# "Discussions on innovation must be aligned with business"

… says **Ashutosh Parasnis,** Co-founder, QLeap Academy, in this interview with Juili Eklahare. He gives details on how the company looks at leadership as an ability to lead, how if one wants to adopt Industry 4.0, he/she should start by thinking what business problems to address and also throws light on the primary reason why industry-institute relationship is not deep-rooted in India. Excerpts…

**Can you tell us about the work you are doing in consulting enterprises, SMEs & start-ups in their digital transformation journey? What kind of challenges do they come across?**

The early stage start-ups are challenged with perfecting the solution and acquiring customers. Established businesses seek to sustain growth and competitiveness. Their challenges include refining the product portfolio & exploring adjacent markets and very importantly, validating if their legacy business model is competitive in a digital world.

**One of the key activities at your institute is to educate individuals with 21$^{st}$ century skills. What role exactly will that play in Industry 4.0?**

Industry 4.0 is digitalisation of the manufacturing enterprise. It's a major change management initiative that impacts a company's strategy, processes and infrastructure. We, therefore, do not look at leadership as a role at the top but as an ability to lead, no matter what role one performs. We have Industry 4.0 programs for senior management, engineering leaders, with emphasis on use cases and solutions. Our services also help organisations re-imagine a business situation and build an Industry 4.0 solution that is relevant to their business and not generic.

**You say that if one is serious enough to apply Industry 4.0, he/she needs to look at it in a much wider length. Can you elaborate?**

What we are saying is that if one wants to adopt Industry 4.0, he/she shouldn't start discussing technology in a small isolated project. Rather, one should start by thinking what business problems or opportunities he/she would want to address and what can be done differently. Initiatives with the potential to generate impactful business benefits will find a lot of support. Technology then steps in to play a critical role – one will then realise that he/she needs talent that can adapt to new technologies and processes.

**You have designed and conducted courses & workshops on creativity and innovative organisations. What do you think are the pivotal elements that need to be infused to bring about creativity to the fullest in manufacturing organisations?**

Firstly, discussions on innovation must be aligned with business. Secondly, one needs a different management approach to innovation as compared to daily operations. Thirdly, talent needs to be trained not just in creativity but in managing innovation. This creates the much-needed, multi-disciplinary set of cognitive, entrepreneurship and domain skills.

**What are your views on industry-institute partnership in India? Would you like to give your recommendations to strengthen the relationship further, to benefit both?**

For far too long, the two have operated independently, barring few exceptions. The primary reason why this relationship is not deep-rooted in India is the gap in the technology readiness levels that exist in institutes versus those prevalent in the industry. Institutes create knowledge, IP and inventions. Industries desire an invention that is nearly manufactural. Developed ecosystems have contract research labs that translate inventions to products, which is what India needs.