INTRODUCTION

“It shall be the duty of every citizen of India...to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement.”

(The Constitution of India, Article 51 A)

Man perpetually strives towards his vision for humanity --- for individuals, for communities and for nations --- because he understands the importance of creating and building the enabling conditions of life, not just interventions that decrease misery. His vision is often aimed at the realization of the optimal in life, the importance of creating an upward spiral of the elements of the positive side of life and how such excellence may be achieved. The concept of excellence defines the indomitable human spirit. In the moment of excellence, something transcends the mundane and touches the Ideal. But too often, Excellence is an indefinable summit that recedes into the measureless skies as one seeks to move closer towards it (Kamath, 2000).

Excellence is best defined as a colossal concept which is dynamic, vibrant and exemplifies reaching the zenith of our potential through harmonious symphony/collaboration of passion, commitment, perseverance and consistency of effort. Its multifaceted nature is expressed in a variety of fields. As an area, it has been fruitful in generating quality research. It has captured the interest of researchers and has been the thrust area of scientific research since recent past. Being a highly individualistic concept, it is often defined by the individual himself and hence, making its pursuit, a journey of commitment, practice and experience (Mohan, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2011a, 2015).

Excellence requires an incredible commitment to persist through the ups and downs associated with becoming the best and maintaining the best performance. It includes committing to, and being engaged in, an ongoing high quality preparation (mental, physical and technical) and the determination to give the best for the entire performance. In short, it means setting clear personal goals and relentlessly pursuing them (Orlick, 2005).
From its inception, Psychology has strongly focused on understanding psychological principles underlying individual differences. It goes to unravel the mysteries of extremes of behaviour in terms of excellence as well as problems. With the advent of Positive psychology, having at its core the view of the human being as a capable and productive being, a major paradigm shift occurred in which human potential, striving for growth and moving towards peaks of performance became the main concern. Probably, it was a quantum jump from frailty to success, from misery to happiness, and from disorder to perfection, getting the rightful focus (Mohan, 2008).

With Positive Psychology suddenly getting the limelight a large amount of research and application ensued to measure and enhance the excellence in each aspect of human endeavour. The images of pain and failure changed into peak performance and extension of human frontiers in scholarship, sports, health, arts, business and organizational skills. It was the rediscovery of the purpose of psychology, a reconsideration to overcome misery and seek happiness. Therein lay the power of positive psychology. It marked a paradigm shift from problem-solving to optimism and a fascinating evolution of thought and practice took place.

The interest of both the scientists and the public in general, was aroused anew in human excellence as the manifestation of outstanding human skills and talents, and also to the enigmatic phenomena that it entailed. An analysis from the perspective of Positive Psychology of the explanations from researchers concerning human excellence, sought to answer what promotes and maintains it in the most varied domains. Personal and contextual factors are mentioned in the literature, while cognitive skills and intentional practice to achieve excellence stand out, personality variables, persistence, emotional control, and openness to experience also deemed critical to the development and demonstration of excellence (Mohan, 1972, 1981a, 1981b, 1988, 1989, 1991a, 1991b, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1996d, 1997, 2000b).

It has been considered an essential human virtue since ages. Arête is an ancient Greek word meaning excellence, virtue, or what something is good for. It is a way of describing quality and involves the creation of happiness (Young, 2009). Aristotle, in his book, Nicomachean Ethics, describes the concept of excellence (the arête or peculiar excellence of a person) as an essential moral virtue and ties it to
the virtue of “practical wisdom” (Richard, 2014). Thus, excellence has been an indispensable and vital component of human psychology since long.

Excellence is apparently unfathomable and yet analysable, unlimited but measurable, unpredictable yet veritably an adaptive, effortful accomplishment executed for a predictable outcome. It is the zenith and hallmark of dynamic capabilities, distinctiveness and competitiveness. Like a book well written, the virtuosity of mastering a discipline, the uncanny ability to hit the bullseye, the singular capability to drive the ball to the goal, the brilliance of playing a musical instrument, the ease in conducting research that uncovers a hitherto mystery and enables scientific advancement, all such instances draw attention as they go far beyond the ordinary. This portrayal of human capabilities and skills represents unique contributions to the development and progress of society. Hence, understanding individuals with this type of performance is of deep interest, in order to create a health fostering culture (Garcia-Santos, Almeida & Werlang, 2012).

Excellence is of paramount importance in the modern era especially, as the development and stimulation regarding human potential has become even more essential. It seems to be one of the most effective ways to ensure the survival of human beings on Earth. Through their unique achievements, those who exceed the standard expectations not only help change previously established models but also set to trial new solutions and thereby, produce unexpected answers for what was standard so far. Therefore, the promotion of excellence in all the socially valued domains is extremely urgent, all the more so because of the predicament in which humanity finds itself (Garcia-Santos et al., 2012). Thus, research in excellence provides a vision intended to inspire others to help build an understanding of how best to facilitate individual, community, organizational and societal flourishing (Donaldson, Dollwet, & Rao, 2014).

HISTORY OF EXCELLENCE

The term excellence comes from the Latin excellentia, which means “the quality of being excellent; primacy” (Garcia-Santos et al., 2012). The use of excellence to describe a virtuous person goes back to the great ancient Greek
philosophers (Köhne, 2012). The Greek term for excellence *aretē* was the most articulated value in Greek culture. The root of the word, *aretē*, is the same as 'aristos', a term which denotes superlative ability and superiority.

In its earliest appearance in Greece the notion of excellence was bound up with the fulfillment of purpose or function as *telos*, the act of living up to one's full potential (Porter, 2007). In the Eastern cultures of India and China, the tradition of the exposition of and the striving for, perfecting, and achieving excellence is found with even greater antiquity (Radhakrishnan, 1977). Centuries ago Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the Athenian philosophers while expounding upon human nature, spoke of *telos, arête, eudemonia* and the importance of cultivating good character, virtue and excellence for personal and social well-being.

*Arete*, the word chosen by Greeks, portrayed the excellence of human effort and its pursuit was a significant part of the paideia, the ancient Greek process of creating and applying a principle of intellectual consistency to one’s training/life. The fundamental aspect of paideia was the achievement of this consistency through training boys to become men. This training in *aretē* included physical training, for which the Greeks developed the gymnasion; mental training, which included oratory, rhetoric, and basic sciences; and spiritual training, which included music and what is called virtue. The paideia sought a balance of physical, mental and spiritual training all pointing toward *aretē*, excellence, that is, becoming ones best and reaching ones highest human potential (Porter, 2007).

The moral excellence or *aretē* of a person or thing was virtue which meant the sum of all the corporeal or mental excellences of man i.e. strength, vigour; bravery, courage; aptness, capacity; worth, wisdom, piety; endurance, self-control, goodness. It was considered to involve exercised application of one’s highest effectiveness and was demonstrated through Greek literature with Achilles, Penelope, Odysseus as examples embodying *arête*, as they all demonstrated a combination of skill, wit, cleverness, bravery and strength, which was the very essence of *arête* (Porter, 2007).

Dictionaries at various times have given a meaning that is norm-referenced and comparative, defining excellence as surpassing others. Excellence as explained by
the Oxford Dictionary (2012) means the state or fact of excelling; the possession chiefly of good qualities in an eminent or unusual degree; surpassing merit, skill, virtue, worth etc.; dignity, eminence. It is a state, a quality which pushes or drives the individual towards exceptional accomplishment or performance. It involves surpassing one’s own performance.

It also includes the reference to a valuable characteristic quality or trait. In characterizing the use of excellence in public discourse, John Gardner observes that “‘excellence’ is a curiously powerful word . . . about which people feel strongly,” and he refers to excellence as a word “into which we read our own aspirations, our own conception of high standards, our hopes for a better world.” (Bruno-Jofré & Hills, 2011).

The various viewpoints regarding the origin, use and development of the idea of excellence continue to colour its concept and have in fact imbued it with certain discernible shades of conceptualization.

HISTORY OF RESEARCH IN EXCELLENCE

The studies addressing excellence can be dated back to the late 19th century, with the work of Galton (1979) on the study of giftedness. Written in 1869, Hereditary Genius, emphasized family aspects and the genetic transmission of intellectual and motivational ability. This was further carried forward by monumental studies for over many decades and eventually led to the humanistic movement in Psychology. The concept of self-actualization by Maslow (1970), fully functioning person by Rogers (1982) and optimal human functioning by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), eventually became the firm foundation for research in excellence (Garcia-Santos et al., 2012).

Psychology also has a long history of studies which focussed on the understanding of the functioning of individuals with superior abilities in the most varied segments of human life. These studies attempted to describe the characteristics of excellence and its foundations, as well as to identify the personal and contextual variables of excellence and under what conditions it occurs (Garcia-Santos et al., 2012).
There is indeed a great variety of researchers, with some being concerned with understanding the aspects of developing superior performance, its stages or phases (Ericsson, 2005; Renzulli, 2010); others being concerned with the quality of results, focusing on the efficacy and means to achieve such objectives (Zimmerman, 2002); some have emphasized the importance of determination, commitment, and personality characteristics to achieve an established goal (Ardelt, 2004; Moon, 2003); others have stressed the role of the context in which someone achieves excellence (Robinson & Clinkenbeard, 1998; Sternberg, 2001). All have associated excellence with a high level of performance of an individual in a given field (Trost, 2000) and agree that excellence requires some extent of experience and practice in a given domain of knowledge and/ or field (Ericsson, 2005). Finally, it is assumed that excellent performance depends on a set of factors that encompasses intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual variables that interact in a dynamic and constant manner (Sternberg, 1999; Trost, 2000).

Araujo, Cruz and Almeida (2007) found studies on excellence, organized in three clusters namely: the approach that concerns superior abilities, which associates excellence with talent and above average skills; the one concerning expertise, to evaluate high performance in certain domains; and wisdom, which associates excellence with the experience of life, maturity, and personal integrity of individuals who achieved high performance (Garcia-Santos et al., 2012).

THE CONCEPT OF EXCELLENCE

Excellence as a notion, an idea and a concept is present in all the fields. To be excellent and to achieve excellence are the hallmarks of the human pursuit of perfectibility. It is a striving for passion and an irrevocable commitment. It is the quality of being outstanding or extremely good as it involves being superior or pre-eminent in the possession of some quality, or in the performance of some action. It is a constant advancement, a journey and a path of self-discovery which requires commitment, practice and experience (Mohan, 2011a). Its pursuit is not an act but a habit, a way of inculcating the knowledge of one’s capabilities and acting progressively. Thereby, making the ‘way of excellence’, an art won by training and habituation (Aristotle; as cited by Hendry, Poole, Randall & Singer, 2006).
Henry Marrou, in his *History of Education in Antiquity*, considered *arête*, a heroic “morality of honor” and even “the ideal value to which even life itself must be sacrificed.” He described *arête* as a term by which the essence of the adaptation of Greek ideals within the Roman education system, can be traced through three distinct phases. It (1) originated in Homeric times (800 BC) to illuminate the glorious knightly culture of aristocratic warriors that thrived magnificently through to the era of the military state of Sparta; (2) assumed a new definition through Plato (circa 400 BC) during the period of the scribe culture of classical Athenian education, which was reserved for a privileged ruling class and based on a search for truth; and (3) finally it expanded its essential characteristics through the writings and oratory of Isocrates (circa 350 BC). Isocrates resolved to find Truth through the virtue of speech. Isocrates sought to train orators to choose subject matter of great consequence and to compose and deliver practical, compelling arguments in the service of Greece. While he shared Plato’s skepticism about the teaching of *arête*, Isocrates hoped that through devotion to the art of rhetoric and lifelong application of its principles, his students would strive toward excellence (Vassallo, 2004).

Plato led the examination of humankind’s quest for excellence. For him, *arete* was mainly associated with moral excellence. It was superordinate to specific moral virtues of Courage, Temperance, Justice, etc.; something they all share, a special, unnamed quality, their essence. It was clearly related to Goodness, but not the same thing (Vassallo, 2004).

For Aristotle, something is excellent when it manifests its unique purpose or *telos*. The unique, defining quality of human beings, for Aristotle, what makes them distinct from other creatures, is the capacity for rational thought. Human excellence, then, involves the correct use of reason, principally in connection with moral choice.

Most ancient philosophers, argued that human excellence must include the moral virtues and that the excellent human would be, above all, courageous, moderate, and just. This argument depended on making a link between the moral virtues and happiness and as ancient philosophers also held that *eudemonia* or
happiness was the proper goal or end of human life, the notion was both simple and complicated (Richard, 2014).

Thus, these different opinions caused historical discussion, the first elaborated on the relation of happiness to human excellence and, the second particularized on the relation of human excellence to the moral virtues. The first was supported by the notion that Human excellence is the psychological basis for carrying out the activities of a human life well; to that extent human excellence is also happiness. While the unhappy person deals with a vital and dynamic emotion like fear in an inept way, the happy person handles fear skillfully, and thereby exhibits human excellence (Richard, 2014).

Nevertheless, the moral virtues are in effect excellent qualities of character — intrinsically valuable for the one who has them; as well as valuable for others. In a significant way, ancient moral theory tries to link happiness to moral virtue by the means of human excellence. Happiness derives from human excellence; human excellence includes the moral virtues, which are implicitly or explicitly other-regarding and thereby supporting the second argument (Richard, 2014).

Excellence has been one of the cardinal principles of Indian Philosophy. It was considered to be present in the moral fibre of man and has captured attention since ages. It has been considered more than a pious platitude and the development of the soul. It is held that man’s quest for excellence began from the very dawn of civilization and its genuine pursuit is infinite and the sublime is the triumph of the spirit, over time, space and matter. Thus, making it possible through faith, hope, charity, perseverance and zeal (Kamath, 2000).

Excellence has been considered a worthy and noble pursuit. Even, the vedic seers indulged in it which is embodied in the Ishopanishad. Indian philosophy has talked of it as that which is the possible extensive elaboration of perfection and is inexplicable. It is an attribute of God and is a transcendence of the highest degree (Kamath, 2000).

Excellence has also been linked to the ancient concept of Dasobhava or grand humility, which involves the spirit of dedication and the power of the creative gift and
thus leads to the cultivation of this virtue. *Dasoha* which stands for the assemblage of the finest constituents of human behaviour and virtue is regarded as the finest example of excellence. *Dasoha* is compounded of humility, service, compassion, love and self-abnegation. Thus, *dasoha* is excellence in excelsis (Kamath, 2000).

Excellence, per se, involves exhibiting characteristics that are exceptional. In the explanatory context, the concept of excellence enshrines one aspect of quality, and, according to the traditional view, it links quality with the exceptional (Kömürcügil, 2014). The various definitions of excellence identify a range of different characteristics:

- A high level of perfection that a person or a thing has in its own kind (Dictionnaires Le Robert; as cited by Brusoni et al., 2014);
- The features of a thing or a person that correspond, nearly perfectly, to the ideal representation of its nature and its function, or that shows a neat superiority in one or the other domain (Atilf; as cited by Brusoni et al., 2014);
- The state or quality of excelling or being exceptionally good; extreme merit; superiority (Collins Dictionary; as cited by Brusoni et al., 2014)

**Excellence** as a concept, thus, is highly individualistic and thus often defined by the individual himself. **Excellence** is using what one has to the fullest capacity (Orlick, 2000). It is a pursuit, a path of self discovery, an endeavour to aim and achieve something exceptional (Mohan, 2014a, 2014b). It involves a perfect balancing of all the various abilities and capacities so as to create the essential atmosphere for higher achievement.

The term success is often interchangeably used with **excellence**. Since it is a process of continual improvement, excellence always creates success. Hence when one seeks excellence, success follows. Success has been defined as the peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming (Wooden & Jamison, 1997).

However, excellence has been found to be two-faceted: on the one hand, excellence is a concept that applies to one person, entity or thing regarding itself and its own capacities. On the other hand, the excellence of that entity, person or thing is
always measured against the capacities of the other people, things or entities of its kind (Strike, 1985).

Therefore, while intellectualizing excellence, there exist further two different conceptions namely norm-referenced and criterion-referenced notions of excellence. The norm referenced conception defines excellence relative to the performance of others. Thus portraying people in competition for excellence and that excellence is not attainable by everyone. On the other hand, the criterion-referenced view, however, defines excellence in relation to a standard such that people are not portrayed in competition for it and, in principle, it can be attained by everyone (Strike, 1985).

Hence, excellence is a highly relative concept. It implies a judgment that evaluates if and to what extent something or someone possesses some definite intrinsic characteristics to be considered excellent (in relation to oneself and others) (Strike, 1985). Thus, excellence involves the coordination of the three vantage points: the individual, the knowledge domain and the professional field (Gardner, 2002).

MODELS OF EXCELLENCE

For the purpose of providing a working framework to understand, explain and/or predict the phenomena and pursuit of excellence, numerous eminent psychologists formulated certain theoretical constructs and models representing processes, mental skills, attitudes and values etc., based upon either their own theories or the experiences of exceptional performers, demonstrating thereby the necessary requisites for a high-level performance (in any domain). These models indubitably, gave a foundation and an impetus to psychology as an applied approach to optimal functioning.

1. THE WHEEL OF EXCELLENCE

Terry Orlick (2005) held that human excellence in virtually all domains is guided by mental factors. He developed his "Wheel of Excellence" (Orlick, 2005) to provide a working framework to guide the pursuit of excellence and enlists seven critical elements of excellence based on the experiences of exceptional performers.
a) **Commitment:** Commitment is the first essential ingredient guiding the pursuit of excellence. Excellence requires an incredible commitment to persist through the ups and downs associated with becoming best and maintaining one’s best performance. It involves the development of an extremely high level of dedication, self-discipline, passion, joy or love for the endeavour undertaken. It is a continuous striving to make personal improvements and meaningful contributions. The world's best performers carry an extremely high level of commitment or passion for their pursuit. This is required to attain the highest levels of excellence.

b) **Self Belief/Confidence:** Belief is the second essential ingredient in the pursuit of excellence. Belief in oneself and confidence in one’s capacity allows to extend the limits, create opportunities and push through performance barriers. Where there is unwavering belief in the capacity to carry out a mission and absolute connection with the performance, doors are opened to higher levels of excellence. Excellence is guided by belief in one’s potential, goal, the meaningfulness of the goal, and trust in one’s capacity to reach that goal.

c) **Full Focus:** The third element of excellence centers around being fully focused for the duration of the performance, on the task at hand, in the
moment, in the zone, on the performance, totally connecting to learning, experiencing or performing and letting things unfold naturally. Focusing is the single most important mental skill associated with performance excellence. Focusing refers to the ability to concentrate totally. The most important mental goal for the successful execution of all performances is to train the mind and body to the point that one can connect fully for the duration of the performance.

d) **Positive Images:** The fourth element of excellence uses positive images to dream big dreams, go after the dreams, follow a desired course of action, pursue specific targets or goals, prepare oneself to act and react in constructive ways, feel the flawless execution of desired performance skills, create positive feelings, make corrections, remain positive and enhance confidence. The world's best performers (e.g. athletes, surgeons, astronauts, and classical musicians) have highly developed imagery skills.

e) **Mental Readiness:** The fifth element of excellence is to create and take advantage of learning and performance opportunities, develop essential mental, physical, and technical skills necessary to excel in the pursuit, plan, practice and prepare effectively, perform to capacity (usually accomplished with a commitment to follow an effective pre-performance routine to enter the best mental "zone" for quality performance) and follow a path that brings out the best. Consistent high-level performers are great at following their own best path. They carry a positive perspective, respect what works best for them, focus fully and continue to look for ways to improve. This path becomes so natural for some great performers that they are able to follow it consistently without much conscious awareness.

f) **Distraction Control:** Distraction control refers to the ability to maintain or regain a positive, effective focus when faced with potential distractions, negative input, or setbacks. Maintaining and regaining a constructive focus is a critical part of performing to the capacity on a consistent basis.

g) **Constructive Evaluation:** Excellence requires the development of an effective process for personal evaluation. Constructive evaluation of mental
and physical performance skills requires two things—reflecting on what went well, and targeting areas for continued improvement.

Orlick (2000) claimed that these seven elements are crucial to guiding people to success, and must be used in concert, for the wheel to function properly.

Research has showed evidence of the specific link between focus and excellence in performance, as shown in the wheel of excellence. Werthner (2002) conducted a series of interviews with eight elite athletes, all of whom were medal winners in Olympic Games or world championships, or were world record holders in their sport. All eight athletes indicated that the ability to focus on the now was essential to an excellent performance. In their study with Canadian Olympic athletes, Orlick and Partington (1988) concluded that focus was one of the “most important statistically significant athlete skill directly related to high level performance”. Talbot-Honeck and Orlick (1998) investigated mental factors related to excellence in elite musicians. The researchers reported that “musicians felt that concentration was a necessary element of excellence and...a determining factor in a quality performance”. McDonald, Orlick and Letts (1995) conducted in-depth interviews with 33 surgeons who were identified as highly proficient in their specialty. All surgeons described experiencing a fully focused state while performing at their best (Hohmann, 2011).

Research in the field of sports has upheld that Orlick's (2008) Wheel of Excellence equates excellence with an individual's ability to achieve quality focus. By incorporating such skills as distraction control and positive images, coupled with a confident and committed attitude of ongoing learning and mental readiness, an athlete is able to reach optimal focus (Freisen, 2004).

Therefore, Orlick (2008) has summarized the key mental skills necessary for high-level performance (in any domain) in his Wheel of Excellence: focus, commitment, mental readiness, positive images, confidence, distraction control, and ongoing learning. Focus is situated at the center of the wheel and is identified as the driving force or the “core of excellence”. Orlick contended that the remaining six elements of excellence develop out of an effective focus. In previous studies, athletes and other performers have certainly placed a marked emphasis on the role of focus in their successful performance (Mahoney, Gabriel, & Perkins, 1987; Orlick & Partington, 1988; Werthner 2002).
2. JOHN WOODEN’S PYRAMID OF SUCCESS

Coach Wooden defined success as “peace of mind, which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to do your best to become the best you are capable of becoming” (Wooden & Carty, 2005). He elaborated on this definition by creating the Pyramid, which may be defined as a diagram of attitudes and values demonstrating how an athlete can achieve competitive greatness. Wooden spent 17 years constructing the Pyramid, diligently deciding where the building blocks should be placed (Nater & Gallimore, 2006). He arranged the blocks hierarchically, such that each row serves as a foundation for the following row. According to Wooden, the blocks are “the natural outgrowth of having the other blocks in their proper place” (Wooden & Carty, 2005). Each block of the Pyramid serves as a precursor to the development of the other building blocks (Gilbert, Nater, Siwik, & Gallimore, 2010). The following figure illustrates the Pyramid of Success:

Diagram 2: The Pyramid of Success

The blocks are elaborated as follows:

**Industriousness**

A positive evaluation of performance behavior occurs when either the person or organization itself finds that the resulting performance behaviors met the initial goal; this refers to Wooden’s definition of industriousness. Industriousness, a cornerstone of the Pyramid of Success, consists of hard work and planning to reach a goal, both of which are needed for positive performance behaviour. According to the Pyramid, a higher level of friendship relates to better industriousness (Perez, Horn, & Otten, 2014).

**Friendship**

According to Wooden, friendship results from the following three principles: mutual esteem, respect, and devotion. It is “doing for others while they are doing for you” (Wooden & Carty, 2005). The friendship building block relates to the loyalty building block, such that a stronger friendship positively correlates with a higher level of loyalty. As defined by Wooden, to be loyal is to “Be true to yourself and to those you lead.” (Perez et al., 2014).

**Loyalty**

**Wooden** held that loyalty is part of the higher nature and it is also part of the nature of leaders who achieve higher goals. He held that loyalty from the top inspires loyalty from below. It is a most precious and powerful commodity and it starts with the leader (Wooden & Jamison, 2005).

**Cooperation**

According to Wooden, being cooperative requires working well with others and having an interest in the good of the whole team. This personal quality often results in greater task cohesion (Spink, Nickel, Wilson, & Odnokon, 2005).

**Enthusiasm**

Wooden defines enthusiasm as a sincere, stimulating, and contagious love for what we are doing. In literature, enthusiasm has often been linked to team task
satisfaction, which includes one’s contentment with teammates’ contributions and coordination of their efforts towards the team’s goal (Spink et al., 2005). Research has shown that those athletes who are more enthusiastic about their team report being more cooperative (Spink & Carron, 1992). This directly supports Wooden’s belief concerning the interrelatedness of enthusiasm and cooperation. High levels of enthusiasm result in high levels of cooperation, and vice versa (Perez et al., 2014).

Self-Control

Wooden defined self-control as self-generated thoughts or actions that require self-discipline and good judgment based upon one’s mental and physical performance. Wooden’s Pyramid theorizes that not only does industriousness lead to self-control, but friendship does as well. Wooden’s definition of friendship requires camaraderie, respect, and a joint effort (Perez et al., 2014).

Alertness

Wooden defined alertness as observing constantly and being eager to learn and improve. He held that alertness is that asset that keeps one awake and perceptive and increases skill (Wooden & Jamison, 2005).

Initiative

He held that failure to act is often the biggest failure of all. According to him, initiative is the ability to act and proper preparation must be followed with initiative (Wooden & Jamison, 2007). Research shows that mental toughness is similar to Wooden’s definition of initiative (Sheard, Golby & Van Wersch, 2009), as both qualities require one not to fear failure but to learn from it and then use this new knowledge to make independent decisions (Perez et al., 2014).

Intentness

According to the Pyramid, cooperation relates to intentness. Wooden defines cooperation as “working together in all ways to accomplish the common goal” (Perez et al., 2014) and he defined intentness as concentration on the team objective and the
ability to stay the course even when that course is most difficult and the obstacles seem insurmountable (Wooden & Jamison, 2007).

Condition

Wooden theorized that self-control results in proper physical and mental condition. Self-regulation, or self-control, enables successful conditioning (Crews, Lochbaum & Karoly, 2000). The Pyramid features not only self-control, but also alertness relating to condition. Wooden believed that remaining alert to one’s surroundings empowers an individual to gain knowledge and continue with the conditioning process (Perez et al., 2014).

Skill

Near the center of the Pyramid, Wooden proposed that alertness, or the skill of observing quickly and constantly, leads to skill (Perez et al., 2014). He held that mastery of the skills needed in the job require learning and it is why leaders and those who are high achievers are lifelong learners as skill is an ongoing and lifelong process (Wooden & Jamison, 2005).

Team Spirit

Wooden defined team spirit as “a genuine consideration for others; an eagerness to sacrifice personal interests of glory for the welfare of all” (Wooden & Carty, 2005). He held that this block of the Pyramid addresses the most important characteristic which is selflessness and is the opposite of selfishness. It indicates the eagerness to sacrifice personal glory or gain for the greater good, namely, the welfare and success of the organization, team, and group (Wooden & Jamison, 1997).

Poise

Wooden defined poise as remaining calm regardless of stressful circumstances. Wooden stated that being well-conditioned leads to poise (Perez et al., 2014). He held that poise means holding fast to the principles and beliefs and acting in accordance with them regardless of how bad (or good) the situation may be (Wooden & Jamison, 2005).
Introduction

Confidence

Wooden defined confidence as the well-founded self-belief that one is fully prepared for the task at hand (Perez et al., 2014). He stated that true abiding confidence is earned through tenaciously pursuing and attaining those assets that allow one to reach one’s own level of competency and that is, excellence (Wooden & Jamison, 2005).

Competitive Greatness

Wooden defined competitive greatness as having a real love for the hard battle and knowing that it offers the opportunity to be at one’s best when the best is required (Wooden & Jamison, 2005). Wooden’s concept of competitive greatness shares many commonalities with the psychological concept of flow proposed by Csikszentmihályi (Csikszentmihályi, 1990a). Wooden held that competitive greatness is “enjoyment of a difficult challenge” (Wooden & Carty, 2005).

Therefore, the 15 building blocks spoken of by Wooden form a guidebook and elaborate on immensely important concepts that ultimately ensure to lead to success (Allen, 2014).

3. THE EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR QUALITY MANAGEMENT'S (EFQM) EXCELLENCE MODEL

In 1988, 14 representatives of European multi-national companies such as British Telecom, Volkswagen and Philips initiated EFQM. The European Commission and the European Organization for Quality supported the initiative. The founding members developed a multi-dimensional quality management model, called the EFQM Model and introduced the principle of self-assessment and the European Quality Award Program. According to the Foundation, quality management should focus on all activities, on all levels in an organisation and should be a continuous process to improve performance. The essence of the approach is that the performance has to meet the expectations, needs and demands of the stakeholders (Nabitz, Klazinga & Walburg, 2000).
The foundation described EFQM Excellence Model as: “a practical tool to help organizations establish an appropriate management system by measuring where they are on the path towards Excellence, helping them to understand the gaps, and then stimulating solutions” (Saada, 2013).

The EFQM Excellence Model is a non-prescriptive framework based on nine criteria as shown in Figure.

![Diagram 3: The EFQM Excellence Model](image)


Five of these are 'Enablers' and four are 'Results'. The 'Enabler' criteria cover what an organisation does. The 'Results' criteria cover what an organisation achieves. 'Results' are caused by 'Enablers' and feedback from 'Results' helps to improve 'Enablers' (EFQM, 2003).

The five enablers assess and question whether there are effective approaches in place to enable the achievement of what the organisation has planned to deliver in terms of its results (Steed, 2003). The five Enablers are:
Enablers or agents define what organisations do in order to achieve excellence. Specifically, it is to do with activities related to the leadership of the directors, the management of human and material resources, as well as process management. Moreover, these activities are not independent: they must be implemented together and in a coordinated fashion (Calvo-Mora, Leal & Roldán, 2006).

The Results are last four criterions and represent the areas where the organization achieve its objectives. The four results areas question whether there are comprehensive measures in place which can monitor and track performance and assess whether strategic objectives have been met (Steed, 2003). The four 'Results' are:

- Customer results.
- People results.
- Society results.
- Key Performance results.

The criteria challenges to what extent the organisation can actually show that the chosen indicators:

- Comprehensively measure what is important to customers and others who receive a service from the organisation.
- Demonstrate continuous improvement against target and results that are linked to and caused by approaches.
The results areas also question the extent to which benchmarking against the best in class is undertaken and used to enhance learning and improve performance (Steed, 2003).

The Model recognizes there are many approaches to achieving sustainable excellence in all aspects of performance and is based on the premise that: Excellent results with respect to Performance, Customers, People and Society are achieved through Leadership driving Policy and Strategy, People, Partnerships, Resources, and Processes (EFQM, 2003). Ghobadian and Woo (1996) confirm that the model implicitly recognizes that the quality of the final offerings is the end result of a complex of integrated processes and employees' efforts and that it provides a useful audit framework against which organisations can evaluate their quality management methods, the deployment of these methods, and the end results. This view is supported by Gadd (1995) who states: "Clearly, the model allows measurement of more than just performance. It also allows for measurement of how the organization operates". The Model's nine boxes, shown in figure, represent the criteria against which to assess an organisation's progress towards excellence. Each of the nine criteria has a definition, which explains the high level meaning of that criterion (EFQM, 2003).

To develop the high level meaning further each criterion is supported by a number of sub-criteria. Sub-criteria pose a number of questions that should be considered in the course of an assessment. Below each sub-criterion are lists of possible areas to address. The areas to address are not mandatory nor are they exhaustive lists but are intended to further exemplify the meaning of the sub-criterion (EFQM, 2003).

The Model has been tested and applied within higher education, with the main benefit of using the Model stemming from its customer-focused approach. This is congruent with the aim of many educational organisations, which put students at the heart of learning and teaching (Steed, 2003).
### EFQM Excellence Model Definitions (2003)  |  Interpretation for Further and Higher Education

| **Results Orientation** | Excellence is achieving results that delight all the organisation's stakeholders. | Focusing clearly on and understanding students and other customers, their needs, expectations and values, keeping in consideration and valuing their contribution, and the contribution of other stakeholder groups. |
| **Customer Focus** | Excellence is creating sustainable customer value. | Anticipating, balancing and meeting the current and future needs of students, staff and others, through developing and setting a balanced range of appropriate indicators or targets, tracking performance, benchmarking, and taking appropriate action based on this holistic range of information. |
| **Leadership and Constancy of Purpose** | Excellence is visionary and inspirational leadership, coupled with constancy of purpose. | Clearly demonstrating visionary and inspirational leadership, which is transparent and open, with a constancy and unity of purpose which is shared by everyone in the institution. |
| **Management by Processes and Facts** | Excellence is managing the organisation through a set of interdependent and interrelated systems, processes and facts. | Understanding and systematically managing all activities through a set of interdependent and interrelated systems and processes, with decisions based on sound and reliably evidenced information. |
| **People Development and Involvement** | Excellence is maximising the contribution of employees through their development and involvement. | Developing, involving and engaging staff, maximising their contribution in a positive and encouraged way, with shared values and a culture of trust, openness and empowerment. |
| **Partnership Development** | Excellence is developing and maintaining value-adding partnerships. | Developing meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships, both internally and externally, in order to gain added value for partners, and support the achievement of both strategic and operational objectives. |
| **Corporate Social Responsibility** | Excellence is exceeding the minimum regulatory framework in which the organisation operates and to strive to understand and respond to the expectations of their stakeholders in society. | Understanding, appreciating and considering positively the way in which the institution interacts with and impacts on the local and wider society, from both a practical and ethical perspective. |
| **Continuous Learning, Innovation and Improvement** | Excellence is challenging the status quo and effecting change by using learning to create innovation and improvement opportunities. | Stimulating, encouraging, managing, sharing and acting on learning and experiences, making changes using innovation and creativity, and enabling continuous improvement to add value in a consistent way. |
| **Agility** | The ability to act quickly to the changing demands of students and stakeholders in terms of speed of response and flexibility to deliver. |
| **Future Focus** | Understanding the short- and longer-term factors that affect the organisation and the education market and planning to take account of these. |

---

**Diagram 4: The Fundamental Concepts of Excellence**

4. **THE EXCELLENCE THEORY**

James E. Grunig (1992) developed the Excellence theory as a normative model for public relations practitioners to follow. The purpose of his study sought to answer, “How, why, and to what extent does communication affect the achievement of organizational objectives”? The model derived from the study outlined practices for effective public relations campaigns so that organizational goals could be achieved.

Grunig (1992) developed a series of general theory principles, which includes four levels: program, departmental, organizational and economic. The program level argues that to be most effective in meeting its objectives, public relations should be managed strategically. At the departmental level, Grunig noted that to be most successful, public relations must function distinct from marketing, practicing two-way symmetric communications. Grunig argues for a separate department of public relations in which practitioners report to senior management. The third level of the Excellence Theory calls for organizational conditions that reflect two-way communications, a participative culture with organic organizational structure.

The final theme of this theory is the economic level in which communication delivers a tangible value of reduced costs of regulation and litigation as well as high job satisfaction among employees (Schmitz, 2014).

The theory offers ten normative principles, for achieving excellent public relations in a campaign:

1. Involvement of public relations in strategic management.
2. Empowerment of public relations in the dominant coalition or a direct reporting relationship to senior management.
3. Integrated public relations function.
4. Public relations as a management function, separate from other functions.
5. Public relations unit headed by a manager rather than a technician.
6. Two-way symmetrical model of public relations in practice.
7. A symmetrical system of internal communication.
8. Knowledge needed to practice the managerial role and symmetrical public relations.
9. Diversity embodied in all roles.
10. Organizational context for excellence (Schmitz, 2014).
Building and maintaining relationships with public falls under the strategic management heading of public relations and is the key characteristic of excellent public relations at the micro-programmatic level. According to Grunig (1992) “strategically managed public relations is designed to build relationships with the most important stakeholders of an organization”.

Organizations can perform more effectively by developing and maintaining relationships with other organizations and individuals to achieve their goals in a mutually beneficial way. According to Grunig (1992), “Two-way symmetrical communication describes a model of public relations that is based on research and that uses communication to manage conflict and improve understanding with strategic public”. His research also notes that this model of communication is more effective than the two-way asymmetrical model because it causes public relations professionals to engage dialogically with its publics to resolve questions or crisis as opposed to one-way persuasive communication.

Grunig notes that, “Symmetrical communication takes place through dialogue, negotiation, listening, and conflict management rather than through persuasion, manipulation, and the giving of orders (Grunig, 1992)”. He describes this practice as a two-way channel of communication in which the organization stays close to the customer and listens to their needs and requests, leading to a more mutually beneficial communicative interaction (Grunig, 1992).

5. **Values in Action (VIA)- Classification of Strengths**

Park and Peterson (2006a) upheld the goals of positive psychology which involve identification and enhancement of the human strengths and virtues that help human beings prosper in the face of adversity and make their life worth living and allow individuals and communities to thrive (Froh, 2004). Through their work, they addressed the moral competence among adolescents in terms of ubiquitously acknowledged strengths of character (Park & Peterson, 2006b, 2006c, 2008; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Their model occupies a prominent place in the research in positive psychology, which is defined by connectedness, creativity, compassion and credibility (Mohan, 2000a, 2001, 2012a, Tripathi, 2008).

They held that in the past, most research had focused on one aspect of character at a time, leaving unanswered questions about the underlying structure of character within an individual. Thus, there was a need for a systematic examination of
character multidimensional terms. To convey the multidimensionality of good character, their model is called components character strengths (Park & Peterson, 2006b).

Classification of Strengths focuses on what is right about people and specifically about the strengths of character that contribute to optimal human development. This model initially involved components of good character and then was devised to assess the components as individual differences. The VIA Classification occupies a prominent position in positive psychology as it puts forth the various virtues and strengths of character which are considered morally valued in its own right (Park & Peterson, 2006b).

The classification identifies 24 character strengths organized under six broad virtues. Character refers to the entire set of positive traits that have emerged across cultures and throughout history as important for the good life. Virtues being the core characteristics valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers and include wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. These six broad categories of virtues appear consistently from historical surveys (Dahlsgaard, Peterson & Seligman, 2005).

Research lends support and indicates that these virtues may be universal, grounded in biology through an evolutionary process that is selected for these predispositions toward moral excellence as means of solving the important tasks necessary for survival and advancement of the species. Character strengths are the psychological processes or mechanisms that define the virtues. In other words, they are distinguishable routes to displaying virtues (Park & Peterson, 2006b). Thereby, forming the basis for achievement of the virtues.

One of the virtues is Transcendence which includes the appreciation of beauty and excellence and refers to the ability to find, recognize, and take pleasure in the existence of goodness in the physical and social worlds (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). As excellence is a highly intangible construct and has a highly personalized meaning (Mohan, 2014a), people can connect to excellence around themselves through multiple channels and create an enriched and awe-filled life (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).
Wisdom and knowledge: Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge.
- Creativity: Thinking of novel and productive ways to do things
- Curiosity: Taking an interest in all of ongoing experience
- Love of learning: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge
- Open-mindedness: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides
- Perspective: Being able to provide wise counsel to others

Courage: Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal
- Authenticity: Speaking the truth and presenting oneself in a genuine way
- Bravery: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain
- Persistence: Finishing what one starts
- Zest: Approaching life with excitement and energy

Humanity: Interpersonal strengths that involve “tending and befriending” others
- Kindness: Doing favors and good deeds for others
- Love: Valuing close relations with others
- Social intelligence: Being aware of the motives and feelings of self and others

Justice: Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life
- Fairness: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice
- Leadership: Organizing group activities and seeing that they happen
- Teamwork: Working well as member of a group or team

Temperance: Strengths that protect against excess
- Forgiveness: Forgiving those who have done wrong
- Modesty: Letting one’s accomplishments speak for themselves
- Prudence: Being careful about one’s choices; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted
- Self-regulation: Regulating what one feels and does

Transcendence—strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning
- Appreciation of beauty and excellence: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in all domains of life
- Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen
- Hope: Expecting the best and working to achieve it
- Humor: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people
- Religiousness: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of life.

Diagram 5: Values in Action (VIA) Classification of Strengths
The VIA-Youth is helpful in identifying the “signature strengths” relative to one's own other strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). It further provides help in utilization of the signature strengths which provides a route to a psychologically fulfilling life (Seligman, 2002; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

6. Models Highlighting Understanding of Higher Abilities

Renzulli’s Three-Ring Model (1986, 2002, 2010) expounds three components namely above average intellectual ability, commitment to tasks, and creativity. He proposes that high abilities are understood as the result of the interaction of these three components that have the same level of importance for the result. High abilities in this model are the result of opportunities, resources, and encouragement promoted in learning contexts and situations and seen as behavior that is developed and depends on appropriate stimulus.

The Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent was put forth by Gagné (2004). He articulated that high abilities depend on natural and hereditary abilities that are spontaneously expressed. According to him, talent derives from the interaction of natural abilities and the individual’s developmental context, subject to learning processes and practice. In this model, the development of talent is linked to three types of factors that may speed up or hinder the developmental process: intrapersonal (personality, motivation), environmental (socioeconomic and educational contexts, among others), and factors such as chance or luck (being in the right place, at the right moment, with the necessary preparation).

Winner’s Model of Inborn Giftedness, Intrinsic Interest and Motivation advocates that inborn giftedness is at the base of high abilities. According to this model, individuals with exceptional abilities have differentiated brain characteristics and a tendency to become interested in the field or fields for which they have greater facility and are more prone. Winner clarifies that for an individual with high abilities to become an eminent adult, personality characteristics related to high levels of creativity, risk-taking, and the ability to break with determined conventions are needed (Garcia-Santos et al., 2012).
The **Intellectual Exceptionality Model** of Castelló Tarrida (2005) considers exceptional abilities and talent to be phenomena of an intellectual nature, as in a building process in which talent could be simpler or more complex, consonant with the cognitive abilities involved and expression domains, subject to the influence of biological or environmental developmental aspects. Despite the differences in each individual’s pace, intellectual development occurs on a continuous basis and can be facilitated (or hindered) by the culture that defines the context, opportunities, and individual’s personality (Garcia-Santos et al., 2012).

Finally, the **Developing-Expertise Model** of Sternberg (1998, 1999) defines high abilities as a process of acquisition and crystallization of a set of competencies considered necessary for high levels of performance. This process occurs continuously and culminates in mastering a given domain of expertise. In this model, natural abilities and training are reconciled, introducing interactional meta-components: learning competencies, thinking, knowledge and motivation (Sternberg et al., 2010; Garcia-Santos et al., 2012).

**PILLARS OF EXCELLENCE**

Any structure that is built to last has to have a strong foundation. This goes for a physical building as well as for a system of thought. Like the stone pillars of the Parthenon, an ancient temple built by the Greeks, which has stood the test of time since about 2500 years, excellence is also based on a solid foundation which involves the mental strategies that further help to withstand storms and adversities (Rockwood, 2008).

Rockwood (2008) talked about the seven pillars of mental excellence which help to uphold the performance of an individual in a situation. They are:

**Pillar 1: Excellence:** The first pillar of mental excellence is excellence itself. Excellence being defined as being the absolute best that one can possibly be, or, in other words, achieving our potential. It involves to “max out” the inner potential (Rockwood, 2008). There is a gap between the current ability and the potential ability, which must be closed, in order to attain excellence.
Pillar 2: The real value of success: The second pillar of mental excellence is to understand what it is that gives meaning to the success (Rockwood, 2008). It requires the understanding and dwelling on the concept of value of the work as, the real value is found through satisfaction and pride of one’s accomplishments through hard work.

Pillar 3: Competition: The third pillar of mental excellence is to have a healthy and correct attitude towards competition. As competition has the capability to bring out the best as well as the worst in people. In good, healthy competition, there is no room for negative emotions like revenge, hurt, or hatred, instead positive emotions like passion for the sport and exhilaration of good competition prevail (Rockwood, 2008).

Pillar 4: Focus: The fourth pillar of mental excellence is focus. Focus is another word for concentration or attention. The ability to focus, and maintain it for the length of the competition is the most important skill (Rockwood, 2008).

Pillar 5: Confidence: The fifth pillar of mental excellence is confidence. Confidence in terms of trusting one’s decision making abilities helps improve practice and perform well (Rockwood, 2008).

Pillar 6: Control: The sixth pillar is control. It involves the correct understanding of what can be controlled and what cannot be. Much of the stress and anxiety that is experienced is caused by elements that are outside the control and by those elements that should be under control but are not. It may include the emotions, the commitments, perceptions and reactions to events and positive and negative thoughts. Therefore, it becomes imperative to determine things which can be controlled and which are out of control. It is important not to waste valuable time and energy on the things out of control and instead focus it on elements under control (Rockwood, 2008).

Pillar 7: Have Fun: The seventh and the last pillar of mental excellence is the desire to have fun. Fun in the sense of satisfaction and pride that is got after many hours of dedicated training. This kind of feeling comes from somewhere deep in the soul. Those who strive to have this kind of fun are more likely to:
Introduction

- Strive for excellence in all things
- Understand that nothing comes without hard work
- Stay focused on the here and now
- Be a fierce competitor without self-doubt or fear
- Be willing to make the tough decisions in the clutch (Rockwood, 2008)

Kapur and Wilson (2010) put forth the fifteen ‘pillars of excellence’ in order to act as a guide in activities such as appraisal and continuing development. They held that ‘human excellence’ was a multifactorial entity, and the range of relevant factors could be collapsed into three critical domains relating to technical proficiency, personal skills and future legacy.

Diagram 6: Pillars of Excellence

Introduction

Technical pillars

These pillars cover the capability while performing a task. They include evidence-based thinking and practice, professional and peer accreditation, decision-support systems, effectiveness and efficiency and learning and risk management.

Evidence-based thinking and practice: In an era of accountability it is expected to show evidence of the efficacy of the practice (Moran & Malott, 2004). Constant checks help maintain the level of excellence in performance and it eventually can be harnessed to help in evaluating applied practice. Smith (2007) reported that the effectiveness of evidence-based practice will only be as good as the evidence on which it is based. The evidence itself should also be subject to stringent analysis (Kapur & Wilson, 2010).

Professional and peer accreditation: Peer review by colleagues is not a threat, but a valuable weapon in our search for optimal performance. Like other professions (Lauer, 2002), observation by peers, critical peer review of the work and visits to experts in the field can be beneficial. Peer review should be made the norm in order to help in managing performance and ensure higher standards.

Decision-support systems: Decision-support systems apply to take ethical decisions relating to performance. It is important to consider the ethical aspect of performance and to be sure of the righteousness of the action based on resource-supported evidence.

Effectiveness and efficiency: It involves the inclusion of the outcome measures that reflect the effectiveness and efficiency through the fulfilment of the hopes and needs and satisfaction with the observed performance.

Learning and risk management: The road to the top is tough and requires the tenacity to deliver by overcoming the risks and learning from failure (Kapur & Wilson, 2010).

Personal pillars

The goodness of a person is considered by looking at the interpersonal skills, collaboration and leadership, resilience and stress management, user involvement, and moral principles.
**Introduction**

*Interpersonal skills:* Interpersonal skills include the ability to interact well with colleagues, and to handle social and emotional aspects of human communication. Errors can result from misunderstandings and may lead to the administration of inappropriate measures, or to poor compliance. There is a need to ensure shared understanding (Butler, 1998; Wilson, Gracey, Evans, & Bateman, 2009) and, if working in teams, should encompass the philosophy and vision of team members, as well as their explicit values and goals and their understanding performance.

*Collaboration and leadership:* Team working and leadership are important constructs in applied psychology (Riggio, 2008). Team working should ensure that mutual understanding and good communication occurs between team members and strong, effective leadership is provided by the team leader, with adherence to key principles and constancy of purpose. Good leadership entails skills in directing, supporting and delegating, and being a role model for enunciating and persevering with key principles, regardless of obstacles and difficulties (Gardner, 1996).

*Resilience and stress management:* The ability to deal with obstacles – to persevere despite stress, and manage stress constructively – are important qualities for optimal performance. Howard (2008) discusses the contribution of positive psychology to the management of stress. Jensen, Trollope-Kumar, Waters and Everson (2008) listed a number of key features of resilience – the ability to prioritise work activities; having well-structured work routines; having peer-support mechanisms in place; ensuring good work–life balance; being aware and reflective of one’s strengths and limitations; having core values; a degree of optimism; an altruistic frame of mind; maintaining a sense of humour; and an element of forgiveness and acceptance of oneself and others.

*User involvement:* The user involvement pillar of excellence simply stipulates that the feedback should be considered through asking those who are directly or indirectly influenced by the performance and contemplating on their views, which further enhances the performance.

*Moral principles:* In the goal-driven and competitive environment of many settings, it is easy to forgo moral principles, such as the key Gandhian principles of
truth and compassion. However, such principles need to be strictly followed in transactions with colleagues, even if it entails some cost (Kapur & Wilson, 2010).

Future pillars

The final set of pillars covers the improvements that are left behind. This includes policy and succession planning, teaching and training, innovation, research and publications, and income resource generation (Kapur & Wilson, 2010).

Policy and succession planning: It is a skill that is in demand in the later stages of performance. There is an increasing realisation of the importance of predicting developments that will impact on their practice, and of succession planning (Dolan, 2004) to prevent major unexpected gaps in performance.

Teaching and training: Excellence in imparting knowledge is important in helping others excel too. The successful professionals can be good teachers who not only impart key pearls of wisdom and encourage self-reflection, but also act as an exemplary role-model and has non-cognitive qualities such as the ability to inspire others in the learning process (Sutkin, Wagner, Harris & Schiffer, 2008).

Innovation: The next pillar is innovation, reflecting the fact that progress comes through the development of new knowledge and new procedures (Greener, 2005). It is important to nurture and reward those who show creativity, and ensure high standards of psychological expertise.

Research and publications: Excellence involves research and those in academic sector can help in making many great discoveries based on the ability to make acute and astute observations, and to draw psychologically relevant conclusions from them.

Income resource generation: Skills and success in generating income and resources need to be acknowledged, rewarded, set in the context of ethical principles, and be in the best interests of performers and scientific progress (Frangioni, 2008).

DETERMINANTS OF EXCELLENCE

Achievement in any field is interplay of mental agility, determination, focus and an unimpeded vision of the performance outcome. Thus, making the potency and
worth of pursuing holistic body-mind training approaches for developing the skills necessitated for excellence, utterly imperative (Williamon, 2004).

Excellence calls for the honing of the mental potentialities in order to perform the best. It involves the synergy of the physical and mental components and thus promises exactitude in terms of performance. This kind of peak performance is exceptional, exhilarating and transcends ordinary levels of functioning (O’Sullivan, 2015).

Research on factors leading to excellence

The role of psychological factors as determinants of performance is well established in the literature with Orlick and Partington (1988), amongst others (Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffett, 2002; Williams & Krane, 2001), offering a range of psychological ‘success factors’ that contribute to the manifestation of excellence at elite levels of performance. In fact, psychological characteristics such as goal setting, realistic performance evaluations, imagery, commitment and confidence appear to be discriminating factors between medal and non-medal winners and, as such, somewhat crucial causative features.

Bailey et al. (2010) found the following psychological characteristics for developing Excellence (Abbott & Collins, 2004; Orlick & Partington, 1988): Goal setting, Realistic performance evaluations, Imagery, Planning and organisational skills, Commitment, Focus and distraction control and Coping with pressure.

Silverman (1993) explained that people with exceptional abilities have specific characteristics of personality that constitute a peculiar way of being. Among them are included keenness of perception, passion for learning, vivid imagination, intense dedication, perseverance, pursuit of perfection, sensitivity, and empathy, in addition to self-awareness, ability to reflect and a tendency to introversion. They were also found to have an acute sense of justice, question rules and authority, and manifest an early moral concern. In the same line, Winner (2000) asserts that there are specific personality characteristics necessary for a child to become an eminent adult, which are creativity, openness to experience and the ability to break
with conventions. These personality characteristics are necessary to the development of talents (Castelló Tarrida, 2005; Gagné, 2004).

However, some important factors can be elaborated as follows:

1. **Commitment and Focus**: Gould et al. (2002) observed that successful Olympic athletes were more committed and focused, and engaged in more extensive mental preparation than less successful performers. By contrast, less successful performers were not as effective in their planning and experienced problems related to focus and commitment. It was further supported by the work of Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) with Olympic and world champions.

2. **Determination and Persistence**: Baker and Horton’s (2004) review of primary and secondary influences on sport expertise suggested that psychological characteristics played a central role, and were necessary for both the acquisition and manifestation of expertise. Determination and persistence (Bloom, 1985; Renzulli, 1986), motivation, and autonomy (Schoon, 2000) have all been highlighted as factors necessary for the attainment of excellence by facilitating the acquisition of skills and enabling athletes to invest the requisite time to practice and stay committed to the development process. MacNamara, Holmes and Collins (2006, 2008), and Kamin and colleagues (Kamin, Richards & Collins, 2007), found that a range of psychological characteristics (e.g., commitment, motivation, determination) facilitated the development of elite classical and nonclassical musicians (MacNamara, Button, & Collins, 2010).

3. **Self-Confidence and Motivation**: Durand-Bush and Salmela’s (2002) identified self-confidence and motivation (Singer & Orbach, 1999; Ward, Hodges, Williams, & Starkes, 2004) as salient personal characteristics of elite. Not only were these performers confident about their ability to succeed, they were also motivated to invest considerable time and effort into training in order to be the best they could be (MacNamara et al., 2010).
Research in the field of academics also found it as the strongest predictor of academic success, aside from prior academic achievement which has been found to be academic discipline, which is defined as the “skill component of motivation” and is exhibited in the amount and quality of effort students devote to work and the degree to which they engage in learning new things (ACT, 2008). Researchers have documented the positive correlations between engagement and achievement, specifically when engagement is characterized by doing more work than what’s required; monitoring their own comprehension; and using strategies to deepen their understanding of new material and connect new material to existing knowledge (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004).

4. **Psychological Preparation:** Research found that the elite employed imagery and self-talk to both prepare for competition and to remain focused during high-level performances. K. Thomas and J. Thomas (1999) found successful performers not only utilised a variety of psychological skills during competition, but also used a wider range of mental skills during training (eg goal setting, imagery, self talk, emotional control, relaxation) than athletes of a lower standard. Reflecting this, Kane stated that: ‘The ultimate factors accounting for achievement are likely to be the unique personal and behavioural dispositions, which the individual brings to the actual performance’ (Kane, 1986).

5. **Management of Emotions:** This ability to effectively cope with the stressors of development and regulate arousal under pressure is a key component of successful development (Côté, 1999). This helps to distinguish between who are able to consistently perform at the elite level and those who fail to maintain these high levels of performance (Ericsson, 1996; 2006). Kreiner-Philips and Orlick (1993) have suggested that psychological factors underpin a performer’s capability to reproduce consistently high levels of performance. As such, the ability to attain and then maintain elite status appears to be, at least partly, governed by the capacity an individual has to consistently engage with the performance environment and manage the unique pressures
associated with being at the top of their sport (e.g. high expectations of performance; feelings of being ‘chased’ (Gould et al., 2002).

6. **Self-Efficacy and Self-Concept**: Self-efficacy, or perceived competence to perform a specific task, and self-concept, a more general sense of how well one does, and related traits such as confidence, assertiveness and positive risk-taking, have been found to correlate with performance (Multon, Brown & Lent, 1991). Researchers believe that a student’s sense of self-efficacy not only influences academic choices, but also influences a student’s level of effort and persistence, particularly when a student perceives their success as within their control (Anderman & Midgley, 1998).

Thus, the role of psychological characteristics as key determinants of development is pertinent topic for attention. Importantly, it has led to a set of ideas which are gaining momentum in the literature (Abbott & Collins, 2004; Abbott, Collins, Sowerby & Martindale, 2007; Baker & Horton, 2004). Research has shown that psychological characteristics that facilitate elite performance also facilitates the successful negotiation of the developing excellence (MacNamara et al., 2006, 2008). As early as 1971, Kunst and Florescu highlighted the balance of psychological factors, motor capacity and anthropometric qualities as determinants of elite achievement. Pertinently, however, they stressed the even more crucial role played by psychological factors in talent development, with this construct accounting for over 50% of the variance in development efficacy. Thus, highlighting their importance.

**EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMICS**

Education is a unique investment in the human resources and academic achievement is a vital aspect of it (Al-Qaisy & Khuffash, 2012). Education, indubitably is the best legacy a nation can give to her citizens especially the children and the youth. It is generally believed that the basis for any true development must commence with the development of human resources. It is often asserted that formal education remains the vehicle for socio-economic development and social mobilization in any society (Aggarwal & Sharma, 2010).
Academic achievement denotes the optimal functioning of human beings, their strengths, potentialities and virtues in the field of education. It is considered a key to judge one's potentialities and capacities. Hence, educators give paramount credence to the intellectual attainment of the child in the form of grades and scorings, and have instead of simply communicating information, often equated education to the age old idea of imparting knowledge and wisdom to the disciples. The generally accepted individual factors conducive for academic achievement are intelligence, personality, study skills, and motivational level of the concerned student (Mohan, Sehgal & Bhandari, 1981; Mohan & Gulati, 1988).

In the yester years, education was primarily for learning. But today the main purpose of education is for earning. In this world of industrialization and globalization, education has become highly commercial and academic excellence has gained through tough competitions (Woolfolk, 2001). The educational status of an individual is highly depicted through the academic achievement. Although the academic achievement of students has been a great concern to educationist since time immemorial now days, this trend has been intensively felt by the academicians, parents and students (El-Anzi, 2005). Strikingly, low academic grading has often become a detrimental index in determining a child's future. From crayons to career, the academic grading speaks a lot about one's academic achievement. Going higher up in the social status by means of academic achievement is universally accepted and the most important determinant of a person's adult status is his career (Eshel & Kohavi, 2003).

Academic achievement is generally an expression, when the individual learns to utilize his energies with the given innate potentials and a particular pattern of socializing pressure. Considering the fact that both innate potentials and environmental factors play equally important roles in academic achievement, it is imperative to look into the interplay of both these factors. Innate potential, in terms of academic achievement is exhibited mainly through the intellectual functions, and of course there is a positive correlation between intellectual functions and academic achievement (Best & Khan, 1999).

Academic excellence refers to the growth of an individual with regard to his or her academic or intellectual ability. Accordingly, in some schools a special prize is
given to the student whose academic results show the greatest rise from the earlier lower score. Yet, in general parlance, academic excellence has too often been used synonymously with intelligent, gifted, or bright, to distinguish between individuals scoring within the top percentile on examinations and those scoring in the lower tiers. Such an application has neglected the very foundation of academic excellence - the ability of an individual to showcase his or her academic ability. It has been observed that academic excellence cannot be achieved by solely attending lectures and memorizing concepts. Instead it requires an experiential learning component in which the individual actively engages in his or her academic field through first-hand experiences, tutoring, internships, service learning, or cooperative education (Holup, 2006).

**Excellence** in a certain sense is only attainable by an elite (of institutions or of individuals), whose status depends on the identification of the inferior others. By definition, in that case, excellence can only be achieved by the few; since educational achievement depends on ability, there will be a small number of high achievers and a much greater number of relatively lower achievers (Allan, 2007).

Excellence in the field of education is usually termed as academic achievement, which is conceptualized as, "that which encompasses the student's ability and performance; it is multidimensional; it is intricately related to human growth and cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development; it reflects the whole child; it is not related to a single instance, but occurs across time and levels, through a student's life in public school and on to post secondary years and working life" (Steinberger, 1993).

**EXCELLENCE IN SPORTS**

Excellence in sport has been a well-documented fact in India. In the past, gurus helped disciples attain the pinnacle of expertise and trained them both physically and mentally. Training being imparted was based on the knowledge, experience and excellence of the gurus. Whereas, Dronacharya and Arjuna can never be forgotten as being the perfect example of creditable coaching and the ultimate success, Eklavya on the other hand shows the motivation, the grit and the will to learn, so very essential for any sport. Thus, the past is full of glorious, motivating and

Not only India but in the world also, excellence in sports has been promoted, propagated and rewarded since time immemorial. It has occupied the core themes of the Olympics. Excellence is not only about winning, but also making progress against personal goals, as reflected in the Olympic motto, "Citius — Altius — Fortius," which means "faster — higher — stronger." It is also a state of mind and a behavior that results from a healthy combination of a strong body, mind and will (Soltis, 2012, Mohan, Sehgal & Tripathi, 2008).

“Aim for excellence” and “Encourage effort”, are derived from the Olympic motto “Citius, Altius, Fortius” and the fundamental principle of Olympism. “Aim for excellence” means always doing and giving one’s best and “Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort and the educational value of good example”. In the Olympic ideal, this value is of utmost importance, requiring to giving one’s utmost on the field of play or in life, without over-emphasising comparative performance yet still being determined to reach one’s personal objectives. Olympics and other sports arenas have provided very many living examples of excellence. Excellence is personified in sportspersons like Usain Bolt, Micheal Phleps, Serena Williams, Roger Federer and our very own Abhinav Bindra and Sachin Tendulkar. They have shown that "Sport is Man's best way to achieve perfection in every respect," (Coubertin; as cited by Soltis, 2012).

It is not only about winning, but also participating, making progress against personal goals, striving to be and to do our best in our daily lives and benefiting from the healthy combination of a strong body, mind and will (www.olympic.org) Participation leading to Excellence in virtually all domains is guided by mental factors (Mohan, 2011b; Mohan et al., 2014; Mohan & Kaur, 2002).

Success or excellence can be personally defined and will vary across individuals and domains. However, the approach used to achieve success or excellence may be similar for all domains. Two individuals who are internationally renowned for their contributions to developing talent are performance enhancement
consultant Terry Orlick and basketball coach John Wooden (Mohan, 2013; Mohan et al., 2014).

Terry Orlick (Orlick, 2000) and John Wooden (Wooden & Jamison, 1997) have each created models that can be used to guide the development of talent. Dr. Orlick developed his Wheel of Excellence to provide a working framework for the pursuit of excellence. The Wheel of Excellence comprises of seven critical elements: commitment, confidence, focused connection, positive images, distraction control, ongoing learning, and mental readiness (Mohan, 2012c, 2012d; Mohan et al., 2014).

Orlick (2000) claimed that these seven elements are crucial to guiding people to success, and must be used in concert, for the wheel to function properly. Wooden’s Pyramid of Success is based on individual blocks, which he believes are personal qualities necessary for achieving success (Wooden & Jamison, 1997).

Excellence in sports is an area which has been of deep interest and of research for the psychologists. Traditionally, excellence in sport has been conceptualised in terms of outcome measures, in the form of medals, records and victories (Penney, 2000). More recently, however, and reflecting growing interest in lifelong participation in physical activity, it is conceptualised in terms of personal participation and improvement (Miller & Kerr, 2002). As such, excellence is differentially defined as:

a. Elite Referenced Excellence (ERE): Excellence in the form of high-level sporting performance, where achievement is measured against others with the ultimate goal of winning at the highest level possible

b. Personal Referenced Excellence (PRE): Excellence in the form of participation and personal performance, where achievement is more personally referenced by, say, completing a marathon or improving one’s personal best.

The former definition is clearly concerned with performance excellence in high-level sport, such as national and international competition. Conversely, the latter definition advocates excellence as the achievement of developmentally appropriate challenges across the length of one’s lifespan, as well as the acquisition of those personal qualities which contribute to lifelong health and well-being (Cimons, 1999).
As such, accomplishments such as completing a marathon, knocking time off a personal best, participating in recreational activity or, even, digging the garden (enthusiastically) can be considered as the pursuit of ‘excellence’ when, from the performer’s perspective, they are measured in terms of personal achievement (Weiss & Amorose, 1992). However, a third perspective also exists which is defined as follows:

**Participation for Personal Wellbeing (PPW):** Taking part in physical activity to satisfy needs other than personal progression. Typical motivations for PPW might include the improvement of one’s social life (eg making/keeping friends), the enhancement of one’s identity (eg being a member of a high-status group or club), personal renewal (eg through activity which is both enjoyable and spiritually fulfilling) and the maintenance of aspects of self-esteem (eg staying in shape).

To conclude, it may be emphasized that to identify and nurture human talent is one of the initial objectives of both academics and sports and that it is necessary to understand what the conditions are that facilitate the emergence of excellence. Therefore, it is imperative to recognize the need to understand the pathways of excellence in the various contexts in which it emerges.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The primary aim of the present investigation was to study the role of Grit, Perfectionism, Self-Efficacy, Flow and Emotional Intelligence in Excellence in Academics and Sports. The sample was studied with respect to Grit and its dimensions viz., Perseverance of Effort and Consistency of Interest; Perfectionism and its dimensions viz., Self-Oriented, Other-Oriented and Socially Prescribed Perfectionism; Self-Efficacy; Flow and its dimensions viz., Challenge-Skill Balance, Action-Awareness Merging, Clear Goals, Unambiguous Feedback, Concentration on Task at Hand, Sense of Control, Loss of Self-Consciousness, Transformation of Time and Autotelic Experience and Emotional Intelligence.