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Final READING VERSION

Convocation address

Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad

R. RAMANNA

Mr. Chairman, Board of the Directors of the Indian Institute of Management, New Diploma Holders, Ladies and Gentlemen:

My first duty is to congratulate all of you who have obtained your Diplomas at todays function. In many ways it is an evening of great significance since you are joining a somewhat elite group of people in the country and therefore may become leaders earlier than it is possible for most other people. You are thus on the threshold of a great challenge and responsibility.

This Institution has had a distinguished record of service of continued excellence. It deserves special mention, as continued success of this sort is rare in our country. I would like to recall my previous association with the Indian Institute of Management and recall the smooth transition of leadership which took place - a tradition of the greatest importance for any institution.

With the growth of industries, management as an organised discipline has come to stay and the work of such institutions is of great importance in the future development of the country. However, the eternal question is how much one can implement from what has been learnt here. How much of it is relevant to Indian conditions and how much is inapplicable because of the lack of sensitivity of the recipient organisations. There is also

the question of the time scale managemental operations.

In expressing my views on some of these problems, I should perhaps restrict myself to an area in which I have spent a life-time and have seen some successes and many failures. I will, therefore, stick to Science Management.

When one talks of science management one is dealing with a new type of trained personnel. They have to be at the highest intelligence level, but their profession requires that they have to be technicians, mathematicians and poets at the same time. Besides their normal creative work it is absolutely essential that they have to take part in the selection of people who will work with them and in their training programmes. They have also to be fully involved in the planning process. It is not recognised that the scientist has to some extent take part in various aspects of administration including the financial side. Though this may look strange, for quick completion of projects, financial control by the scientists themselves is an ~~essential~~ inescapable part of his ~~duty~~ duties. With all these composite activities scientists could hardly be treated as equivalent to Collectors of Districts or personnel from North and South Block at Delhi. Their profession makes them sensitive and the world of competition makes them subject to elation and depression more than in any other profession. How then do we manage them or better still, create a system in which they can manage themselves.

As has been recognised the worst enemy of scientific progress is delay and the existing method of multiple scrutiny in whcih we specialise, is based on delay. Multiple scrutinies are necessary if no empowered joint project committees exist, for coordinating the work of different agencies. If empowered committees already exist, then such scrutinies become redundant and only produce delays. Why then do people insist on multiple scrutiny. It must be because some body does not want to take a decision for fear of being pulled up or somebody without taking responsibiitiy wishes the project to languish.

The principle on which our administration has been based is that the rules should be changed only to a minimum extent over the years. Is it not strange that we still come across proformas which were designed almost a hundred years old and nobody has ever bothered to change them. I recently came across a proforma which is a request for transport and one of the possibility of transport included in the proforma was an Elephant Transport with a statement that if elephant transport is required, atleast 6 hours notice should be given to prepare the Elephant. In contrast, each new S & T Project requires that a different system be initiated to attract good people, to make for harmonious relationship between groups from different disciplines and different agencies and maximise the use of local industries. Proforma methods either on paper or in the mind are no solutions.

The selection of a scientist and his subsequent training is of utmost importance in getting the best out of a man who has the capacity to deliver the goods. It has also been found that if trainees from different disciplines are brought together to study together an esprit-de-corps comes about with lasting benefits to the institution concerned. It is essential that the trainees should have the opportunity for multi-disciplinary training and have the chance to discuss overlapping areas with specialists in disciplines other than their own. The BARC Training School and its selection methods are good examples of a successful approach to this problem.

In this country, we have experience in the training of scholars ranging from the Gurukula type where a single Professor turned out many students of high quality to the type of training school which BARC has been running for a quite long time and which has also produced leaders of science, many of who are now holding important positions all over the country. However, we still do not have methods of spotting talent at an early stage and sustain them over a period of years. Existing efforts have not been quite satisfactory.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of science management is keeping up the morale of the scientists over his active period. A tendency of the past has always been to treat a student as 'once a student, keep him always a student'. By which I mean that he is used by

the professor to ~~assit~~ assist him but never given the freedom to develop his own originality.

If one has to deal with science management in the large, some system has to be worked out by which the quality of the contributions are properly assessed and recognised. If this process has to succeed, merit should be the only consideration be it for recognition of any sort promotion, prizes etc. The USA has benefitted from getting the best from all parts of the world as a policy.- Here in India, everything goes by caste, language etc. and this is an ideal situation for mediocrity to prevail. We all know that some times pure recognition of merit leads to resentment and frustration of individuals who have to take the second place, irrespective of seniority. However the very atmosphere that everthing is done on the basis of merit provides the right background for any work. Unfortunately for those who cannot make it by merit, ~~to~~ seek positions of power in Unions and Officer's Associations. This becomes their only outlet and to upset the systems through legal methods becomes another such outlet which our political systems encourage. The Institution must be strong enough to survive these difficulties. The appreciation of merit, and merit only, is the only strong protective ~~system~~ Covey against deterioration of a scientific institution.

In the years immediately after independence, the people of the country felt that it was the scientists who could contribute to the development of the country

in a unique way. This was encouraged by the Government and it is for this reason science progressed very rapidly in the last 30 years and India is now amongst one of the few countries in the world, able to contribute to mathematics and the sciences in a very fundamental way. When I say this, I am not referring to Nobel Prizes or purely theoretical studies as a measure of progress but include experimental sciences involving the highest quality of instrumentation. World recognition does not come easily for such contributions. However, in very recent times, a certain feeling is growing amongst the scientists of the country that they are not wanted as much as they used to be. There are forces operating especially from bureaucratic and other agencies to reduce their high reputation, & their status. Science progressed rapidly in the earlier days mainly because they were protected from people, however powerful who understand ~~did~~ do not understand the scientific profession. We now have to restudy the situation and create a protective system so that we do not revert to earlier pitfalls which had been removed with great care by excellent leadership.

I have shared my thoughts with you on a subject of management which I have studied carefully not by means of the usual academic methods but by pure experience. ~~In principle, if requires that~~ Perhaps as it will be of somebody write a book on the subject ~~because of its~~ unique value to the country.

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I have merely mentioned ~~this~~ these problems at ~~in~~ this Convocation address because of its importance. I would, therefore, request members of staff and students of IIM to look into these problems more carefully than ever before because I have no doubt that the future glory of the country depends on the country's capability to do science and technology of the highest quality. ~~and~~ Organisations like IIM can assist in ~~the~~ this progress ~~of~~ even if it be just the protection of ~~atleast~~ what we have achieved till now.