

*Strategic Plan for
Centre for Health Professionals Education
Research
2013 - 2015*



Foreword by Professor Mak Joon Wah, Vice President of Research, International Medical University

Health professions education research is relatively new to Malaysia, however this is an important thrust area given the current scenario in both the public and private institutes of higher learning offering health professions related courses in the country. In the past 10 years there has been a sharp increase in the number of institutions offering health professions related courses. These courses range from clinical based courses like medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, dietetics to laboratory based courses like biomedical sciences and medical biotechnology. This sharp increase has given some cause for concern in the educational experience, assessment and work readiness of future health professionals in Malaysia. Professional and accreditation bodies, future employers, governmental agencies and institutes of higher learning would greatly benefit from research in health professions education as the research findings can form the basis of decision making, implementation of policies and improving the quality of education. Research in health professions education will also provide opportunities for innovative yet contextual teaching learning and assessment methods to be applied in the curricula. Interestingly the need for research in health professions education is shared internationally as many other institutions around the world face similar challenges in the training of health professionals. At IMU, it is envisioned that the establishment of the Centre for Health Professionals Education Research will address both national and international issues regarding health professions education and provide a platform for collaboration and training amongst current and aspiring health professions education researchers.



Centre for Health Professionals Education Research

The demand for quality and patient centered healthcare has resulted in increased interest in how health professionals are selected, trained and perform in work place. Universities, professional bodies, patient groups and accreditation agencies are stakeholders that value research into new and effective methods in student selection, the delivery and assessment of a curriculum, the students learning experience and faculty professional development. In the last couple of decades, health professional education (HPE) research has been gaining momentum within universities. This is evidenced by the setting up of education centers or teaching learning offices within health professional schools. There is also a growing number of internationally recognized academic journals dedicated to HPE research suggesting the importance of this field in training competent and work prepared health professionals educators. Given IMU's history and expertise in health professionals education and partnership with international universities, it is timely to focus on health professionals education research and to share our findings in a scientific manner with stakeholders. The formation and activities of the Centre for Health Professionals Education Research (CHPER) will be vehicle and platform to do so.

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Aims and Portfolio

Based on evidence from our analysis of HPE research, pedagogies, policies and practices in the diverse range of health professionals education, we propose that our research portfolio is in congruence with the IMU learning model, Professional Development and Quality Assurance. Educational literature suggests that building capacity based on the three previously areas can lead to expertise development, knowledge creation and creating change (Norman, 2002; Cook et al., 2008). Thus the aims of the CHPER are

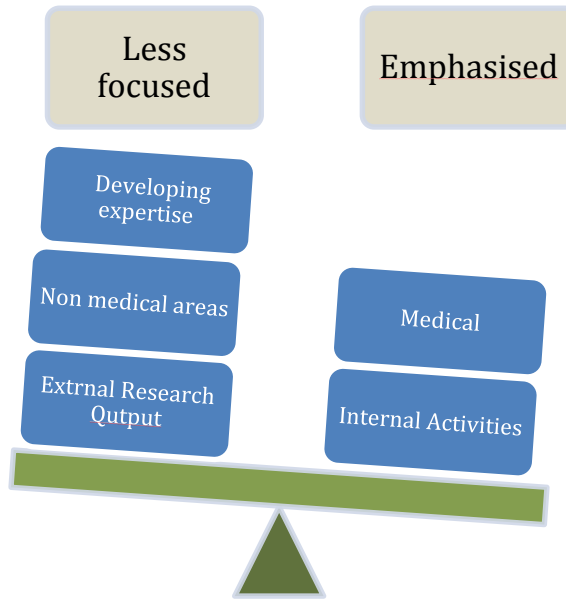
- i. To develop and promote niche research areas based on IMU's unique educational model of internationalization, inter-professionalism and experiential learning.
- ii. To promote expertise development in health professions education research through faculty development plans and recruitment strategies at IMU.
- iii. To promote research collaborations through partnerships with local and international universities.
- iv. To initiate positive change in the area of health professionals education based on research evidence within the nation.
- v. To ensure quality assurance in the health professionals education research at IMU.

Strategic Plans for CHPER 2014 to 2015

A. Background and Context

This paper describes the strategies and action plan for the development of the IRDI Centre for Health Professionals Education Research as a center of excellence for Health Professionals Education (HPE) in Asia. The concept of excellence in HPE forms the basis for these strategies. Excellence in this context is defined as developing expertise, creating knowledge, producing innovations, fulfilling international standards and quality in relation to health professional training and most importantly being change agents in HPE. Evidence of excellence in HPE based on the abovementioned definitions are for example, McMaster's University which developed Problem Based Learning (PBL) as an innovation to learning and later became a change agent which resulted in many institutes of higher learning adopting PBL. Maastricht University is another example of excellence as educators there adapted PBL based on the principles of constructive, contextual, collaborative and self-directed learning to create the now widely used 7 step PBL approach. The University of Dundee has also stamped itself as a change agent for HPE with its expertise on outcome based learning and affiliation with medical education journals and conferences.

IMU's unique educational model of internationalization, inter –professionalism and experiential learning needs to be evidenced, triangulate and shared in a scientific manner , the CHPER provides an opportunity to do so. The CHPER activities currently emphasize educational research and curricular development largely for the medical programme, hence resources are now needed to enhance these activities across all programmes. Professional development and quality assurance activities are also needed across the board for all health professional courses. While there has been an increase in educational research proposals (as evidenced in the number of educational research proposals in the IMU JC, 2013 and 2014), the research output has been strong with conference presentations however in terms of publications in high impact journals there are still gaps. The current shortage of dedicated and expert staff in educational science needs also be addressed. In summary, based on current practice, the three areas of research, professional development and quality assurance needs strategic planning to move forward.



B. The Strategic Plans

We propose the following strategies to close the gap and increase the quantity and quality of research related to the IMU learning model, Professional Development and Quality Assurance.



- i. Focus on Niche Areas for HPE Research related to IMU strengths of internationalization, inter professionalism and experiential learning.**
- HPE Research in the above mentioned niche areas can take the form of description studies, justification studies and clarification studies, and literature suggests that clarification studies are uncommon in experimental studies in HPE. Studies with this purpose (i.e. studies asking: ‘How and why does it work?’) are needed to deepen our understanding and advance the positive outcomes of research into evidence based HPE decision making (Cook et al., 2008)
- Learning concepts related to Internationalization, Interprofessionalism Experiential and Service Learning
 - Adult Learning: CCCS (Constructive, Contextual, Collaborative and Self Directed Learning): T/L activities that perpetuate these principles
 - Traditional and New functions: E-learning, Student Selection, Learning Spaces
 - Assessments: Portfolios, Skills Based, PPD (Judgment Tests)
 - Teaching Excellence and Scholarship: Innovative training programmes, Learner centered teaching scholarship, Leadership in Education
 - Less emphasised HPE research in literature: Traditional Chinese Medicine, Chiropractic, Nutrition and Dietetics Education Research
- ii. To invest in expertise development for health professionals educational research.**
- Employment of staff with expertise in HPE research (for example ICE needs to increase the number of staff with expertise in HPE research at Senior Lecturer and above, by allocating and increasing specific HR budget yearly)
- IMU to provide opportunities for staff to pursue either a Master’s degree or PhD in HPE (HR to make available a couple of scholarships for faculty development related to HPE)
- Currently the Ron Harden Visiting Professorship is a visiting professorship that allows IMU staff interaction with international experts in HPE, this effort should continue and similar opportunities to work with HPE consultants should be encouraged at the school level.
- iii. To promote collaborative research with national and international institutions of higher le.**
- Collaboration at the national level for HPE research is not optimum and needs to be improved for higher impact research and opportunities for national or international grants. Efforts are currently being made to contact the Exco members of any HPE related society in Malaysia to determine its current remit and activity status (an email has been sent to the President on the 6th of Sept, 2014, as determined from the 2012 Registrar of Societies Minute for the Persatuan Pendidikan Sains Perubatan dan Kesihatan Malaysia). IMU through ICE and the teaching and learning office is and should be committed to take a leadership role in a national society and contribute in developing HPE research in Malaysia.
- iv. To develop short term research skills training in Health Professionals Education research for IMU staff.**
- Currently ICE conducts short research skills training courses for IMU faculty interested in HPE research, however the courses are not often enough (due to lack of time or number of experts) and are sometimes not taken up by faculty who may need it. The effect of this is poorly designed research proposals or research outcomes that are not publishable in HPE journals. The strategy proposed is to develop online research methodology course for HPE so that IMU faculty can participate in this course at their own pace and time. The measurable outcome for the course is an approved research proposal from the IMU JC.

v. To provide publications support for faculty.

Considering the multiple roles played and tasks performed by IMU faculty, there is a need to assist IMU faculty when they need to publish their research work. One strategy is to have a collaboration between IRDI, ICE, the IMU library and e-learning to provide one stop service center for publications.

The following suggestions are extracted from (http://library.uncg.edu/research/faculty_support.aspx) and while some services are in place, it is not coordinated in terms of publications support.

i. Library Liaisons

Assigned to each academic department, learning community, institute, and program to work with faculty to ensure that the Libraries' collections support their research and to assist faculty with specific research needs.

ii. Data Services

Assistance and consultation with statistics and numeric data discovery, and statistical software packages (primarily SPSS and SAS).

iii. Journal Publishing Support

Open Access Publishing Support Fund

Faculty, EPA employees, and graduate students may apply for a grant of up-to RM5, 000 to pay for article processing fees to publish in open access journals.

Staying Current with Your Research

The Libraries have developed a guide to help faculty stay abreast of new research and publications in their fields of study.

Reference Manager, EndNote and Other Citation Management Tools

These applications for storing citations and generating in-text references and bibliographies are freely available to all or are provided for free to current IMU faculty.

Digital Media Services

Assistance and consultation provided for scanning, format conversion, and image and video editing. By appointment only.

Formatting and Language Services.

Our capabilities

Based on our current faculty and learning resources strength, we have research expertise and capabilities in the areas of:

- a. Learning concepts and philosophies related to Internationalization, Interprofessional, Experiential and Service Learning,
- b. Adult Learning Theories and Faculty Development
- c. Traditional and New functions in Health professionals education : E-learning, Student Selection, Learning Spaces,
- d. Assessments and competencies of health professionals: Portfolios and Skills Based Assessment
- e. Teaching Excellence and Scholarship: Innovative training programmes, Learner centered teaching scholarship, Leadership in Education
- f. Traditional Chinese medicine, Chiropractic and Nutrition and Dietetics Education Research.

Opportunities for Collaboration

In order to develop and expand our research capabilities, our researchers are dedicated to strategic collaborations with national and international institutions of higher learning with interest and expertise in health professionals education. Our current research collaborators in Health Professionals Education Research include the University of Newcastle, Australia; the University of Tasmania, Australia; the University of Adelaide, Australia; Griffith University, Australia.

We would like to hear from you, please get in touch with us:
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