

# Highlights from the Academic Leadership Camp-5 of the AIMST University, Malaysia

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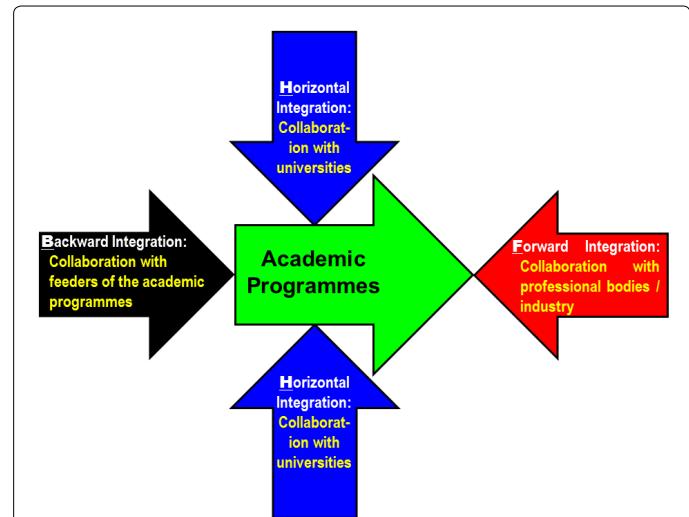
Education industry is evolving rapidly, especially in the developing countries. In Malaysia, the AIMST University is one of the universities that offer biomedical academic educational programmes. The AIMST University do conduct 'leadership camps' for its '*academic staff-in-leadership-role*' with the aim to enhance their academic leadership skills. This article is based on the university leadership camp-5 (ULC-5), which took place on December 20-21, 2013, at the Hydro Hotel Penang, Malaysia. The ULC-5 was attended by 56 participants from the various faculties of the AIMST University and two observers from university's international collaborating institutions. R. Premkumar (AIMST University), R. Aruljoethy (AIMST University) and deans of the various faculties of the university shared their views with the participants (potential academic leaders). This article highlights the essence of the ULC-5.

In the opening talk, speaker highlighted that innovations has significantly changed the medical education and research, and as a result of it, health care sector is going to benefit the most. The biotechnology, nanotechnology, neurotechnology, and information technologies with networks were highlighted as the building blocks of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The biotechnology, nanotechnology, and neurotechnology are multidisciplinary domains; however, gene-technology is going to play an important role in all these three domains. In this line, the academic executives need to be aware of the need of preparing their staff and organisation for the future to meet the challenges of the changing workforce. It appears that the current education system is not well prepared to deal with the challenge of preparing the required workforce for the future. Education industry does need effective and efficient visionary leadership to reinvent itself. In fact, we do need to teach students about how to deal with the future challenges; because, students are the future citizens and they should know 'how to survive in the extreme future?' speaker deliberated.

In the strategic educational-foresight discussion, speaker highlighted that universities business is not about competition; but, it is all about smart collaborations, networking, and working relationships. All the departments, centres, and faculties in any university are unlikely to have the abundant resources; therefore, smart collaborations are essential.

While talking about programmes management strategies, speaker highlighted that most organizations of higher learning do simultaneously pursue a combination of two or more strategies; but, a combination strategy can be exceptionally risky, if carried too far. Therefore, *academic staff-in-leadership-role* must be able to make the difficult decisions to establish the priorities. For the universities, especially for the private universities, market penetration, market development, and integration strategies can help to run the academic programmes successfully. In this line, we do propose the 'Backward, Horizontal and Forward (BHF) Integration Model' for the sustainability and excellence of the academic programmes (Figure 1).

The continual increasing tuition fees and innovation in online communication is boosting the 'online higher education (OHE)' programmes. In this line, educational institutions are getting realigned with expected changes for the future OHE. In this front, while talking on the future of online education, R. Aruljoethy elegantly highlighted



**Figure 1:** The proposed 'Backward, Horizontal and Forward (BHF) Integration Model' for the sustainability and excellence of the academic educational programmes.

that younger generations are going to change, and they may not go to the libraries; because, students are able to carry all the essential books (e-books) and literature in their iPad or similar gadgets. He also highlighted that in biomedical education, general surgeons are the most rigid in adapting the change in teaching and learning.

The ongoing key trends in education industry indicate that people are expecting to be able to work, learn, and study whenever and wherever they want to. Therefore, education paradigms are shifting to include online teaching and learning, hybrid learning, and collaborative models. Speaker highlighted that the operational economic pressures and the option of online education are bringing unprecedented competition to the traditional mode of higher education. Speaker also highlighted that the digital media literacy is rapidly becoming more important; the institutional barriers are the present major challenges in moving forward with emerging technologies; challenges for traditional libraries are increasing; and the current business models implemented by universities and libraries are being challenged. Therefore, the *academic staff-in-leadership-role* should be aware of the fact that online education (teaching, learning and assessment) is going to stay and universities,

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Received March 04, 2014; Accepted March 24, 2014; Published March 31, 2014

Citation: Premkumar R, Bhore SJ (2014) Highlights from the Academic Leadership Camp-5 of the AIMST University, Malaysia. Gene Technology 3: 108. doi: [10.4172/2329-6682.1000108](https://doi.org/10.4172/2329-6682.1000108)

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colleges and schools do need to get acclimatized with online education mode at the earliest.

Many universities are heading towards offering its academic programmes offshore. In this line, speaker highlighted that three types of capital namely, 'organizational capital', 'information capital', and 'human capital' are the essential requirements of university in becoming '*A Truly International University*'. In education industry, Australia was the first to share the resources and expertise, followed by United Kingdom. Speaker highlighted that branding, quality assurance, and direction set by academic leaders determines the success of the academic programmes offered at offshore campuses. Based on the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) experience, speaker also highlighted that transnational (offshore) education offering comes with the risks such as quality of partner's practices, marketing, and teaching quality of the staff. A rigorous mechanism must be in place to monitor the implementation of the agreements, and reviewing partners at regular intervals is very important to ensure the success of the transnational academic educational programmes offering, speaker highlighted.

Running university leadership camps on a regular basis is an important part of the AIMST University's 'educational excellence business model'. In fact, these types of university leadership camps are very important in order to develop the pipeline of potential academic leaders in each faculty, department, school, and centre [1]. In addition to this, university leadership camps do help to bring all the '*academic staff-in-leadership-role*' and '*potential academic leaders*' on the same page in order to push the agenda of the university to achieve the common goals. On top of it, university leadership camps do serve as an important platform to provide the latest developments and trends

in higher education industry for the university leaders, so that they will continue to source for opportunities to enhance the quality of education that may help university in becoming '*A Truly International University*'.

In a nutshell, both public and private universities should be aware of the remote future to take the appropriate steps to produce the workforce for the future. The '*academic staff-in-leadership-role*' must have strategic foresights to develop new (academic) programme initiatives (NPI) or to adapt the relevant changes in the existing academic programmes. Academic leaders should effectively implement the 'BHF Integration Model' and should prepare to shift from traditional education to online education for the appropriate programmes. The branding, quality assurance and a visionary academic leadership direction are the key factors that determine the success of the university to make it '*A Truly International University*'. The perspectives highlighted in this report could be useful for the '*academic staff-in-leadership-role*', academicians, health professionals, educators, healthcare researchers, administrators and academic policymakers.

#### **Acknowledgement**

Authors acknowledge that this workshop (ULC-5) was fully supported by the AIMST University, Malaysia. Authors are grateful to R Aruljoethy, N Jivaranee, and their dedicated supporting team members for organizing ULC-5.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

Authors attest that there are no conflicts of interest to declare.

#### **Reference**

- Premkumar R, Bhore SJ (2013) A summary report of the workshop on the 'academic leadership training in the AIMST University, Malaysia'. J Young Pharmacists 5: 67-69.