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Enhancing academia–industry linkage through liaison centers

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There is a strong linkage between the academia and the industry in developed countries. Research activities conducted by the lecturers in academia make them different to teachers and the research outcomes implemented in the industry will lead to benefits to society. The industry produces goods and services with the prime objective of maximizing individual profit but it also provides benefits to the society and enriches lives of the public.

The main output of a university is the intellectual labour and but once a graduate engages in work, there is a tendency to lose the linkage with the academia. It could result in fading out their professional development. On the other hand, although the universities continue research, it may be difficult to find a proper partner to implement the research findings in the industry or to provide financial support. Ultimately, development of the industry may not reach full potential and slow down the progress of the economy of the country. However, there are socio-cultural reasons hindering development of a strong linkage between the academia and industry as observed in the recent past and it is evident that there is a necessity for both parties to work together.

In view of these circumstances, a qualitative research study was conducted to obtain the views of stakeholders to assess the current academic-industry linkage. In the study, a survey was conducted with semi structured open ended questions as it is required to give the freedom for both academia and industrialists to express their views without framing them to a set of specific questions. As a case study, direct interviews with the lecturers from the Faculty of Engineering Technology were conducted and their responses were recorded and verified. Senior Managers from the Industry were also contacted and their views were obtained. The study focused on four key characteristics of a relationship shown in literature such as vision, trust, benefit and attitude. Based on Content Theory and Thematic Analysis, the intricacies of meaning within these characteristics were captured. Narrative summary for each characteristic based on details provided by the respondents was tabulated.

The results of the study revealed that it is hard for a one to one direct interaction of industry and academia to exist and as such it is recommended that a unit is established in the industry to liaise with a similar unit set up in the academia to strengthen the linkage. The two units should possess the same work culture and work towards synchronization to generate a synergic effect. It is a coherent interface for like-minds to comfortably work on a shared vision with trust for mutual benefit.

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