CHAPTER IV

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CSIR is recognised as one of the world’s largest publicly funded R&D organisations having linkages to academia, an industrial houses and R&D agencies. CSIR’s 38 laboratories knit India into a giant network that impacts and adds quality to the life of every Indian. CSIR is also party to the prestigious Global Research Alliance that has the objective of applying global knowledge pool for global good through global funding. CSIR’s R&D portfolio embraces areas as diverse as aerospace, biotechnology and chemicals. The Government of India has announced a gradual increase in funding for Science and Technology from the present outlay of less than 1% of GDP.

4.1. Performance appraisal in CSIR

The history of performance appraisal in CSIR dates back to its inception. The system followed in the appraisal was then referred as Confidential Report (CR), the format of which was common to all staff, irrespective of whether they belonged to the technical or non-technical grade. The appraisal was then carried out by three functionaries, viz, the reporting officer, reviewing officer and head of the department. The promotion scheme of all scientific and technical staff was covered under byelaw 71(b) under which a five-year assessment scheme was provided, which was linked to the CR.

The assessees were then graded on a five-point scale: outstanding, very good, good, fair and poor. The report was not communicated to the assessee. The substance of
an unfavourable report was, however, communicated to the officer being assessed orally or in writing as considered appropriate by the reviewing officer. If the reporting officer felt that the communication of unfavourable remarks would not serve any useful purpose and that it might at the same time discourage the officer reported on, he would submit the matter to the head of the department for a decision.

4.2. The new recruitment and assessment scheme

The practice of CR was continued up to 31.01.1981. CSIR then appointed various committees to study and recommend assessment schemes, suitable for scientific and technical staff. The Valluri/Varadarajan Committee in its report submitted in 1981 recommended an assessment scheme popularly called the New Recruitment and Assessment Scheme (NRAS). It classified the scientific and technical staff into four groups. Scientists were placed in group IV; technical staff in group III; and the support staff in group II or I depending upon their educational qualification. The performance appraisal was then designed covering grading on an eight-point scale: exceptionally brilliant (A+), outstanding (A), well above average standard (A-), good average man (B+); average reasonably competent but without special ability or initiative (B) insufficient initiative and capacity for work without constant supervision (B-), indifferent but just worth retaining (C) and not fit to draw the next increment or be confirmed (D). The parameters (1) intellect (2) professional ability (3) administrative ability and (4) personal qualities were measured in a semantic differential in terms of rating on dipolar scales with two ends having contrasting objectives. The report was not communicated to the assessee.
4.3. The merit and normal assessment scheme

NRAS was operational up to 31.03.1988. It was replaced with a scheme called the Merit and Normal Assessment Scheme (MANAS) with effect from 01.04.1988. The performance appraisal designed under the scheme is referred to as the Annual Performance Appraisal Report (APAR). The APAR was required to contain an overall assessment by the reporting officer and the reviewing officer in terms of variable gradings. The APAR was normally written for each financial year. APAR was applicable to Group I, II, III, IV and V (A) staff. This was used for reporting the work done by staff during an entire period of reporting. Part I of APAR consisted of a self-assessment report by the employee and its appraisal by the reporting/reviewing officers based on assigned tasks, accomplished work and output. This part of the appraisal was open and carried 75% weightage and was communicated to the employee. Part II consisted of behavioural aspects. This part of the appraisal was confidential and carried 25% weightage. However, any adverse remarks was communicated to the employee as per provisions in respect of Part I only.

APAR consisted of grading on a seven-point scale: outstanding (100 marks); excellent (90 marks); very good (75 marks); good (60 marks); satisfactory (50 marks); fair (35 marks), poor (20 marks). Apart from grading work, behavioral aspects of the employees were also graded on a five-point scale in terms of a Likert scale with vertical columns having attributes such as intelligence and industry; creativity and motivation; ability to work in a team; sense of responsibility/discipline; and punctuality
and attendance. The horizontal rows consist of gradings: outstanding (5), very good (4),
good (3), satisfactory (2) and poor (1). Marks awarded for work and behavioral aspects
are added and then converted for a maximum of 30 marks.

4.4. The annual review of performance

CSIR adopted Scientists Recruitment and Assessment Promotion Rules, 2001(CSRAP) with effect from 01.01.2001. The system of APAR was replaced by the Annual Review of Performance (ARP) for the scientific cadre. The technical cadres follow the pre-revised format of APAR. ARP is designed as an important component of larger human resource development and management programme. ARP distinguishes activities and results. It, however, evaluates results and not activities. It analyses three indices, viz; performance index (PI), capabilities and potential Index (CPI); and values and qualities index (VQI).

4.5. Problem areas

General problems in the CSIR appraisal system are:

(a) Lack of clarity of goals for individuals as against the goals for which they are being assessed;

b) Lack of progressive leadership approach, which has reduced the effectiveness of the appraisal system by inhibiting tendencies of individual expression and development;

c) Supervisors do not keep a proper record of critical incidents. (As a result, the evaluator is guided not by the performance in the entire period, but by the performance
during the few months or weeks preceding the evaluation. Evaluation is done casually as supervisors do not have enough time to devote to this work).

d) Sometimes an employee is reporting to more than one officer with different functions and behaviours. (This can result not only in contradictory reports but also in lower over-all efficiency due to tension arising out of plural control);

e) Superiors fail to view indications of deficiency as pointers for management to undertake efforts for development of the assessee. (This is probably due to the absence of a formal system for development);

f) Lack of common yardsticks for different kinds of jobs;

g) Biases/prejudices of the reporting and reviewing officers reflecting themselves in the assessment forms;

h) Instances of the reviewing officer not in touch with the assessee and being influenced by the reporting officer;

i) Full powers are generally with final grading officers; and

j) Failure to consider constraints while rating appraisals.

4.6. Procedure/Guidelines

In order to avoid delay in the issue of orders for confirmation, promotion, deputation to ex-cadre posts, etc., a time schedule is prescribed for the submission of APARs, which needs to be followed. It shall be the duty of the APAR unit concerned to remind the reporting/reviewing officers to submit the APARs within the time frame prescribed. In fact, it should be ensured that the time schedule for submission/completion of the reports and communication of the critical appraisal and gradings awarded to the
staff in their APARs are strictly adhered to and a certificate to that effect sent to CSIR by June 30th every year. In case of transfer of an employee, the reporting officer can write a report, provided he had an opportunity to watch the work and conduct of the employee for not less than three months; the report should be handed over to the next reporting officer under whom the employee is going to work. On joining or leaving an organisation, the reporting/reviewing officers should have occasion to watch the work and conduct of the subordinate officer for more than three months; if the period is less than three months, the report could be got written by the next reporting officer. In case of transfer during the middle of the year, the reporting officer should write the APAR up to the date of transfer and submit to the reviewing officer. In case the reviewing officer himself is transferred, would be required to hand over the reports to the next reviewing authority. There is no provision for any other authority for recording remarks/comments about the work and conduct of any officer in the APAR. In the event of suspension of the reporting/reviewing authority, the APARs of his subordinates have to be got written within two months of his suspension or within one month from the date on which the ACR falls due, whichever is later. Beyond this period, the APAR should not be presented to him for writing. If reporting officers is about to retire, he should be allowed to write the APAR within one month of retirement. No time limit is prescribed for reviewing officers under similar circumstances. If reporting officer happens to be a close relative of a subordinate officer, the reviewing officer should assume the role of the reporting officer. In order to avoid such a situation, it is desirable to shift the subordinate officer from the direct charge of the reporting officer.
While writing the APAR, the reporting officer should restrict himself to (a) making objective assessment of the conduct and work of the subordinate; (b) expressing his opinion in clear and unambiguous terms; (c) helping the subordinate officer to overcome his faults and deficiencies; (d) summing up, in general terms, of good as well as bad qualities apart from his observations on general qualities such as work aptitude, integrity, relations with his colleagues, attitude of the officer being reported upon towards subordinate officers as well as towards his superior officers, etc.; (e) recording outstanding performance in areas other than his official activity such as games and sports, fine arts, etc.; (f) reporting mental and physical abilities/disabilities, etc.; (g) ensuring that the APAR contains specific incidents where certain penalties have been imposed on him during the period of reporting; (h) not writing remarks such as "doubtful character", "understood to be insincere" etc. as any comment that cannot be substantiated with proof should not be made; (i) avoiding prejudicial or flattering reports; and (j) not hesitating to record merits as well as demerits in justified cases.

To the extent possible, the reporting and reviewing should not be done by the same person. Wherever the head of the laboratory/institute is required to act as the reporting as well as the reviewing officer in respect of certain employees, grievances arising out of such writing have to be referred to the Director-General, CSIR along with the comments of the Director. It is important to see that the APAR folder does not contain any thing other than the APAR, letters of communicating adverse remarks, representations by the employee, punishment orders, appellate orders, etc. There might be certain occasions where the officer being reported upon might not have been able to
perform up to the expectation of the reporting/reviewing officer, which may lead to issuance of a communication expressing his displeasure of reprimands. However, at the end of the year the reporting/reviewing officer may or may not decide to make a mention about the communication in the APAR depending upon the overall performance of the officer or in the event of his showing considerable improvement. However, if the officer was to decide to include/report such warnings or reprimands, the reporting officer may record the same in an appropriate column of the APAR and such warning should be attached to the APAR. The adverse remarks should be duly communicated to the officer and his representation, if any, should be considered as per the prescribed procedure. The official should be afforded an opportunity to represent to the appellate authority through proper channel and decision taken on the same to expunge or retain the adverse comments has to be duly recorded.

For assessing the performance of an individual, performance appraisal is a very vital document with regard to one’s performance, potential, conduct, etc. It is a tool for human resources development. The columns in the APAR are required to be filled with care and diligence. Words and phrases should be used cautiously. The reporting officer should at regular intervals review the performance of individual officers and take necessary corrective measures.

Before recording any adverse remarks on the APAR of an employee, the reporting officer should, in normal course, have tried to convey his unhappiness over the behavioural or performance aspects of the employee and suggest improvements wherever required. If there is no improvement in the functioning of the employee, the fact could be recorded in the APAR. It may so happen that the reporting officer is reluctant to express
himself orally (due to various reasons) and resort to directly record shortcomings of the employee in the APAR, which is not desirable. The reporting officer should make all efforts to make the officer being reported upon understand his shortcomings so as to enable him to correct himself and come up to the expectations of the reporting/reviewing officer. Underplaying is as undesirable as over-playing. Both actions will have serious repercussions on the employee. If the reviewing officer slightly differs with the remarks of the reporting officer or if the report is too brief or ambiguous, he may make additional remarks, if necessary, by quoting earlier good/adverse remarks for or against the officer reported upon. Once the adverse remarks are recorded, the reviewing officer should countersign the APAR wherever prescribed. In all other cases, the remarks of reviewing officer could be made ready for communication to the employee within a month, duly allowing the employee reasonable time (four weeks) to represent against the remarks communicated to him.

Experience shows that most of the remarks of the reporting officer are not always brief, objective or rational. The reporting/reviewing officer should be specifically trained in the basic tenets of writing APARs. If this is done at least a couple of times in the official career of an officer, well written APARs could be obtained and the number of representations against adverse remarks could be brought down effectively. Normally, only one representation against adverse remarks is entertained. Representations should be handled by an officer superior to the reviewing officer, wherever it is possible. It is desirable to get the representation examined also by the reporting/reviewing officers to enable them to justify or reconsider their views on the adverse remarks recorded by them. This would help the higher authority to understand and decide on the issue expeditiously.
at least within three months from the date of submission of the representation. If the higher authority feels that the remarks are justified, it may be recorded in the APAR and communicated to the employee. If the competent authority feels that there is sufficient ground to interfere, he should make necessary entries in the APAR toning down separately, leaving the earlier entries untouched. If it is felt that the remarks are not justified and are prejudicial or incorrect, such adverse remarks should be expunged through an order. Then the adverse remarks as well as the letter communicating the adverse remarks should be struck off.

The principles applied in judicial as well as quasi-judicial tribunals are (i) No one shall be judge in his own cause, (ii) No decision shall be given against a party without giving him opportunity of hearing, and (iii) The decision must be taken in good faith and without bias. Entries in APAR should be duly made following the guidelines, and should not be made arbitrarily. As per the principle of audi alteram partem, disposal of representation against adverse entries should preferably be through a reasoned order so as to inspire confidence among the staff in the adjudicatory process. Once a decision is taken on a representation, it should be taken as closed and no review is possible. Adverse remarks cannot be reviewed or expunged after final rejection of representation unless fraud or mistake is established.

4.7. Normalisation of Ratings

In an organisation there may be a number of heads of department whose rating styles may vary. As a result, there may be large-scale discrepancy in the final ratings. Final ratings may be the basis for sponsoring training or development programme in
India or abroad in which case those who have been rated liberally may have an undue advantage over the others. Organisations may use performance appraisal to identify persons with a potential with the purpose of grooming them or putting them on fast track. In such a case, wide differences in rating behaviours may cause problems. One way to circumvent this problem would be to appoint a top-level management committee, which would review in consultation with departmental heads and modify the ratings suitably. They could bring about a rationalisation in ratings. This would enable the really outstanding people to be recognized.

In order to avoid favoritism or bias in recording APARs by the reporting/reviewing officers and for effecting balanced assessment of performance of staff in different sections/divisions in a laboratory /institute, CSIR has evolved a system to normalise gradings through a Normalisation Committee with effect from the reporting year 1994-95. The Normalisation Committee constituted at each laboratory/institute consists of senior scientists under the chairmanship of the senior-most scientist. The gradings so normalised by the Committee will be communicated to the employees concerned.

In order to facilitate normalisation process, tasks are to be assigned to all S&T personnel in advance in the beginning of the reporting year for the sake of objective evaluation of the performance of the employees against such tasks by reporting/reviewing officers.

The normalisation process will be restricted to the "open part" of the APAR containing critical appraisal and the grade awarded by the reviewing officer, carrying
75% weightage. The APAR pertaining to behavioural aspects, carrying 25% weightage, will not be subjected to any review/normalisation.

The Normalisation Committee of one of the laboratories under CSIR has adopted the following parameters for evaluating and reviewing the performance of its various divisions: (i) external cash flow in respect of applied research; (ii) publications in journals of repute in respect of basic research, and (iii) present staff strength vis-à-vis manpower utilization in the overall performance of the division. Taking into consideration the performance parameters of each division, the Committee has attempted award of performance ratings to each division. The rating for any given division did not cross “very good” and has not gone down beyond “satisfactory”. The exercise undertaken by the Normalisation Committee does have certain conspicuous and inconspicuous limitations. The reporting and reviewing authorities, at least up to the level of Scientist E-I or equivalent, should be below the level of Head of the Laboratory /Director or any other designated authority, as the case may be, so that any disagreement on the gradings awarded could be settled at the level of the Director. If the Director happens to act as the reporting as well as reviewing officer in respect of certain staff members who might be reporting to him directly, any disputes on this account may have to be referred to the Director General, CSIR with detailed comments of the Head of the laboratory against each point of dispute. If the Director himself happens to review the APARs in respect of certain staff members, such APARs should not be subjected to further review by the Normalisation Committee as the Director is the appellate/decision-making authority in case of disputes arising out of gradings awarded by the Normalisation Committee.
Staff members may respond in writing within a period of four weeks from the date of receipt of communication of gradings. Such representation will be considered by the competent authority and the final grading will be communicated. Wherever required, the staff member can seek an interview with the competent authority in order to present his case personally. The decision of the Director shall be binding on such staff members.

4.8. Issues in Normalisation

The functional parameters as postulated by the Normalisation Committee may not apply universally within a given laboratory as each laboratory may have its own style of functioning. If the Normalisation Committee were to “normalise” by adjusting the gradings awarded to individual staff members by their respective reporting/reviewing officers in consonance with the policies formulated by the Committee, there could be serious disturbances to the existing grades awarded to the individuals. Furthermore, gradings within a division could also vary to a great extent. The performance of each individual is not amendable to rational assessment in the existing system. The individual might have performed in an excellent manner while the division might have failed as a whole as per the performance parameters set by the Normalisation Committee. Failures on the part of a group or a division as a whole cannot be attributed to an individual who might have exhibited excellent performance as far as his assigned tasks are concerned. The influence of having cordial relations by the staff members on the reporting/reviewing officer is expected to play significant role in reporting by the reporting/reviewing officer. The reporting/reviewing officer may have an inherent tendency not to down-grade the gradings of their staff members or let them down as it may also reflect on his overall
performance and that of the division as a whole. The reporting/reviewing officers dealing with individual staff members may surely be aware of the capabilities and limitations of each individual. In such cases, interfering with the gradings of immediate supervisors by the Normalisation Committee may not be desirable. The concept of “Management” has undergone a lot of transformation in recent years. The leader can no longer use his “whip” and at the same time get things done. The leader has to constantly motivate the staff. In government R&D organisations, motivation cannot be created through monetary means; at the same time promotions are no longer in the hands of senior officials. Then the only carrot-and-stick policy that can be dangled before the staff is grading. In the present system no one wants to displease his subordinate officer and get away with it. The scientist would be required to undergo a lot of embarrassment for extended periods as the process to retain or expunge adverse remarks including a lower grading would take a long time. The reporting/reviewing officers have to “manage” the manpower requirements with the available staff members. They cannot displease existing staff by awarding the gradings in strict terms. Since the forms are devised to ensure maximum objectivity in reporting/reviewing activity, subjecting to “normalisation” with others “similarly” or “not-so-similarly” placed divisions would defeat the purpose of fair assessment. Any objective analysis of an individual also depends upon individual characteristics such as integrity, intelligence, keenness, industry, tactfulness, and attitude towards superior officers and subordinates. Reporting officers normally consider the above characteristics while writing their reports. This all may go astray in the process of “normalisation”. The reporting officer can understand the nature of work and behavioural aspects of the officers reported upon more than the Normalization
Committee. Once the gradings are lowered in the process of “normalisation” and communicated to the individual, the Normalisation Committee or the competent authority will not be able to justify the action amply in all the cases if the individual staff member prefers to represent. The individual always expects a better grading irrespective of his contribution. The reporting/reviewing officers should have acquainted themselves with the work of an official being reported upon for at least three months during the period covered by the APAR. In such a situation, the Normalisation Committee may not be aware of the nature of work of the individual or the grading already suggested by the respective reporting/reviewing officers. This would jeopardize the spirit of observations. The effort and time involved in examining the respective reports and gradings of all the individuals vis-à-vis the overall performance of the division/institute is an enormous task. The Committee, which consists of senior officers, should be able to afford their valuable time on this activity. The work involved in administrative wings in keeping all the work reports ready for review by the Committee is very time-consuming and laborious, particularly when the administrative staff strength is on the decline. Prima facie, the argument against the “normalisation process” may sound rather preposterous in the first instance. The bone of contention is whether a “normalisation” process is required at all. However, if the concept of “normalisation” by a committee cannot be avoided, the following suggestions can at least be considered: (a) grading from “satisfactory” to “very good” may not be touched by the Normalisation Committee, and (b) gradings of “excellent” and “outstanding” and gradings below “satisfactory” may be examined by the Committee. If necessary, the concerned staff member could be invited by the Committee for presenting his case before a decision is taken on the issue.
4.9. Conclusion

It must be noted that under the old APAR system, at least 75% was open. Scientists knew their grades. The new system introduced from 2001, the Annual Review of Performance (ARP) does not convey the grade to the scientists. In fact, the ARP is a closed system. Only after the recommendation of the screening committee, scientists are aware that they are ‘eligible’ for consideration for promotion. Keeping the scientists in the dark for the period of three to four years about their annual performance would defeat the very purpose of appraisal. The feedback and the level of performance must be known to them to maintain morale and motivation.