

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME (ALP) MARCH 2025

The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at IIM Bangalore hosted the Academic Leadership Programme (ALP) from March 8–13, 2025, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE), Government of India (GoI). The cohort comprised Vice Chancellors from various centrally- and state-funded universities and Directors of Institutes of National Importance. The participating institutes were IIM Raipur, IIT Dhanbad (ISM), NIT Raipur, NIT Jamshedpur, Mizoram University, North Eastern Regional Institute of Science and Technology (NERIST), Himachal Pradesh Technical University, Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies, and Vijayanagara Sri Krishnadevaraya University.

The programme included thoughtfully curated sessions and a roundtable discussion covering various facets of academic leadership, such as leadership mindset, strategy implementation, organizational & data-driven decision-making, financial acumen, stakeholder management, institution building, innovation and higher education, managing with AI, the role of leaders in creating a sustainable society, and more. Prof. Sushanta K Mishra, Chairperson of CTL and faculty, OB and HRM area, inaugurated the programme with the participants by lighting the lamp. He further opened the sessions by introducing IIMB, and CTL.

The programme also facilitated a one-day visit to Prashanti Kutiram, S-Vyasa University, where the participating faculty members engaged in sessions on yoga and holistic wellness. The programme concluded with a Special Address by Prof. Rishikesha Krishnan, Director of IIM Bangalore, followed by a valediction ceremony.

The details of the sessions conducted during the programme are as follows:

Session 1: LEADERSHIP MINDSET

Instructor: Sushanta K Mishra

The discussion opened with an enquiry on the challenges faced by the participating leaders in their respective organizations. The participants touched upon challenges including finances, availability of space, non-participation and non-responses, faculty motivation, ego clashes, groupism, internal politics, political interference, and court cases.

Based on the insights gained, the instructor presented the ideas of ‘area of control’ and ‘area of concern’, urging the participants to focus on their areas of control rather than that of concern, which he believed would bring a huge difference to their overall productivity.

To further elaborate the two ideas, the instructor discussed a case study that explored conflicting management styles of stakeholders in academic institutes. Laying out the challenges at hand, the instructor posed thought-provoking questions at the participants. Drawing from their opinions, the professor highlighted the ability to work with pluralities and manage differences as a critical competence in an organization.

He also touched upon the ideas of self-reflection using the 'Johari Window' communication model, advocating an individualized leadership development plan where one consciously jots down one's abilities, mission, other's perception of oneself, and standard organization expectations. He also advised a practice of categorizing tasks into quadrants of crises, control, deception, and escape. Using this classification, he also discussed how to determine when to delegate, monitor, motivate, and train one's subordinates. In conclusion, he emphasized the importance of feedback which helps in self-awareness, developing perspectives, and bridging development gaps.

Session 2: STRATEGY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Instructor: R Srinivasan

This lecture offered an in-depth exploration of the strategic processes essential to organizational success, focusing on how strategy can be effectively formulated, executed, and sustained. The session began with a discussion on the hierarchy of strategic intent, which includes vision, mission, goals, objectives, targets, and plans.

The instructor stressed that strategy must be understood in the context of three critical elements: ends, scope, and advantage.

- Ends refer to the goals an organization aims to achieve, which must be specific, time-bound, and measurable to track progress effectively.
- The scope defines the operational boundaries of the organization, including whether it operates horizontally, vertically, or geographically. The scope helps determine what the organization will focus on and what it will exclude.
- Advantage refers to the unique combination of resources and capabilities that differentiate an organization from its competitors. This advantage allows a firm to deliver a unique value proposition to its customers or stakeholders, setting it apart in the marketplace.

A key point emphasized during the lecture was the importance of defining the boundaries of an institution. Using examples such as Ashok Leyland and Tata Consultancy Services, the instructor illustrated how clear strategic boundaries help organizations maintain focus on their core strengths and avoid overextension. In the same vein, he shared how universities, while providing cognitive services that are difficult to measure, must carefully define their boundaries to stay relevant in the evolving educational landscape.

Further, the instructor introduced the concept of curiosity as a vital trait for strategists, outlining five dimensions that shape the decision-making process: deprivation sensitivity, joyous exploration, social curiosity, stress tolerance, and thrill-seeking.

Reflecting on the future of strategy, he discussed the "Crystal Gazing into the Future", outlining six critical issues that would shape the future of strategy in institutions.

- **Equity**, which involves ensuring access to education, balancing skills vs. knowledge, and addressing quality concerns in the educational landscape.
- **Quality**, addressing the challenges related to institutional rankings, accreditation, and strategic planning. He raised concerns about fairness in ranking systems and the difficulty of fitting diverse educational needs into standardized frameworks.

- **Technology and digital transformation**, especially the impact of remote learning, unsupervised learning, and self-paced courses. He highlighted the increasing role of Generative AI in education, which is expected to significantly influence learning and evaluation methods in the near future.
- **Governance**, with an emphasis on balancing quality, equity, and quantity in educational institutions. The governance structures must ensure effective supervision and oversight to maintain a high standard of education.
- **Learning vs. teaching**, stressing the need to move beyond traditional teaching to focus on. Pedagogy, communication skills, and the ability to transfer knowledge effectively.
- **Research and critical cognition**, with a call to enhance critical thinking and research abilities within institutions.

Further, Professor explored the role of strategic control in achieving operational efficiency and maintaining a focus on quality. He also highlighted that reward systems are integral to motivating employees and researchers and ensuring alignment with the institution's strategic goals.

The lecture concluded with a reflection on the mind of the strategist, emphasizing the importance of strategic agility. The professor emphasized that strategy is not a static process but a dynamic one that requires continuous adjustment and informed decision-making to ensure the institution remains competitive and responsive to new opportunities and challenges.

Session 3: LEADERSHIP VISIONING

Instructor: Gopal Mahapatra

The session was focused on helping the participants articulate a personal vision by assessing their sense of happiness, achievement, significance, and legacy. community. The instructor used pedagogical tools such as roundtable discussions, visualization exercises and meditation, inspirational short videos, lecture, academic literature, and individual deliberation.

The instructor guided the participants through a carefully designed process of self-evaluation and vision formulation, encouraging them to reflect deeply on personal and professional priorities. These assessments were intended to reveal gaps between aspiration and current reality, offering participants a way to recalibrate their leadership paths.

In setting the context, he emphasized the need to periodically revisit one's "personal kaleidoscope" which is a metaphor for the dynamic interplay of different aspects of one's life and career. He referred to Peter Drucker's prediction that knowledge workers would typically have career spans of up to 50 years and recommended Lynda Gratton's book, *The 100-Year Life*, to help contextualize planning in such extended trajectories.

To illustrate the evolution of personal and professional goals over time, the instructor used the Sigmoid Curve (S Curve), a model that helped participants visualize inflection points in their careers. He recommended Jim Collins' books, *Built to Last* and *Made to Last* as supplementary reading on the habits of visionary organizations. The discussion encouraged participants to evaluate their lives comprehensively, raising questions on how integrated and varied their profiles were, whether some domains were neglected, and if their notions of success were evolving or stagnant.

Finally, to articulate a comprehensive personal vision, participants were asked to complete a “Wheel of Life” exercise. They were guided to chart an ideal life balance by marking their current and aspirational positions across different life areas and connecting these to create a web. The visual contrast between the present and ideal webs helped participants identify areas needing attention or growth.

Session 4: DECISION MAKING

Instructor: Mukta Kulkarni

This session explored various decision-making strategies used by leaders of organizations across sectors. Some of these strategies included pivoting, constructive dissent, pre mortem, cobra effect, framing, decoy effect, and bias blind spots. The session facilitated active knowledge sharing where participants dissected their decision-making norms. The instructor advocated the use of strategic decision taking and stressed the importance of networking within the organization.

Setting the context against the backdrop of emerging disruptions in higher education, she posed a compelling question—are educators truly prepared for the changes that Artificial Intelligence, Large Language Models, and MOOCs could bring to the dynamics of academic institutions? She urged the participants to consider not just the abstract implications of these technologies but to introspect on how each of them was concretely preparing to adapt.

To deepen the reflection, she explored the concept of "controlled fires" as a metaphor for controlled experimentation in academic institutions. She invited participants to share instances where they had created controlled environments to test new initiatives within their organizations. Through these shared experiences, she encapsulated the importance of agility, experimentation, and the leadership skill of "pivoting"—the ability to act on emerging signals and recalibrate direction when needed.

Further, she proposed a framework built on cultivating three distinct types of networks: operational networks that offer on-the-ground insights for implementation, developmental networks comprising individuals who challenge and strengthen one’s ideas, and strategic networks that support long-term visioning. This led into an introduction of the "pre-mortem" approach—an exercise in foresight that imagines all the ways in which a decision could fail, thereby enabling more robust planning.

The instructor led the participants through scenarios to explore how the framing of questions could lead to dramatically different stakeholder responses. She highlighted subtle decision-making techniques—strategic nudges, aggregate recall, and re-framing—that influence institutional outcomes. Through vivid illustrations, including the notorious "cobra effect" and case studies on school nutrition programs, she demonstrated the significance of framing in policy and leadership decisions.

Delving into behavioral economics, the professor explained the “decoy effect” using an example of magazine pricing tiers, revealing how stakeholders’ choices can be manipulated through biased options. The idea was to challenge participants to reflect on whether they were indeed smart decision-makers or merely perceived themselves as such.

In conclusion, participants were asked to reflect on how they allocated their time across strategies like framing, gathering intelligence, and deciding how to decide. The instructor encouraged the leaders to think deeply about the architecture of their decisions and the assumptions that shape them.

Session 5: FINANCIAL ACUMEN

Instructor: Hema Krishnamurthy

This session provided insights on accounting & finance, capital budgeting, and corporate valuation which could aid a leader in better financial management of an organization. Using sample financial statements, the instructor engaged the participants in a hands-on training on managing and supervising balance sheet, profit & loss, and cash flow.

A comprehensive understanding of both qualitative and quantitative data was emphasized throughout the session. Capital budgeting, a major focus of the lecture, dealt with long-term investment decisions with significant and often irreversible implications. Such investments may be directed toward expansion, replacement, the launch of new products, or compliance with regulatory and welfare standards. The instructor threw light on the preparation of a project report, which typically included financial forecasts, market assessments, and risk analyses.

The final part of the lecture delved into corporate valuation—a critical process for a wide range of business scenarios including raising capital, mergers and acquisitions, strategic sales, or even for internal financial planning. Valuation, as highlighted, was not a fixed measure but a perception shaped by various factors such as industry conditions, socio-political influences, company-specific potential, and the strength of intangible assets like intellectual property, brand equity, and management capability.

Multiple approaches to valuation were discussed in detail. Cost-based methods included the net asset value, replacement cost, and liquidation value methods. Income-based methods, particularly the Discounted Cash Flow (DCF) method, were presented as the most comprehensive, given their ability to reflect future profitability and incorporate intangibles. The DCF approach relied on free cash flow projections, cost of equity (often calculated using the Capital Asset Pricing Model), and the Weighted Average Cost of Capital. The lecture also explained the importance of computing the terminal value and discounting all future cash flows to present value to arrive at a holistic business valuation.

Finally, market-based valuation methods such as the transaction multiples approach were discussed. The session underscored the importance of combining analytical tools with contextual judgment. Financial decisions, whether operational or strategic, involved a complex interplay of data, assumptions, external conditions, and managerial foresight. The instructor encouraged the participating leaders to approach financial management not merely as a technical discipline, but as a critical component of strategic leadership.

Session 6: SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Instructor: Sourav Mukherji

This stimulating discussion was centred on the undeniable correlation of sustainability and inclusivity. The instructor argued that simple initiatives adopted by the institute could have larger impact in terms of building a mindset of sustainability in students.

He outlined the essential attributes of a sustainable society: one that reduces poverty and inequality, promotes health and wellness, actively mitigates climate crises, and upholds environmental integrity.

Within this framework, he highlighted the responsibility of different societal stakeholders—government, civil society, non-profits—and turned the lens inward to question the role of academia. Are institutions creating students who are socially aware, ethically grounded, and equipped to tackle the complex challenges of our times?

Calling for a fundamental rethinking of India’s development model—one that foregrounds sustainability and inclusion—the instructor proposed targeted measures such as creating livelihoods for the 833 million Indians (63% of the population) residing in rural areas, supporting internal migrants who move to cities in search of employment, and ensuring financial inclusion through affordable credit and insurance products. These interventions, he argued, were not only social imperatives but also economic necessities.

Drawing inspiration from Muhammad Yunus, the Nobel Peace Prize winner and pioneer of microfinance, he underscored the potential of decentralized production, localized distribution, and inclusive business models to address developmental challenges. He also drew attention to the philosophical underpinning of sustainability. The capitalist who maximized personal value and was indifferent to others, must give way to the “real person”, someone who valued relationships, community, and the environment. To instil this shift, academic institutions must nurture not just intellect, but also empathy and ethical responsibility.

The lecture then turned to the interconnected nature of sustainability, poverty, and inequality. A regenerative and distributive economy—one that balanced environmental, economic, and social goals—was proposed as the path forward. The instructor stressed how academic leaders held considerable influence over students who will eventually spread out across various sectors of society and industry, bringing about systemic changes. The session made a compelling case for the central role of academic institutions in shaping a more inclusive and sustainable society.

Further, as a demonstration of the discussed ideas, [Prof. Haritha Saranga](#), Chairperson of the Sustainability Taskforce, IIM Bangalore, took the participants on a guided tour to offer them a glimpse of the sustainability initiatives on the campus.

Session 7: STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

Instructor: P D Jose

The instructor opened the session stating that nurturing a strong network of stakeholders who champion the cause of the institution was key in the growth and success of any institute. He discussed strategies in managing and collaborating with different stakeholders of an institution who he introduced as partners, not obstacles.

The talk began with an exploration of contemporary learning models, emphasizing the shift from traditional, linear forms of education to more need-based, asynchronous, and virtual learning environments. Professor Jose highlighted the changing paradigms in education, where excellence is framed as inclusive, learning is viewed as lifelong and non-linear, and collaboration, peer-to-peer learning, and technology integration play central roles.

One of the key sections of the lecture revolved around reimagining the future of universities and learning. The instructor introduced the concept of unbundled learning, where the traditional educational value chain—comprising curriculum creation, content delivery, credentialing, and evaluation—is broken down into more modular, flexible components.

In a highly interconnected, digital world, stakeholders in education are no longer just passive observers but active participants. The instructor identified the growing diversity of stakeholders in higher education institutions—EdTech companies, government agencies, regulatory bodies, employers, NGOs, students and their parents, alumni, and industry partners. He emphasized that student and parent satisfaction are paramount, but all stakeholders must be aligned and engaged for an institution to succeed.

A data-driven approach to engagement, continuous involvement, and institutionalizing these processes were highlighted as essential strategies for success. Alignment with societal values and policies, particularly in a rapidly changing world, is another key component of successful stakeholder management.

In his closing remarks, Professor Jose emphasized that the most successful universities are those that have nurtured strong networks of stakeholders. These institutions have managed to champion stakeholder engagement, creating collaborative environments where all parties—students, faculty, alumni, industry partners, and more—work together to foster innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability in education. By reimagining education as a flexible, choice-based, and collaborative process, and aligning it with the needs of all stakeholders, universities can better prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Session 8: MANAGING WITH AI

Instructor: Rahul De'

The instructor offered a perceptive take on different aspects of Artificial Intelligence including the implications of AI in today's world, the role of AI in reshaping education, its effectiveness, progress, and goals.

The lecture delved into AI's profound impact on the learning experience, making it more personalized and accessible. This democratization of education would allow for highly personalized learning experiences tailored to individual needs, a shift from the traditional one-size-fits-all approach.

To further illustrate AI's growing influence, the instructor introduced tools like DeepSeek and Grok by Elon Musk. He also demonstrated AI's image recognition capabilities, showing how the error rate for AI in classifying images was notably low at 3%, compared to a human error rate of 5%.

Another key focus of the session was on the responsible use of AI, particularly the ethical implications of algorithmic bias. The instructor discussed how AI is increasingly being used in sectors such as criminal justice, financial services, and healthcare. He stressed the importance of transparency in these processes, emphasizing that the data used to train AI models, the creators of those models, and the accountability of those involved must be clearly understood. Ethical considerations surrounding privacy, security, and interpretability were also discussed, with the professor highlighting the need for responsible AI deployment to avoid unintended consequences.

Looking ahead, Professor De discussed the potential future of AI in education, particularly with the emergence of autonomous universities. He emphasized that educators must familiarize themselves with AI tools, as the next generation of students will need to be AI-literate. This knowledge will be essential for preparing students for a workforce where AI plays an increasingly prominent role.

Session 9: DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

Instructor: U Dinesh Kumar

This session highlighted the significance of data in decision making. As an attempt to demystify AI, machine learning and data science, the instructor walked the participants through the key aspects of handling large data. Using interesting examples like data on relationship status extracted from Facebook, he highlighted the correlation between an organization's analytic sophistication and its competitive performance. He also discussed a couple of case studies which exemplified calculated use of data in yielding better results in educational entrepreneurship and healthcare sectors.

To begin with, Prof. Kumar spoke about the common practice of forming committees and conducting thorough background studies before making decisions. In the corporate world, decisions are often influenced by the HIPPO algorithm, which stands for the highest paid person's opinion. However, there exists a strong correlation between an organization's level of analytics sophistication and its competitive performance, suggesting the value of moving away from such subjective models.

Further, he explained how large language models such as ChatGPT operate using billions of parameters, and telecom companies use over 10,000 features to derive insights about their customers. Moving into more technical territory, he discussed data description and challenges, model development strategies, and the use of AI in automation. He presented various data visualizations and demonstrated how AI could process and analyse them efficiently. He stressed that the ability to ask the right questions is vital when working with AI, especially with large language models.

He then discussed the concept of ChatGPT as an agent and how specific agents can be created for particular causes or tasks. Referring to a couple of self-authored teaching cases, the instructor exemplified calculated use of data in yielding better results in the educational, entrepreneurship, and healthcare sectors. By combining empirical evidence, theoretical insights, and interactive demonstrations, the lecture offered a comprehensive understanding of how AI and data-driven strategies can transform decision-making in a wide range of sectors.

Session 10: INNOVATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Instructor: Rishiksha T Krishnan

Drawing from his extensive experience at IIM Bangalore, the instructor provided a thorough understanding of the key structures and processes that support academic innovation and entrepreneurship within institutions. He also advocated that leaders must strive to foresee the upcoming crises in the funding ecosystem and plan well in advance for achieving excellence in research and innovation.

A significant part of the lecture was dedicated to fostering an entrepreneurial mindset within academic institutions—one that encourages and supports student startups, creates academic programs that address societal needs, and nurtures academic entrepreneurship.

The instructor referenced several notable personalities, including Dr. M K Bhan, Anil Gupta, Gagandeep Kang, Dr. Paulraj, and Prof. Bert Langer, discussing their contributions to various fields and how their work exemplifies the intersection of research, innovation, and entrepreneurship. He discussed how institutions can create an environment that fosters innovation and entrepreneurship, especially through partnerships with external stakeholders and the integration of entrepreneurial principles into research and academic programs.

The session then proceeded to an in-depth discussion on the organizational framework that underpins academic programmes. The instructor highlighted the importance of course committees in approving programs, which includes Deans and department heads. Mock meetings were emphasized as a valuable tool for understanding institutional processes. Furthermore, he touched upon the role of program offices in implementing routine checks, including biometric swipe card systems to monitor attendance and discipline, alongside surprise checks aimed at maintaining academic integrity.

The session concluded with an open forum where participants raised various questions regarding the institutional processes, monitoring mechanisms, and how to practically implement some of the entrepreneurial strategies discussed. This interaction provided the participants with a clearer understanding of how institutions like IIMB function and how they can build entrepreneurial structures within their own academic environments.

Pannel Discussion: LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTION BUILDING

Panellists

- **Anurag Kumar, former Director, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru**
- **M K Surappa, former Vice Chancellor, Anna University**
- **B Mahadevan, former Vice Chancellor, Chinmaya Vishwa Vidyapeeth**
- **Rishikesha T Krishnan, Director, IIM Bangalore**

Moderator: Sourav Mukherji, Professor, OB & HRM

The panel discussion explored critical aspects of building strong academic institutions, with a focus on leadership, faculty roles, stakeholder relationships, and performance metrics. The discussion also delved into the intersection of leadership and institutional performance, considering both the national context and the evolving needs of higher education institutions in India.

Prof. Anurag Kumar opened the discussion by highlighting the top universities globally, with a particular focus on institutions like Caltech and MIT. He emphasized that these institutions' core philosophy goes beyond rankings, centring on developing cutting-edge research programmes. Prof. Kumar also addressed the expected outputs of world-class universities, which include well-placed alumni, sought-after experts, impactful publications in science and technology, and contributions to industrial innovation and societal policy. He underscored the importance of cultivating a scientific atmosphere that encourages research excellence and innovation.

He further explored the inputs required to achieve such outputs, noting the need for top-tier faculty, exceptional students, and strong administrative and infrastructural support. He also discussed the critical role of academic research in influencing industrial performance and stressed the importance of the dynamic relationship between academia and industry, which should flow in both directions.

Prof. Surappa contributed to the discussion by drawing attention to the role of ancient texts in leadership education. He urged leaders to "walk the talk" and emphasized that institutional performance relies on excelling in each of its components. He further introduced the concept of Category Normalized Citation Impact (CMCI) as a way to evaluate the quality of academic output. Prof. Surappa's insights reinforced the notion that leadership within institutions must be visionary, value-driven, and focused on sustainable excellence.

Prof. Mahadevan discussed the complexities of establishing a university from scratch, comparing it to a "greenfield startup". He emphasized that the ultimate goal of education is to liberate individuals, urging institutions to focus on holistic development. He also discussed key leadership qualities, including a strong academic record, the ability to attract star faculty, creating credible governance structures, and being an approachable, people-oriented leader. Passion, innovation, and integrity were presented as essential traits for effective leadership in academic institutions.

Prof. Krishnan joined the discussion by sharing his experience as Director of IIM Indore. He reflected on how he turned the institution around during his tenure, emphasizing the importance of building on existing strengths. He notably doubled the faculty strength at IIM Indore over five years and fostered a culture of high expectations and motivation. In the words of Prof. Krishnan, leadership is not just about talent but about fostering an environment where faculty members are motivated to excel. He pushed for quicker hiring processes to ensure the institution attracted the best faculty and addressed financial resource procurement, particularly research funding, as a critical aspect of institutional growth.

The discussion continued with a focus on leadership in higher education institutions and the challenges of building institutions from the ground up. The panel also touched on the issue of brain drain, particularly from IITs and IIMs. While Prof. Krishnan acknowledged the concern, he noted that the brain drain from IIMs is relatively less pronounced, with most alumni staying in India and contributing to the nation's development. He emphasized the importance of closely evaluating students' skills, including communication and teamwork abilities, as these are critical for their success in the professional world.

The panel discussion concluded with a broad consensus on the need for visionary leadership in building and sustaining successful academic institutions. Leadership, it was agreed, must involve a balance of strategic foresight, effective governance, fostering talent, and cultivating an innovative academic environment. As higher education institutions in India face new challenges and opportunities, the insights shared during this discussion provided valuable guidance on how institutions can navigate these complexities and emerge as centres of excellence and innovation.

The programme also provided a platform for the academic leaders to discuss and present their institutional best practices, where they discussed their achievements and how they brought changes in their respective institutions. The participating VCs and Directors used the opportunity to discuss possibilities for further excellence.