

# IMU VALUE SYSTEM, CULTURE AND PHILOSOPHY

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### 3.1 What Are Value System, Culture and Philosophy?

In today's business world, many organisations are placing more importance on values and operating philosophies or principles that guide their internal conduct as well as their relationship with all stakeholders, i.e. employees, customers, business partners, shareholders and the community at large. This is especially so after the scandals like Enron<sup>1</sup> that have led to tighter controls with the introduction of Sarbanes-Oxley Act (2002)<sup>2</sup> to increase penalties for destroying, altering or fabricating records or attempting to defraud shareholders. It also increased the accountability of auditing firms to remain unbiased and independent of their clients<sup>2</sup>. The US scandal has shaken the world to realise that good values and integrity at the highest level are fundamental principles for all organisations to have today and the future.

What can we define as a value system? According to BusinessDictionary.com, a value system is "A coherent set of values adopted and/or evolved by a person, organisation, or society as a standard to guide its behaviour in preferences in all situations".<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia describes it as "a set of consistent ethic values (more specifically the personal and cultural values) and measures used for the purpose of ethical or ideological integrity. A well-defined value system is a moral code".

Values are defined as how we conduct ourselves and identify what matters to the organisation. The value system links closely with culture. A culture can be described as "Broadly, social heritage of a group (organised community or society)". It is a pattern of responses discovered, developed, or invented during the group's history of handling problems which arise from interactions among its members, and between them and their environment.

These responses are considered the correct way to perceive, feel, think, and act, and are passed on to the new members through immersion and teaching. Culture determines what is acceptable or unacceptable, important or unimportant, right or wrong, workable or unworkable. It encompasses all learned and shared, explicit or tacit, assumptions, beliefs, knowledge, norms, and values, as well as attitudes, behaviour, dress, and language"<sup>3</sup>.

Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines culture as "the beliefs, customs, arts, etc. of a particular society, group, place, or time. A particular society that has its own beliefs, ways of life, art, etc." In short culture can be described as the way we do things here, our dressing, beliefs, values, philosophy and behaviours.

What about philosophy? According to Wikipedia, the word "philosophy" comes from the Ancient Greek which literally

means “love of wisdom”. Philosophy is the study of general and fundamental problems, such as those connected with reality, existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, and language. Philosophy is distinguished from other ways of addressing such problems by its critical, generally systematic approach and its reliance on rational argument. In more casual speech, by extension, “philosophy” can refer to “the most basic beliefs, concepts, and attitudes of an individual or group”.

Overall, the value system, culture and philosophy are closely inter-linked with each other and integrate as one where the characteristics of the organisation will be reflected. We believe the culture and the organisation should be built upon our corporate values that we cherish. Whether or not organisations have the right value system in line with their vision and mission would be demonstrated by their fellow employees and their outputs. We are of the view that it is of utmost importance that the IMU takes cognizance of this as our value system, culture and philosophy is the foundation to support what the university aspires to achieve in our vision and mission.

### 3.2 History of the Development of the IMU’s Value System and Culture

Our history started with the incorporation of the International Medical College (IMC) in 1992. It took about one and a half years for the IMC to materialise after careful planning and deliberation. In 1999, the IMC was granted university status and was renamed as the International Medical University (IMU). We were the first private medical college and private medical university in Malaysia. Established with only 73 students in 1992, we have grown to more than 3,500 students in 2015.

With more than 23 years of history and establishment, IMC has evolved from a small entity where the founders were

basically academics in social science and a doctor. During the inception of the college, the employees worked closely as a small team. Things were simpler then with the low student intake. The work processes were straightforward and people worked collectively together to build a dream of establishing the first private medical education institution. The collegial culture of the academics has been embedded as part of the IMU’s culture until today.

As the years went by, the IMU has grown from a single Medical School to another additional four schools, i.e. Dentistry, Pharmacy, Health Sciences and Postgraduate Studies. The IMU’s unique partner transfer model has been very successful in establishing the IMU as a leading private university in Malaysia. We have made our mark with a strong reputation among the medical practitioners and healthcare providers. The IMU continues to grow with additional programmes and with an increased number of faculty and support staff in tandem with the increased number of students. With that, diversity and complexity increased as our faculty comes from various parts of the world. Indeed by 2011 we had 466 employees of which 40% were expatriates from 18 different countries. In 2013, we grew to 564 employees of which 44% are expatriates from 22 different countries throughout the world. We have employees from Malaysia, India, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, United States, Canada, Britain, Australia, China, Taiwan, Iraq, Senegal, Yemen, Egypt, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and others.

With the richness of cultures and background, the employees influence each other with their way of living and adapting to the Malaysian and in particular, the IMU environment. It is indeed a drastic change and a cultural shock for some who found difficulty in adjusting. The IMU has always been a close community where the collegial culture prevails in faculty since its inception. This has been preserved despite the increased number of new employees from different backgrounds.

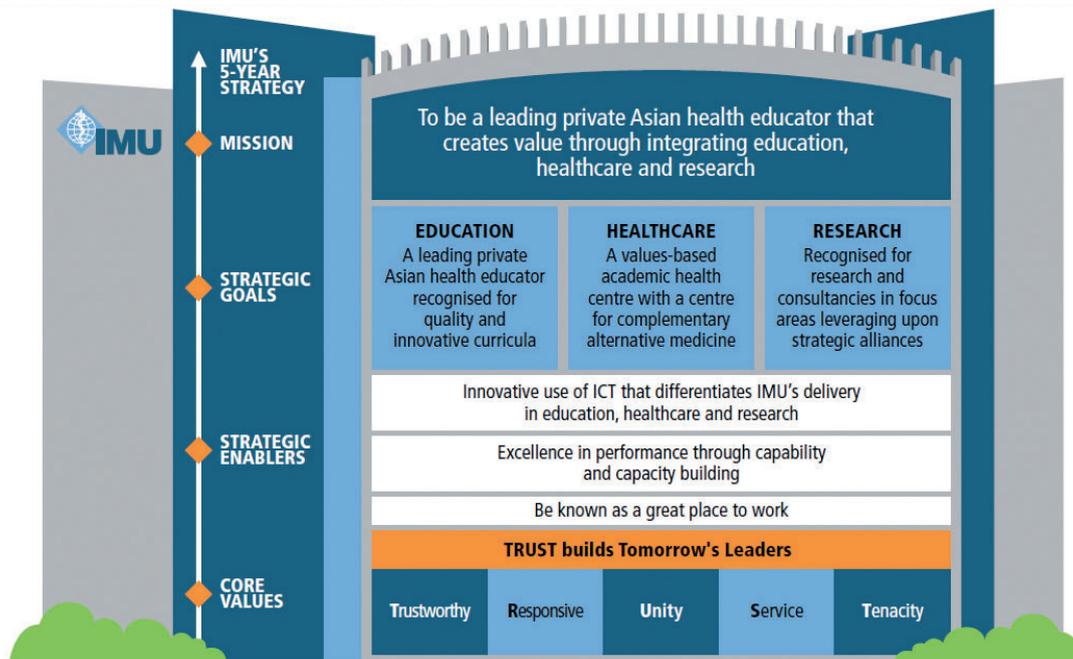
Apart from the diversity of its employees, the organisational structure, policies, systems and processes in the IMU have also been evolving from a very simple structure at inception to a more complex structure now. The IMU has invested in better management systems and automation. The Century system, Kofax, UMIS, SLIM, etcetera, were implemented over the years to meet changing needs.

With the changing organisation structure, there is also a necessity to meet the evolving challenges externally and internally. The education industry over the past 23 years has changed and private higher education has mushroomed into a huge industry. The challenges of our staff being poached by other institutions leaving us with a stretched workforce coupled with the difficulty of recruiting the right candidate poses a great challenge to the IMU. These have also impacted the culture and the way we work here, with more multi-tasking and stretched assignments within our limited resources.

### 3.3 The IMU Aspire Dream (2011-2015): Core Values as Foundation to Our Strategic Goals

In 2010, the Senior Management of the IMU comprising of all Corporate Heads, Leaders in Academic Management and Professors met to plan for IMU's future. With this our 5-Year Strategic Plan under the name of ASPIRE was born. The ASPIRE plan was launched in 2011 covering the period from 2011 – 2015. ASPIRE is a comprehensive strategy with its mission to place the IMU as a "Leading private Asian health educator that creates value through integrating education, healthcare and research".

Management is aware that the success of our strategic plans depends on developing and embedding a strong values-based organisation, with emphasis on integrity, ethics and professionalism in our activities. We launched our values-based emphasis under the acronym of T.R.U.S.T. which stands for Trustworthy, Responsive, Unity, Service and Tenacity. To expand on these:



*“Trustworthy”* stands for integrity, reliability and commitment. We should make ourselves trustworthy by demonstrating high integrity with moral ethics and professionalism, being reliable in tasks assigned to us and in executing our responsibilities, and have a sense of urgency and commitment towards ourselves, our colleagues, our students, our patients, the organisation and the society at large. We have to earn our respect and not demand respect with our demonstrated behavior, credibility and humility. We need to “walk the talk” and be a role model for others. Reliability means taking personal responsibility on the needs of our stakeholders and be that someone that they can depend on. Our actions speak for itself in our commitment to live the values.

*“Responsive”* refers to change and people’s needs. The world is ever changing with the advancement in research and technology. Society’s needs are changing as well with the various generation gaps. We must make ourselves adaptable and be responsive to the changes around us. We need to be responsive towards our stakeholders - our students, patients, parents, employees, Board of Directors, society and the nation. Education and healthcare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century may evolve into a very different model; we need to embrace it and have forward thinking and wisdom to discern the real need of the people. The 3 I’s of the IMU – Innovation, Imagination and Insight have to be embedded in all of us to discern what are required now and in the future instead of remaining static and backward in our thought.

*“Unity”* is critical to ensure a strong teamwork to achieve a common goal. We acknowledge that unity is strength and we cannot do everything ourselves with our limited capability. We should possess a genuine intention to work cooperatively with others, to be part of a team, to work together collaboratively as opposed to working in silos or competitively. This includes working effectively and collaboratively within own department, across functions, or

work groups and participating actively as a team player or a team leader to accomplish organisational goals.

To be a good team player we need to understand team objectives, goals and expectations; personal commitment to the team and team decision, even if one does not like it, because it is best for the team. We have to participate willingly in team activities and do our own share of the work and do whatever needs to be done to reach team goals. Apart from this we need to keep other team members informed of our own actions and share relevant or useful information.

We have to express positive expectations of our team and contribute constructively in team discussion. When we are united, we genuinely value input and expertise of others and are willing to learn from others by listening well to understand others’ perspectives. We should help the team develop and maintain clear purpose and direction, develop team cooperation and trust and encourage and empower team members, and make them feel important to the team. We should publicly acknowledge team members who performed well.

Lastly, a good team player needs to have a right attitude, self-awareness, good emotional intelligence, inter-personal and clear communication skills, respect for others, understanding, empathy, compassion, and willingness to bring conflict within the team into the open and encourages or facilitates beneficial resolution of conflicts. In unity, we ought to promote a friendly climate, good morale and co-operation. We need to leverage on the strengths of others to build a desired IMU culture based on our values. The IMU has developed a strong collegial culture over the years where employees come together to help each other and take on additional roles when required to achieve our organisational goals. This has created dedicated team players making our staff the greatest asset in the IMU.

“Service” is a fundamental value where we are committed to provide outstanding service, making peoples’ needs (our employees, students, parents, patients, vendors, suppliers, community, etc.) a primary focus of one’s actions; working in partnership and exhibiting willingness to walk the extra mile with people we interact with to provide the best service and solution; being responsive and taking responsibility for their satisfaction and loyalty.

This requires us to recognise the importance of placing our stakeholders’ needs and interests before our own, giving friendly and courteous service, follow through any inquiries, requests or complaints taking personal responsibility for correcting stakeholders’ service problems. We must correct problems promptly without being defensive and evaluate from both the stakeholders’ and the organisation’s viewpoint in making decisions. We should make ourselves fully available, especially when the stakeholder is going through a critical period and we should take actions beyond normal expectations.

We should make concrete attempts to create value to the stakeholder, to make things better for the stakeholder in some way. We need to review and implement effective ways to monitor and evaluate stakeholder issues and improve the satisfaction level. We should work with a long-term perspective in addressing stakeholders’ problems and anticipate and identify future needs of stakeholders, and design appropriate future products/services/solutions. With all these, we will act as a trusted advisor in stakeholders’ decision-making process.

“Tenacity” describes our eager and tenacious pursuit of excellence. We will aim to be the best and excel in everything we do. We shall never give up easily and persevere when we face obstacles and challenges. We practise continuous improvement in our pursuit of excellence and continuously learn from each other to

achieve the best results and outcome. This requires a lot of self-leadership, the ability to have self-drive and passion for delivering excellence. One will set challenging goals for self and motivate oneself and others to greater heights. The success of this arises from the ability to know one self, self-motivate, communicate effectively and receive feedback positively to move forward. One must be able to have self-confidence, insight and drive high standards of performance to achieve organisational excellence. These will assist us in developing a performance-based culture and a learning organisation.

The above values should be embedded in our day-to-day life and be institutionalised in the IMU as they are the foundation that holds together all our strategic pillars to make the IMU a leading private Asian health educator that creates value through integrating education, healthcare and research.

### 3.4 Redefining Our Core Values, Culture and Philosophy for the Future

#### 3.4.1 Objectives

Over the years IMU’s core values have not changed; they were, are now and forever shall be the same. Since day one, we have always emphasised on demonstrating high integrity, ethics and professionalism. We want to be students and patients centred; we stress on quality, the 3 “I’s” – Innovation, Imagination, and Insight. While we strive to be the best, we acknowledge that we need to be humble for it is a virtue one has to develop.

The only change is the approach in interpreting and demonstrating these values which may be perceived differently by the various individuals. Hence, it is important that we brace ourselves and be mindful of the different generations and how we engage them to be in line with

our value system. Here, we would want to redefine our values, culture and philosophy for the future to be linked with the following fundamental areas:

### **3.4.2 Link with IMU's Vision and Mission**

(See Section 1, Chapter 2 on IMU Vision and Mission)

### **3.4.3 Link with IMU's Education and Healthcare Philosophy**

(See Section 2, Chapter 8 on IMU Educational Philosophy, Learning Model and Graduate Attributes)

### **3.4.4 Link with Medical Professionalism and Ethics**

(See Section 1, Chapter 5 on Bioethics and Professionalism at the IMU)

### **3.4.5 Link with Non-Medical Professionalism and Ethics**

(See Section 1, Chapter 5 on Bioethics and Professionalism at the IMU)

### **3.4.6 Link with Scholarly Activities, i.e. Research, Learning, Teaching, etc.**

(See Section 1, Chapter 6 on Academia and Scholarship at the IMU)

## **3.5. The IMU as a Values-led Organisation**

In order to develop a values-based organisation, several HR strategies that can be taken are:

### **3.5.1 Values-based Recruitment (staff and students)**

Our human resource is our greatest asset and it is critical to select and recruit the right people into the IMU where they can value add to the organisation. It is of utmost importance to identify candidates who share and believe in our values and the way we do things here. While it is

important to look at the right academic qualification (for faculty), experience, skills and the right motivation, the right cultural fit is important for one to achieve his or her full potential.

Although we provide all employees with the opportunity to grow with the company, it is critical that their aspiration fits into the organisation's vision, mission and core values. It is only by recruiting those who share our values that we can move forward in tandem with the organisation's goals. Hence the selection of candidates must be done through a thorough selection process. Behavioural event questions on values should be asked during interviews to gauge the values held by the candidates. Reference checks before offering positions to ensure no record of breach in integrity, ethics and professionalism should also be made mandatory. Psychometric tools used, where necessary, should also emphasise on values which are in line with those of the organisation. With these precautions taken, there will be reduced risk of hiring those who do not share our values.

This also applies to selection of students into the IMU programmes. During the interview sessions, the interviewers should ensure that the students' values are in line with those of the IMU before offering them a seat in our programmes.

### **3.5.2 Values-based Performance Management**

Similarly to recruitment, we need to embed our core values in every aspect of our IMU life. The most effective way is to create a platform where employees are reminded that they will be assessed based on "behaviours driven by values". In this aspect the IMU's values takes precedence where employees will be measured on how they have demonstrated our core values. Here, we suggest a relook at our performance management competencies and to embed our core values as part of a critical assessment

at each performance appraisal. This should be discussed at performance management review carried out twice a year. With the frequent reminders and the emphasis in our performance management system, employees will need to work on how to demonstrate the practice of these core values. Employees who did not demonstrate our values or behave contrary to our value system will risk being rated lower, which impact on their bonus or are subjected to disciplinary action for infringing our value system.

### **3.5.3 Values-based Incentives and Rewards**

The IMU's existence is to create value for its stakeholders – its shareholders, students, patients, employees, and society at large. The IMU strives for quality and excellence in everything it does. Hence, the incentives and rewards must be designed to create value and measurable outcomes of what we promise to deliver. Our compensation philosophy is to move towards performance or outcome-based rewards. We would want our goal setting and key result areas to meet the S.M.A.R.T. principles – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound.

Our employee will be rewarded based on their delivery and creation of value which are measurable. Currently we have our Performance Management System that measures achievement of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and competencies. As to competencies, we should ensure that our core values are measured during appraisal. Employees that have demonstrated these values will be rated favourably and be rewarded.

Apart from the annual Performance Appraisal, there are also Achievement Awards given out to employees that have met the criteria of the various categories of awards to encourage individuals and teams to deliver outcomes that deserve to be recognised and rewarded.

### **3.5.4 Values-based Training and Development**

Values-based training and development is the approach in which our programmes must run consistently on values and the outcomes measured. Here we need to focus on creating value for our stakeholders, managing value for the organisation and evaluating values to ensure we are on the right path.

Our training and development initiatives must focus first on the organisation's needs. The individual employee's needs will then follow through to align themselves with the organisation's goals. Our training and development focusses on teaching scholarship, professional development and individual development. In our competency based training, we should incorporate values that can be measured. The outcome of the programmes should be measurable for its value.

Training on core values is carried out during Induction Programmes for new employees to assimilate them into the IMU culture. An important training we have in IMU is the Cultural Sensitivity Workshop where we try to create awareness and understanding among employees with regards to the diversity of employees. Adequate emotional intelligence is required to integrate our faculty into our IMU values and culture especially those who come from very different backgrounds and culture.

### **3.5.5 Values-based Leadership**

In Harry Kraemer's book<sup>4</sup>, "From Values to Action: The Four Principles of Values-Based Leadership" he mentioned that becoming the best kind of leader is not about emulating a role model or a historic figure. Rather, our leadership must be rooted in who we are and what matters most to us. When we truly know ourselves and what we stand for, it is much easier to know what to do in any situation. It always

comes down to doing the right thing and doing the best we can. Doing the right thing is a lifelong challenge for all of us.

The four principles which Kraemer gave are focussed mainly on self-reflection, balance, self-confidence and humility. Self-reflection is about the ability to identify and reflect on what we stand for, what our values are, and what matters most to us. To be a values-based leader, we must be willing to look within ourselves through regular self-reflection and strive for greater self-awareness. After all, if we are not self-reflective, how can we truly know ourselves? If we do not know ourselves how can we lead others?

The second principle is balance, which means the ability to see situations from multiple perspectives and differing viewpoints to gain a much fuller understanding. Balance means that we consider all sides and opinions with an open mind.

The third principle is true self-confidence, accepting ourselves as we are. We recognise our strengths and our own weaknesses and strive for continuous improvement. With true self-confidence we know that there will always be people who are more gifted, accomplished, successful and so on, than us but we are good with who we are.

The fourth principle is genuine humility. Never forget who we are or where we came from. Genuine humility keeps life in perspective, particularly as we experience success in our career. In addition, it helps us value each person we encounter and treat everyone respectfully.

The person who practises these four principles need not be of a leader that holds a high office position with many staff reporting to him or her. It can be applied by anyone, from the President to the most junior staff. It is truly leadership at all levels. It is never too early or too late to become a values-based leader.

### 3.5.6 Towards a Learning Organisation

As an academic institution, the IMU has always embraced itself striving to be a Learning Organisation. According to Victor Lim (2013)<sup>5</sup> (IMU as a Learning Organisation), “a learning organisation is an organisation that facilitates the learning of its members and constantly undertakes to transform itself.<sup>5</sup> It is an organisation where its people work collaboratively in an atmosphere of openness and trust to continually self-improve and innovate in order to achieve a common vision”. There are many benefits of becoming a learning organisation and IMU’s vision clearly indicates that we are committed to be a learning organisation. We have put in place a Learning Organisation Framework to be more structured in our approach, taking into consideration Peter Senge’s five elements of a learning organisation – systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building a shared vision and team learning as well as the seven dimensions<sup>6</sup>

1. Connect the organisation to its environment
2. Create continuous learning opportunities
3. Provide strategic leadership for learning
4. Promote inquiry and dialogue
5. Create systems to capture and share learning
6. Encourage collaboration and team learning
7. Empower people towards a collective vision) used to assess the characteristics as a learning organisation.<sup>6</sup>

We have also conducted a Dimensions of the Learning Organisation Questionnaire (DLOQ) survey to provide a clearer overview of the current baseline and culture to support the transformation of the IMU into a learning organisation.

Many initiatives and action plans have been drawn out to support the seven dimensions of our learning organisation model in the IMU. The challenge is to measure its successes and learn from these experiences.

### 3.6 Internalising Our Core Values: Applications and Action Plans

#### 3.6.1 Employees

The employees in the IMU comprise of corporate and academic staff from various ethnic, race, religion, culture and nationalities. It is truly an international university where 50% of the academic staff are non-Malaysians. With these diverse backgrounds it is critical to hire right at source. We need to recruit candidates who believe and share our IMU value system. This can be done through interviewing techniques using behavioural event interview questions focusing on values of the candidates, what they believe in and whether they are in line with the IMU's values. Other methodology would be through selected psychometric tools.

As for existing employees, we need to first create the awareness and understanding of our core values - what are they, why is it important to us, when do we demonstrate and lead by example of the values, how do we measure the outcome of the behaviours that reflect these values. It is only through a deep understanding and correct interpretation of our values that our staff can share the same frame of reference when we talk about our value system and culture. After creating the awareness and understanding, we need to get the buy-in of the faculty on why we need these values and how it can benefit all of us if we share and live the common values. Once our staff are convinced, hopefully it may translate into change behaviours where we begin to internalise the values into our actions.

The process to institutionalise and internalise our core values is a journey where one requires adequate understanding, support and encouragement. Here the Management and Heads of Department (HODs) need to play their role to promote and support the internalisation of our values. They need to remind employees over and

over and make values a topic of discussion in their regular meetings. The HODs need to remind their staff of the values during performance appraisal and talent reviews; training workshops, meetings, etc. and recognise and reward those who have demonstrated our values to encourage them. Other colleagues do have a role in encouraging one another to live the values with pride and dignity. Sources of reference for the various groups are as follows:

#### 3.6.2 Students

Malaysian and International students.  
(See Section 1, Chapter 5 on Bioethics and Professionalism at the IMU)

#### 3.6.3 Healthcare

Patient first - orientated  
(See Section 1, Chapter 5 on Bioethics and Professionalism at the IMU)

#### 3.6.4 Patients

(See book on Serving the Community at the IMU)

#### 3.6.5 Society

Service to the community  
(See book on Serving the Community at the IMU)

### 3.7 The Role of Leaders in Executing Our Value System

#### 3.7.1 Definition of Leaders

Although leaders frequently wield considerable or relatively more power than those who are being led, it is not always appropriate to equate power with leadership. This apparent paradox is influenced by the dynamic relationship

between leaders and those they provide leadership to. This relationship evolves with the environment where the interaction between leaders and those who are led take place. It is possible that the dynamics of this interaction will provide the potential for identification and development of leadership skills and styles which may supplant existing ones that are less appropriate in the evolved situation.

Much research on leadership styles especially in the cross-cultural context is available and this has been adequately reviewed by Dickson et. al. (2003)<sup>7</sup>. As pointed out, the impact of cultural values will influence the leadership styles and power of leaders and behaviour of followers. We need to reflect on this as we analyse the role and impact of leaders within the value system of the IMU.

It may be worthwhile to broadly classify leadership in any academic institution into organisational and academic leadership even though there is considerable overlap between them.

### **3.7.2 Organisational and Academic Leadership**

#### **Organisational Leadership**

Organisational leadership is seen as the umbrella under which other leaders derive their roles and functions. The organisational leadership provides the strategic direction and framework for achieving organisational goals which are formulated within the broader context of the governing body of the organisation and in consonance with public, national and global influences. The IMU as an academic organisation has reached maturity with its 23 years of existence. Amongst one of the most important factors contributing to its successful existence is the availability of effective organisational leadership. This has provided the framework and boundaries within which academic leadership can develop the educational philosophy, learning

model, and desired outcomes of the various academic programmes.

#### **Academic Leadership**

Educational leadership finds expression in the philosophy of the IMU's learning model, including its curriculum delivery, assessment, and expected outcomes for all its programmes at the pre-university, undergraduate, postgraduate and continuous professional development programmes.

Research leadership is manifested in the governance of the research process at the IMU and in the continuous audit of the relevance of its research emphasis. The IMU-Joint Committee on Research and Ethics (IMU-JC) was formed in 2002 and has been recognised by the Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH) since its formation. The composition of members, functions and activities of the IMU-JC have been evaluated by the MOH and duly endorsed in 2013 as being in compliance with national ethical standards. Traditional output indicators of excellence in biomedical research such as impact factor, Hirsch index, and publications in tier one Web of Science ISI Indexed journals are measured yearly and compared with both public and private universities. In addition, there is a conscious effort to relate the research findings to applications in the medical and health sectors, and to industry. As part of the evaluation process and to enhance the relevance of the research at the IMU, the Institute for Research, Development and Innovation (IRDI) was set up in September 2012. The four Centres of Excellence (CoE), namely, (a) Bioactive Molecules and Drug Delivery, (b) Cancers and Stem Cell Research, (c) Environmental and Population Health, and (d) Health Professional Education Research, were formed to provide the leadership and drive to the next level of research. The bold move was taken based on the research expertise available and researchers' success in obtaining external research funding for the last five years (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1** Research funding at the IMU, by source of funding and year, from 2009 - 2013.

Year	Research Funding (RM)		
	Internal*	External	Total
2009	535,020	701,462	1,236,482
2010	951,610	558,272	1,509,882
2011	528,552	1,465,465	1,994,017
2012	434,181	1,112,091	1,546,272
2013	424,142	1,670,200	2,094,342

\* Excludes undergraduate projects

### Leadership Styles and Skills

In general, leadership styles at all levels will influence not only activities but also the outcomes in an organisation. While the greatest influence on organisational behaviour and performance will be from top management leadership, middle and lower management leaders also yield substantial effect.

Leadership skills that are needed to ensure the vibrancy and success of any organisation have been identified by many and Leslie (2009)<sup>8</sup> lists the essential characteristics: (a) Leading employees, (b) Strategic planning, (c) Inspiring commitment, (d) Managing change, (e) Resourcefulness, (f) Being a quick learner, and (g) Doing what it takes.

Is there evidence that these essential characteristics and more importantly, activities and decisions reflecting them, are being followed in the IMU? Examples of academic leadership include the formulation and practice of the IMU learning model, our curriculum delivery, and in the quality of our graduates of the various programmes. Strategic planning for the IMU finds expression in our ASPIRE Plan for the period 2011-2015. We have conducted the mid-

term review for this plan and are currently planning for the next 5 years. Commitment from all levels of staff is needed for success of any strategic plan and the strong emphasis by leaders in the IMU on the necessity to internalise the IMU value system into the daily activities of both staff and students is constantly being monitored. Management of changes in the external and internal environment of the IMU is also constantly being addressed. Examples of effective management of these are seen in the succession planning for key leadership positions to meet challenges. The IMU has identified the next generation of leaders and have provided them with the required exposure, nurturing and training to assume these key positions in due course. In the process it has looked both internally and externally to source for the appropriate people to fill these positions.

### Leaders as Role Models

The importance of role models in all spheres of human interaction is well known and leadership by example is a powerful tool to learn both appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. It is thus essential to define the meaning and effect of role modelling in the academic environment. Senior members of the Faculty are expected and indeed

looked upon to provide leadership and serve as role models for their younger colleagues. Role modelling can be conscious and purposeful but it is argued that spontaneous role modelling qualities will have greater impact on others. Academic leaders must practise the right values expected of a scholar<sup>9</sup> in a learning organisation<sup>5</sup>. As stated, academic leaders through their intellectual discourse within a learning organisation that emphasises the core values of professionalism, ethics, critical thinking and learning ethos, will stimulate similar values amongst colleagues.

Is there evidence that these values are being observed and emulated by members of the organisation? Evidence and outcome measurements are difficult to define, but can perhaps be measured indirectly in the research area by the willingness to share research ideas and research activities through collaborative research projects that cut across disciplines. Indeed all approved internally or externally funded projects are multi-authored and multi-disciplinary. Research leaders must share ideas and nurture younger minds in critical appraisal of the research findings, their interpretation and directions for further research. A monthly research meeting where graduate students and faculty present their research findings has been in existence for the last eight years. These meetings are appropriate avenues for such intellectual discourse and critical appraisal for mutual learning and practice of leadership skills.

### **Principle-Centred**

Personal values and interest are important in setting individual goals. These should be in consonance with organisational values and interest. Where there are potential areas of disagreements and conflict, leaders must manage decision making that is not only fair but seen to be fair. Sometimes hard decisions have to be made in the best interest of the organisation but the effects of the outcomes must be anticipated and managed. The IMU has

policies which address issues of professionalism, ethics and misconduct which govern the activities of both student and staff. The appropriate guidelines for students and staff, as well as educational programmes on the prevention of such inappropriate behaviours are integrated into the teaching and learning programmes as well as orientation programmes.

### **Education Leadership**

Leadership in the teaching and learning activities of students is central to an academic organisation like the IMU. Academic leadership must be evident at all levels and an example of the framework of the required leadership at the programme level is well discussed in Johnston & Westwood (2007)<sup>10</sup>. Educational leadership at the IMU, especially in the provision of the unique model of credit transfer to partner medical schools for the past 23 years is a prime example of such leadership. The philosophy and history behind this have been adequately captured by Young (2013)<sup>11</sup>. Leadership in education for all health professional programmes at the IMU was again eminently visible in the crafting of the IMU Learning Model in 2008<sup>12</sup>. An important leadership initiative is the requirement that all academic staff be trained and certified through its Basic Teaching Licence certification course.

### **Mentor and Coach**

Much has been written on the roles of a leader as a mentor and coach and various senior faculty have addressed this adequately for the learning environment<sup>5</sup>, and in the research setting<sup>13</sup>. At the undergraduate level mentees are assigned to mentors; the common experience is that both parties seldom meet until problems arise (mainly assessment performance) or when mentees need the agreement of mentors for their elective postings, and advice on transfer to partner medical schools. A better mechanism should be

in place so that maximum benefit can be derived for both parties. It would also be appropriate that some thought be given on the development of a robust mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of the mentor-mentee system.

### Inspiring the Core Values of IMU

The IMU core values have their foundation in the 3 I's of its logo, namely, Innovation, Imagination and Insight. The 3 I's together with the core values of the IMU are given the acronym of TRUST as discussed above. These core values guide our teaching/learning, research, service, and consultancy activities and all staff and students are expected to internalise these core values. The monitoring of adherence to these core values are carried out continuously at all levels and the outcome measures are reflected in the mid-term and annual staff assessments.

## 3.8 Challenges in Execution

### 3.8.1 Commercialisation Versus Idealism

The IMU's success has caught the attention of big players in the commercial world where it has been acquired by the Khazanah Group few years back and made part of the IHH Group which is listed in both the stock exchanges in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

The IMU's philosophy is very different from a typical commercial entity. Although we acknowledge the need to be profitable and meet our shareholders expectations, we also have a noble vision to produce the best quality graduates and give back to society as part of our contribution towards nation building. Our model is to produce future leaders with high quality, ethical and moral conduct in our curriculum and be patient-centred in healthcare. Our students and patients come first. The emphasis on our core values and professionalism is our guiding principle.

Even our model for the Academic Health Centre focusses on salaried doctors rather than independent consultants where most private hospitals adopt. Here, the need to balance between profitability and our values is an increasing challenge especially with the rapid competition from other private and public institutions similar to ours. Our staff are being poached by our competitors, lured with higher remuneration and benefits. To attract and retain our talents, we may have to pay them competitively resulting in higher operational costs. The regulatory bodies' insistence on tight staff: student ratios, the increasing utilities cost, and the implementation of GST in 2015 will also push up inflation which will impact our operating costs. In order to ensure smooth operations, the university needs to be more profitable to cover the escalating operational costs. The fear of compromising too much at the expense of quality is a concern.

### 3.8.2 Diversity in Academia and Students

The second challenge is the diversity in academia and students.

## ACADEMIA

### Managing Cultural Diversity in an Organisation

The definition of culture according to the UNESCO Social and Human Sciences glossary is "...that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society"<sup>14</sup>.

Cultural diversity is a representation of various races or ethnicities, nationalities and religions within a community. In an organisation such as the IMU, cultural diversity has been known to bring about unique challenges in integrating a central value system and philosophy. A workforce of different nationalities and cultures may contribute to conflicting values in the roles of individual

employees. However, diversity, if managed effectively, can provide a distinct competitive advantage.

As illustrated in The Executive from the Academy of Management, a multi-national organisation which manages its cultural diversity will benefit from cost savings (less staff turnover), an edge in resource acquisition, improved marketing efforts, an increased level of creativity, better problem-solving (due to heterogeneity in decision-making), and a more flexible system in response to environmental fluctuations<sup>15</sup>. A successful organisational culture would value differences while upholding a prevailing value system, and practise cultural inclusion rather than segregation.

In a 2006 review of the GLOBE study of culture, leadership and organisations, the leadership mind-set has been found to shift from the individual leadership theory (ILT) to the cultural leadership theory (CLT)<sup>16</sup>. The Value-Belief Theory portrays a society in which the values and beliefs of representatives from different cultures affect both the level of enacted behaviours and the degree of which the behaviours are regarded to be acceptable, legitimate and effective. The GLOBE study investigated nine cultural dimensions which influence leadership styles in a culturally-diverse organisation; including future orientation, gender egalitarianism and humane orientation.

## Cultural Diversity in the IMU

Statistics from the Human Resource Department emphasises the fact that the IMU is a truly culturally-diverse organisation, employing faculty of about 16 nationalities from around the globe (Figure 3.1). More than half of the employees expectedly comprise of the local workforce, whereas about 25% of staff are expatriates from the Indian continent. This melting pot of cultures provides a fertile ground for exchange of ideas and a heterogenous pool of bright minds working towards a common organisational mission.

However, staff diversity also unveils a clash of various norms and beliefs which may be detrimental to rapport and collaboration. Variations in interpretation of events may result in misunderstanding and awkwardness if failed to be managed appropriately. A dissonance in values also lies in the leadership styles between individuals from Western and Asian countries. A 1997 study revealed that there was cultural universality in some leadership behaviours, but culturally-specific behaviours in aspects of leadership such as directive, participative, and contingent punishment<sup>17</sup>. It is commonly suggested that individuals from a Western-culture upbringing are more direct, assertive, and expressive in highlighting their views compared with their Asian counterparts.



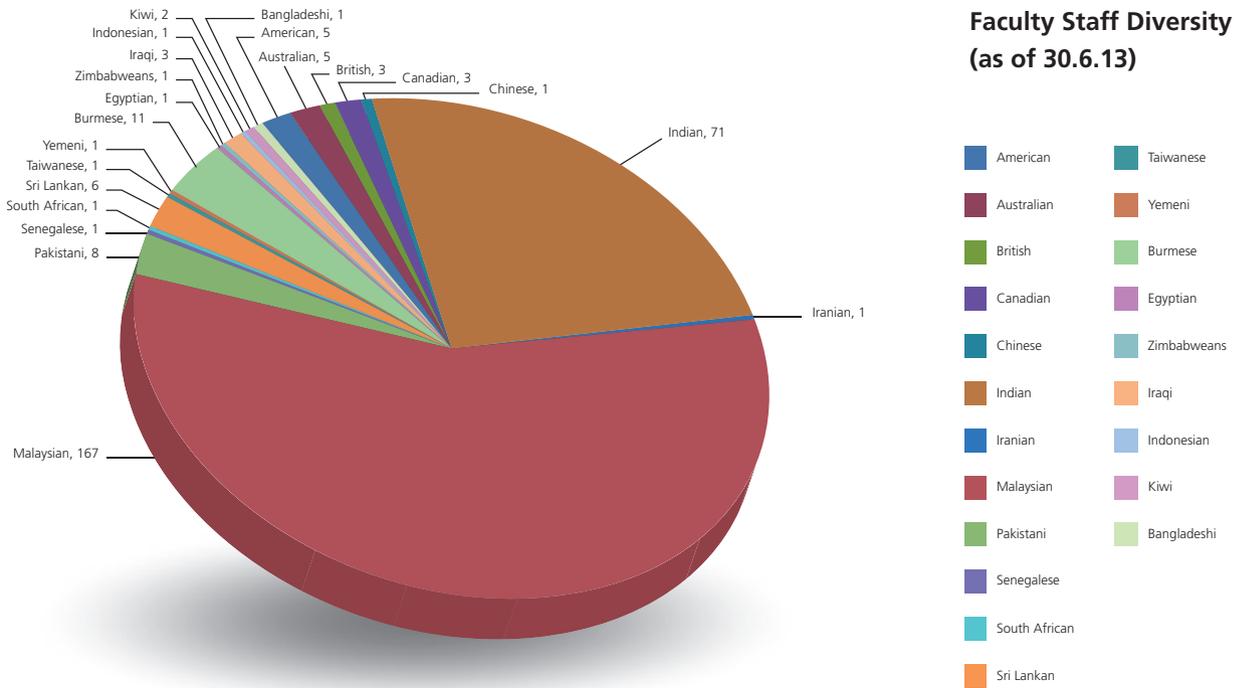


Figure 3.1 Nationalities of employed faculty in the IMU

Challenges in cross-cultural communication also become an underlying hurdle to achieve mutual understanding and unity. Although the medium of communication is English, variances in colloquial terminology, accents and articulation require extra effort from all parties to establish effective discourse. This is vital in decision-making processes where discussions play an important role to shape the direction of university policies.

### Enhancing Cultural Inclusion in the IMU

How does the IMU diminish cultural barriers to develop an organisation united under a single value system? A key factor is the comprehensive support provided for expatriate staff. The Expatriate Management Section under the Employee Engagement unit in the HR Department handles all expatriate matters from pre-arrival (work permit

application), arrival (airport pickup) to settling down in the organisation (orientation, EPF registration and banking). The unit even goes to such lengths as to help expatriate staff source for accommodation and education opportunities for their children. This caring culture allows foreign employees to adapt quickly to the country and organisation, thus easing them into the institution's value system.

In the IMU ASPIRE 2011 - 2015 Strategic Plan, several strategic initiatives have been in place to make the IMU a 'great place to work'. Among these, initiative S06 strives to create a conducive work environment to boost morale, efficiency and productivity through improving work culture, developing work-life programmes and employee support schemes. The establishment of an attractive total reward system is also expected to attract, motivate and retain local and foreign talent.



Activities that improve the staff's sense of 'belonging' to the IMU also contribute to enhancement of cultural harmony and unity. An annual University Day is held to commemorate and reward staff achievements and organisational milestones. Teambuilding activities held in conjunction with the University Day create a fun and relaxed atmosphere to develop teamwork and cross-cultural understanding among all levels of staff. In addition, staff trips organised every few years serve as an ingenious platform to learn about different cultures and traditions, whilst participants establish rapport with each other on a more personal level. University-wide festive celebrations introduce staff to a fascinating array of cultures and beliefs which further enriches their cultural experience.

Perhaps it is timely to learn from established strategies to transform from a traditional organisation into a truly culturally-diverse one. The key components to achieve this include the commitment of all levels of management to cultural diversity (leadership), managing and valuing diversity (MVD) training, research on diversity-related issues (such as equal-opportunity profile data), a review of the HR culture and management systems (including recruitment and performance appraisal), and institutionalising change as part of regular processes (follow-up)<sup>11</sup>.

## STUDENTS

### Diversity and Inclusiveness in a Medical School

It is well established that diversity plays an important role in higher education, including the health professions<sup>18</sup>. Diversity amongst the student body in a medical school is especially relevant as it creates a more holistic learning environment and prepares undergraduates for service in a multi-cultural society. Other benefits of a diverse student population include enhancing communication and patient-care outcomes, as well as encouraging innovation in brainstorming solutions.

A recent study by Dhaliwal et. al. (2013) revealed several challenges faced by a culturally-diverse medical school in the United States<sup>19</sup>. Within the student population, there were tendencies for bias against minority groups, conservative religions and values, gender, low socioeconomic status, and even non-native English speakers. Prejudice against individuals with different religions and conservative values ranked the highest among participants of the study. Recommendations to improve the diversity climate and increase inclusiveness include extending the definition of diversity in the institution to include religious, spiritual values and political beliefs, as well as organising diversity awareness and training programmes encompassing all members of the learning community.

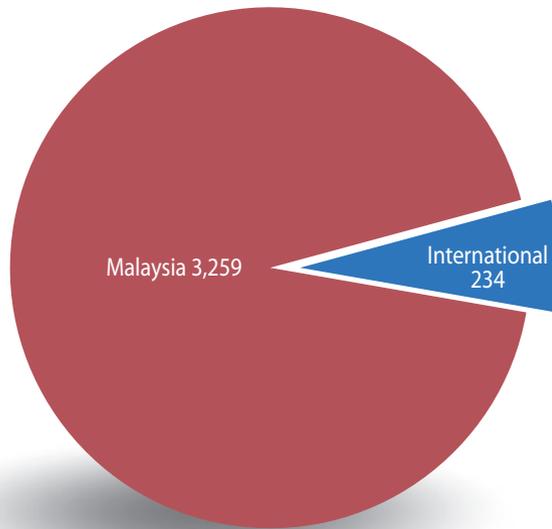


Figure 3.2 Nationalities of the student population in the IMU (as of December 2013)

List of international students by country

Country	No.	Country	No.	Country	No.
Algeria	1	Japan	1	South Korea	10
Australia	15	Kenya	3	Sudan	2
Bahrain	1	Libya	2	Sri Lanka	28
Bangladesh	4	Maldives	20	Sudan	2
Brunei	1	Mauritius	9	Taiwan	3
China	1	Myanmar	14	Tanzania	4
Cameroon	1	New Zealand	3	Thailand	2
Canada	2	Nigeria	12	Tunisia	1
Gambia	1	Pakistan	5	Uganda	1
Hong Kong	6	Philippines	1	Vietnam	1
India	23	Seychelles	1	Yemen	1
Indonesia	7	Singapore	33	Zimbabwe	3
Iran	8	South Africa	1	Others	1

### Student Diversity in the IMU

As with its namesake, the IMU is truly 'international'. Data from the Academic Services Department showed that the IMU is home to a multicultural amalgam of students from more than 40 nationalities, although Malaysians comprise of the vast majority (93%) (Figure 3.2).

As the Learning Model in the IMU strongly encourages teamwork, learning in a culturally-diverse climate poses a myriad of challenges. For instance, problem-based learning (PBL) sessions require students in groups of ten or less to execute productive discussions in order to achieve their learning outcomes. This is where command of the English language and communication skills plays an important role in achieving the objectives. Facilitators often find that the students' cultural background influences articulateness, willingness to participate, and in the group dynamics.

In addition, the contrasting value systems of students from different nationalities may impede the assimilation of the IMU core values in their everyday lives. If students find it difficult to adapt and understand the values of individuals from ethnicities unlike their own, accepting a set of institutional principles may be a challenge in itself.

### Improving the Diversity Climate in the IMU

International student support by the Student Services Department (SSD) and Student Representative Council (SRC) play a pivotal role in assisting foreign undergraduates acclimatise to the culture of the institution. The IMU International Student Handbook supplies comprehensive information on travel documents, accommodation, financial, transportation and other matters. Pastoral care for international scholars is offered through the initiative of the International Student Society (ISS). Besides a welcoming

party for the international students, all new undergraduates would participate in an intensive orientation to assimilate into the IMU culture. The official SRC website offers helpful details such as places of interest and access to daily necessities.

Student participation in clubs and societies is highly encouraged in the IMU to enhance inter-cultural understanding whilst honing important life skills. For this, the SRC can help direct interested individuals through the provision of the respective club president's contact details, as well as brief new students on the purpose and activities for each club. University faculty/student team-building activities such as sports events (the IMU Cup) and community service projects (through the IMU Cares initiative) develop inter-professional and intercultural rapport amongst the student community.

Differences in norms and beliefs encourage the tendency of students to establish cliques of similar ethnicities and educational backgrounds, where they would be more comfortable expressing themselves in their mother tongue. This is a barrier to effective communication for collaborative learning. To enhance inter-cultural communication, the IMU upholds an English-speaking policy for all communications on campus. It is believed that when the entire student population uses the same lingua franca, meaningful collaborative learning will ensue. Among the strategies implemented by the Language Department to improve English proficiency include compulsory English modules for all undergraduate programmes in the IMU, and the IMU 'tea party' for students needing additional support.

In nursing education, a study in 2010 outlined the pitfalls of cultural diversity in the classroom as well as recommendations for increasing effectiveness with diverse students.<sup>7</sup> Among the consequences of managing a diverse student body include cross-cultural barriers to

communication. A rather stimulating example quoted from the paper describes the nature of a physician trained in China:

*"He was observed on several occasions to pick up a patient's medications, shove the cup under the patient's nose, and command, "Take!"<sup>20</sup>*

The different cultural background of the physician rendered him unable to understand that politely requesting the patients to take their medications is a more appropriate gesture.

For the faculty, developing cultural competence is one strategy for increasing effectiveness within a diverse student population. Understanding one's own personal cultural background as well as the students', self-reflection, and learning from the students themselves are ways to effectively cope with a multi-cultural student body. Instead of relying on the SSD and SRC to ease the 'culture shock' that international students may confront, the initiative to accept and learn from one another's values should be the responsibility of all stakeholders in the IMU.

### 3.8.3 Generational Gaps

At the IMU, our work force is unique. Apart from the different cultures and nationalities, we are facing the challenge of generational gaps that coexist on the job. The generational diversity can frustrate and challenge the workforce as much as it enriches it. We have employees that cut across four generations (Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y or Z, aged above 70 to below 20) in the IMU.

Managing the ages, faces, values and views is an increasing difficult task. It is important to be able to understand the profiles of the four distinct generations, their motivations, desires, work ethics and life-shaping events to find common

ground. The challenge is to create and nurture a work environment that is generationally comfortable and conducive to focus the employees' energies on their work effectively.

While we have a number of Millennials entering the IMU, many older faculty are returning to the IMU after retirement. This is especially so when we are facing challenges of sourcing for medical lecturers who are knowledgeable and experienced to train and mentor our younger faculty and teach our students. Some of these may be retired civil servants that come from a very different culture. To assimilate them with the younger generations and the IMU culture may be a great challenge.

#### **3.8.4 Integrity of Leaders**

Another key challenge would be for our leaders to walk the talk in demonstrating our core values. The integrity of our own leaders marks the success or failure of implementing a values-based culture in IMU. Building a culture is more effective from top-down rather than bottom-up approach. If leaders are perceived as not practising what they preach or required to demonstrate, it will be difficult to convince the employees to follow the values that we want them to demonstrate.

We need to select, train and expose our leaders to industry best practices, be aware of corporate governance and risk management areas so that we are not ignorant of the demands of stakeholders today. After the Enron scandal, control measures have been tightened for corporate companies to prevent them from repeating these mistakes and the leadership plays a critical role in making this a success.

#### **3.8.5 Teamwork and Collaboration**

Another key challenge is the willingness and ability of our people to work collaboratively together as a team.

### **Definition of Teamwork**

The business dictionary defines teamwork as the process of working collaboratively with a group of people in order to achieve a goal. It was also stated that "Teamwork means that people will try to cooperate, using their individual skills and providing constructive feedback, despite any personal conflict between individuals."<sup>3</sup>

Teamwork is defined by Scarnati<sup>21</sup> "as a cooperative process that allows ordinary people to achieve extraordinary results". Harris and Harris (1973)<sup>22</sup> explained that a team has a common goal or purpose where team members can develop effective, mutual relationships to achieve team goals.

Teamwork skills include the mix of interactive, interpersonal, problem-solving and communication skills needed by a group of people working on a common task, in complementary roles, towards a common goal whose outcomes are greater than those possible by any one person working independently (Griffith Institute of Higher Education, 2010)<sup>23</sup>.

### **ORGANISATIONAL AND ACADEMIC TEAMWORK**

#### **Organisational Teamwork**

The value of organisational teamwork was highlighted in books in the 1980s<sup>24,25</sup> while in the real world teamwork was considered "nice" but not critical for the success of corporations. Towards the end of that decade, teamwork gained importance when it was regarded by public and private sector leaders as beneficial to achieve effective programmes.

The IMU adopted the first Partner Medical School programme in 1992 which allowed the students to start their education in Malaysia while completing and earning a degree at an international university. The existence and the success of the IMU model can be attributed mainly to the

teamwork and effective collaboration within the IMU and between IMU and its partners all over the world.

### **Academic Teamwork**

The roles and values of teamwork within academia in general and health education in particular are important and significant. Collaborative practice amongst healthcare professionals must be based on a status-equal basis between the various team members<sup>26</sup>. Knowledge sharing between various healthcare professionals was also identified as beneficial to patient care<sup>27</sup>. The IMU model considers all specialities and disciplines as equal and this encourages both the students and the staff learning together and sharing knowledge to achieve better outcomes for patients. The informal and relaxed atmosphere created within the work environment is integral for effective teamwork and creativity in solving problems<sup>28</sup>. The IMU conducts shared activities for staff from various disciplines of academics and non-academics, to provide an informal climate for employees to get to know each other and develop collaborative relationship.

### **Attributes of Effective Teamwork**

Attributes that are required for successful teamwork include the commitment to team success and having shared goals, interdependence where individuals depend on each other to achieve goals, interpersonal skills including honesty, trustworthiness and openness in addition to fostering a caring working environment. Open communication and positive feedback were also identified as an important attribute to successful teamwork. In teams, members feel a sense of ownership; they collaborate together and use their skills to complement each other. They accept and appreciate diversity, try to participate equally in making decisions but understand clearly the role of a team leader<sup>29-33</sup>.



### **Teamwork in IMU**

Based on the social-motivation theory, being part of a team is motivating as members work towards common goals<sup>34</sup>. Since the 1990's, the Ministry of Health of Malaysia has promoted three elements; caring, teamwork and professionalism. Teamwork plays an integral part in the health care setup to ensure better outcomes for patients. Teamwork is a way of life in the IMU. Students get exposed to working in teams from their first right through to their final semesters. Examples include problem-based and task-based community family case studies (CFCs), clinical groups, community services, sports events and social events (PEAC Report, 2012)<sup>35</sup>.

#### **3.8.6 Employee Engagement**

The success of the IMU depends largely on the commitment, passion and perseverance of our employees to make things happen. An engaged employee will go the extra mile for the organisation, even without expectation of compensation for putting in the extra hours. Of course work-life balance is an important aspect for employees to be more productive but at times employees are required to sacrifice personal time to

respond to the needs of others. With passion and tenacity, we should never give up and ensure we deliver the tasks with quality and care. This is what differentiates the IMU from others, our service above self.

One of the major challenges is having our employees feel engaged with the organisation, that they love their jobs and they are doing it out of passion to be the best of whatever they are doing. With this commitment, the organisation will definitely move forward. Employees need to trust the Management and on the other hand the Management must also play their role in gaining that trust. We must develop a work environment that is conducive for all as best as we could. The Management must be able to feel the needs of the employees and be fair to them, recognising and rewarding employees for the values and outcomes that they bring, giving employees the opportunity to grow with the Company and empowering them to do better. Employees need to be motivated and feel that they are instrumental in developing an IMU of the future.

### 3.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, the IMU's value system, culture and philosophy will determine the success or failure for the organisation to achieve its vision and mission. These serve as the foundation in which the organisation is built upon. Without a strong foundation, the entire building no matter how big or strong will not hold long. It will eventually weaken and collapse. Hence, it is utmost critical for the IMU to define its value system, culture and philosophy clearly and embed these into the organisation to ensure success. Amidst the challenges ahead, with the right leadership and the right people, together we can overcome all obstacles and build a better IMU for all.

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