of the Institute who have just received their diplomas and the winners of the gold medals for outstanding performance? I would like to join the Chairman and our Chief Guest in wishing them all success in the years to come.

All of us at the Institute are delighted that our Finance Minister Shri H M Patel has been with us on this important occasion. I would like to thank Shri Patel for the most valuable and inspiring address he has just delivered. I am sure that the outgoing graduates of the Institute will take note of and be guided by his words of wisdom and advice. May I, on behalf of the Institute, express our most sincere appreciation to you for your participation in this annual convocation. I am also grateful to all other guests and well wishers present here this evening for their support and interest in the Institute's work.

It is customary for the Director to use the occasion of the annual convocation to review the year's academic activities. I shall start with a brief review, but propose to devote some time to highlight a few of the lesser known facets of the Institute's working, and some emerging issues as I see them. Turning first to our educational programmes, about

a thousand persons have completed our various courses conducted both on the campus and outside during the past year. Of these, 158 have received their diplomas today. Thirty-two participants of the Six-month Management Education Programme will complete their studies here next week. Practically, all those who are graduating today have already received one or more job offers. An increasing proportion of graduates (40% this year) are joining public sector and non-profit organisations. Public sector and small and medium organisations together have attracted nearly 75% of the graduates. The Fellow Programme from which six have graduated today is an important contribution to the development of teachers and researchers in management for other institutions in the country. All the new graduates have been placed.

Among the short term programmes, the three month programme on management applications for computer professionals sponsored by the Electronics Commission was offered for the first time this year. The programme for trade unions was held again after a lapse of two years. In the mix of programmes, there is a distinct trend towards research based courses for managers and administrators concerned with development tasks. There is more demand than we can cope with in this area. Our management development programmes are attracting an increasing share of participants from the public sector and small and medium enterprises.

In respect of research, our various groups such as the Centre for Management in Agriculture (CMA) and Public Systems Group (PSG) have kept up their pace of work. Two new projects of national significance

which have been initiated this year relate to the management of the handloom sector and forestry management. As regards the latter, we have not only initiated research, but also agreed to provide assistance to the Union Ministry of Agriculture in setting up a new national Institute of Forest Management. 44 consulting projects were in progress during the year of which 23 have been completed.

A survey of this year's work as well as what we have been building up in the past several years will reveal a conscious strategy to develop strengths in three important areas: enterprise management, management of agriculture and rural development and the management of public systems covering a variety of developmental tasks. The thrusts we have made in these areas are justified both by their social relevance as well as their potential pay off in terms of conceptual contributions.

While the accomplishments of the Institute faculty and research staff in respect of their primary tasks of teaching and research are relatively well publicised, not much is known to the outside world about other parts of the Institute that facilitate this process and the linkages with external groups or publics which support these efforts. The publications, library and administrative staff of the Institute who provide the supportive services for academic work deserve special mention in this context. As part of an effort to improve their effectiveness, training programmes have been organised for selected groups by the Institute and several persons have been deputed to undergo training through suitable

programmes elsewhere. Currently, an Institute committee consisting of some professors and staff at other levels including a peon and a clerk is engaged in examining a variety of problems facing the staff. I am sure that these deliberations will lead to viable and acceptable solutions to the problems under study.

Like any other organisation, we also interact with a variety of publics. It is natural that we have a greater awareness of and interest in the publics which could properly be defined as our clients because they are directly concerned with our primary tasks. Thus, we cultivate and nurture our links with industry and other sectors which participate in our programmes or recruit our graduates. We remain in constant touch with organisations which come to us for consulting. There are, however, other publics too which are relevant to our mission and performance.

Over the years, the Institute's interface with two categories of publics has assumed increasing significance. The first set consists of alumni, scholars and international organisations whose linkages and interactions with the Institute are of an academic nature. Alumni's contacts with the Institute have grown substantially, especially with the strengthening of our journal *Alumnus*. An evidence of this trend is the willingness our alumni have shown to establish ten new scholarships at the institute for the post-graduate programme. The research conference that we have initiated, the journal *Vikalpa* and the growing volumes of books and monographs of the faculty provide us strong links

with the community of scholars beyond our campus. Our collaborative programmes with institutions in other countries and international agencies have given our faculty valuable experience and greater international recognition.

The second set of publics consists of Government, both central and states, members of the Institute society and the local community, whose links with the Institute are of a supportive nature and resource oriented. Government clearly is the single largest source of funds for the Institute. Through a variety of collaborative programmes, seminars, projects and participation in committees and other bodies, we have kept close contacts with the Government and demonstrated our relevance to public management. A recent example is the two day seminar organised for Gujarat State Secretaries on the subject of motivation based on research done on Gujarat government problems.

To bring the donor members of our society closer to the Institute, we started two years ago an annual society conference to discuss and share new developments in the management field. Society members also receive our journals, research reports and publications on a regular basis. The number of member organizations has doubled over the past 5 years.

For the local community whose support is most important, we have used the medium of our Centre for Regional Management Studies to provide training facilities, and funds to finance research on local problems. The programme organised by us for local small industrialists is an example.

Our interaction with these different publics should not be viewed as a diversion, but rather as effective means to reinforce the Institute's capability in discharging its basic functions and serving its primary client systems. These linkages have been a source of support and need to be nurtured and strengthened in the years to come.

We have during the past year deliberated a great deal on the Institute's future directions. Without getting into the substantive issues involved, I would like to refer briefly to three concerns about our future role.

In the first place, we need to carefully consider the balance between freedom and responsibility in relation to academic work at the Institute. We have expanded a great deal both in terms of the size of the faculty and the diversity of our activities. In a large group, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain personal contacts, interact with one another informally and ensure that institutional tasks are properly fulfilled. Mechanisms for monitoring and control which are introduced to cope with these problems will tend to become more impersonal as size grows. Under these conditions, the concept of freedom and autonomy for the individual that we have cherished and sustained at this Institute will survive only if every individual uses his freedom with responsibility, responsibility to himself and to his institution. Failure to cope with this emerging problem will take us only in one direction towards a rigid structure that will smother freedom and creativity - unfortunately the bane of many educational institutions today.

Secondly, there is the danger that as an Institute we might try to be all things to all men. Every activity and every sector in the country has a management problem. The price of being somewhat successful and known is that a bewildering variety of demands are placed on us. The courage to choose what is socially and professionally relevant and consistent with our competence and resources and to say "no" to demands which seem inappropriate is a quality worth preserving. The alternative is to become so diffused that our focus and sense of identity is lost.

Thirdly, while our emphasis on relevance is laudable, there is a real risk that our concern for immediate problem solving and involvement in action will lead to the neglect of the development of ideas which have an enduring value and could provide a basis for action by others. Ideas precede action. Certainly ideas are no substitute for action. Nor is action a substitute for thought. I believe that our comparative advantage lies in the generation of new management ideas and concepts which hopefully would influence action by practitioners, in the context of policy making as well as the management of organisations and programmes. I am here referring not to sterile research divorced from reality, but to the generation of management thought informed by real world problems and pioneered by researchers whose feet are firmly on the ground. I suspect that in the long run, we are likely to be remembered by our peers and practitioners alike for contributions of this sort.

To the young men and women who have graduated today, all this may sound somewhat unreal and far fetched. Yet, a moment's reflection will show that you too will face similar dilemmas in the careers that await you. Managerial positions do provide some measure of freedom and autonomy. The call to exercise freedom with responsibility is a challenge that you will constantly face in your lives. The problems of choice which is at the heart of all decision making can be ignored by a manager only at his own peril. Unlike academic people about whom I spoke a moment ago, those of you who have opted for managerial careers should know that your comparative advantage lies in action, but informed by relevant ideas and concepts. I hope that the education you have received here will, in a modest measure at least, enable you to play these different roles effectively.

We will miss you on the campus, but will remember you for your fine achievements, your active involvement in the many things we have done together, the gaiety, fun and even noise you shared with us. We hope you will miss us too, and so will come back to us to see your 'alma mater' and be in touch with its progress. Our very best wishes and blessings go with you.

GOOD BYE AND GOOD LUCK !