

Not another research talk

Ramna

Department of Chemical Engineering

IITM

This presentation is my personal opinion,
not opinion of NCCR or IITM

Outline

- Are we really free to choose problems we like to work on
- How to make centres more relevant: India centric concerns

Are we really free to choose problems we like to work on: A historical view

- Greece – shipbuilding and Pythagoras till Ptolemy
- Arabia – practical knowledge
- Italy – Renaissance (Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler)
- 15th century and music – Haydn (paintings), Rousseau, Goethe later Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert
- Physics - Classical and quantum mechanics
- Chemistry – Alchemy, phlogiston, Scheele, Priestley, Lavoisier...

Werner Heisenberg, Tradition in Science, Science and Public Affairs – Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 29, No.10, pp 4-10, 1973

Role of “centres”: India centric concerns

- The do-loop with no exit
 - Faculty chosen on the strength of publication record.
 - Faculty and students continue to publish “acceptable” research!

- Postulate
 - The best academics work on the big problems and set the parameters of the match.
 - They differentiate; like companies do; and excel
 - **and**, get grant/contract monitors to fund them!

What should we do?

- You will hear

There is a lot of money now in India 😊

- We have many choices:
 - Do research: “parametric variations” etc.
 - Lots of small publications to run projects and centres
 - Become Professors and evolve ..
 - Do the present “in” things
 - Info, bio, nano..
 - Network
 - Become Professors and evolve ..
 - Run behind your grant/contract monitor or have them monitor you!

(or)

**Do the all-time big problems (and
hope money follows)**

Do the all-time big problems (and hope money follows)

Challenges

1. Poor peer recognition
 2. Poor reception
 3. Lots of failure
 4. Lack of institutional support structure
 5. Lack of money
- and more.....