STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMMES FOR PRODUCING PROFESSIONAL MANAGERS

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CONVENTION ON EDUCATION AND PROFESIONALISM
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At the out set, I completely agree with what the organising team has suggested the theme; CONVENTION ON EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONALISM. This startegic vision can be pursued through improvement of educational quality among the Muslim population (*Ummah*) of today's global village. Only if we read Noble Al-Quran and try to understand it, it might be enough for us for *akhirah*. But in today's world, we have to resort to education as a tool to earn our livelihood and respect in society. We should take care to avoid unnecessary rat race and envious pursuit to achieve merely worldly successes. If we would develop our thought and philosophy of life according to the teachings of Al-Quran and the Holy Prophet (SAW) along with modern education and inculcate Islamic values in the younger ones too *inshaAllah* we will not see many cases of suicides committed by students, as an emerging trend noticed elsewhere. The situation is not grim yet in Muslim world, but it has the potential of acquiring greater magnitude in future.

We, therefore, needed a complete re-evaluation of our educational system and in particular a careful scrutiny of institutional performance. I am very pleased to observe that these discussions have already started among the Muslim communities including among the community of Brunei Darus Salam. The end result of this introspection will most certainly be good. There is no doubt about it. However, these discussions will become a mere intellectual gymnastic unless we address the critical issues that are plaguing the plight of Muslims, ie; dearth of professionalism. I realized that our discussion may be missing some pertinent issues that must be examined systematically as follows.

INTRODUCTION

In the field of **education** we need good primary education as much as we need top quality higher education. We have to work hard and collectively to improve the condition of both. In fact we all are concerned about our educational status and want it to be better. Here I have tried to understand the issues and put them up with some suggestions from my side.

There are three categories in which we can divide our educational requirements:

(1) *Primary Education Institutions*: Primary education is a feeder of higher education programmes and therefore very significant for future of the societies. To impart primary education on mass scale mainly to those who cannot afford it and do not recognize its importance too. In this category a vast and comprehensive project is required with a network of primary schools covering all geographical areas. There is a need to reach up to the needy as needy are not able to come to us. Teaching of Holy Qur'an, Islamic studies and national/regional language should be compulsory, with some basic grounding in Mathematics, Science, Social Science, and English as a global language. Moreover, efforts should be made to equip the children with basic modern education in the field of occupation they are likely to take up after schooling. Some scientific knowledge of agriculture can be imparted to a child who may grow to be a farmer. Similarly if a child is certain to become an artisan/technician he/she can be trained in that field to make him/her a future **semi-professional**. It would make the student a more able person in future life and it will help in removing inhibitions about 'non-earning educated children' sometimes from the minds of labourer/very poor parents. There should not be any fees for students from such families but a nominal fee should be taken from students whose parents can afford to pay so as to maintain their interest in studies. The purpose of these schools should be to produce aware-minded individuals who would further educate their kith and kin. The widespread network of *Deeni Madaris* (purely religious schools) all over Muslim world can be very well used for this kind of education if it does not go against the spirit and sanctity of these institutions.

This kind of project needs lot of planning, resourcefulness and a dedicated team of trained volunteers to keep it going. It is not possible to undertake such mammoth tasks at one go. Gradualism is very much needed. We can move in phases starting from one district or region to

another. Once we prove ourselves at initial places and have learnt from our possible mistakes we would be ready to move forward. And thus take our mission forward to the next places. So on and so forth, we can gradually cover all the areas *inshaAllah*.

Also there must be an scheme to be initiated by some members of tracking the drop-outs due to economic reasons and bringing them back in the mainstream of education. It is a laudable effort. We need such initiatives in greater number.

This time the answer should not be "*Ana Ummi*" (I'm illiterate) when someone says "Iqra" (read) after all this has been an exemplary efforts of our beloved Prophet (SAW) to instill in us the importance of learning, knowledge and education collectively known as 'Ilm'. Education is not the panacea of our past problems; it builds an individual who has better chances of finding solutions to these problems. Education is meant to enlighten us and help us in adopting the right path.

(2) *Top Quality Higher Studies Institutes*: There is a dire need to have top quality higher education institutes in Muslim world to produce quality grads and bring home the much needed goodwill and confidence. If we want to compete with otherwise educated nations and beat them in the game we should have all the tricks of the game too. The ideas like that of having a state-of-the-art world-class institute of science in Muslim countries should be taken very seriously now. Being a more optimistic person or may be less experienced of the grinds of system than many of you over here, I support the idea of having **institutes (centre of excellence)** constituting all the professional courses run by **professional bodies** at our places. The existing medical, engineering, business management, legal studies, and other management courses like, teacher's training etc. should be clubbed together to form an autonomous bodies affiliated with established Institutes as strategic partner in education of the West. This would not only allow better operations but also improve quality of staff and students, thereby improving its recognition and ranking in the industry.

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The above would allow professional and technological changes for good even before the faculty gets impressed and inspired by the world-class institutes across the road and save us a little time. We should not stop at already existing institutions that can also be used for making top quality education accessible to younger ones. A few of them already taking good steps towards improvement and maintaining quality in education. It should be appreciated and learned by others' experiences.

A few of them are launched after the 1977 Muslim Educational Conference held in Mecca under the auspices of OIC (e.g. IIUM), can work in this direction to bring all such forms of educational bodies on a single platform to bring about a synergic effect.

(3) *The Existing Institutes*: We should not undermine the importance of the existing average educational bodies. These are the grind mills churning out lots of educated individuals tirelessly. They are the feeder institutes to most of the universities. A wide network of Islamic colleges and tertiary educational bodies offering certificates/diploma courses exists at urban areas and many small and big cities domiciled by sizeable Muslim population. There is a need to revive this network and bring it at par with its glorious past. The past, I mean, the record of quality civilisation yesteryears/centuries through Islamic education at these so called Islamia schools, were better than many English medium/convent schools of today. These colleges were equipped with science labs then, good education systems, students' boarding hostels, libraries and many more facilities, which are difficult to arrange today. Moreover, these colleges are still found in many Muslim cities and they are up to intermediate level which means the burden of senior secondary education is also borne by them. Today these banyan trees of education are wanting for funds and professional attention. They are still standing tall with the promise of providing quality education only if we take care for their betterment rather criticizing and neglecting them.

These colleges are generally meant for educating the male child. A parallel system for girls' education has to be made available to give full educational opportunity to the female population in *Ummah*.

As submitted earlier in this forum and as has been very recently, and eloquently, argued by many Muslim intellectuals, education though very vital is not the only bane of the community. The argument that you take care of education and the rest will follow has been belied time and again in empirical and analytical studies by academics and organizations like the UNDP etc. It needs to be very carefully considered by policy makers in South East Asian Nations (millions Malay populace) whether they can play a more enabling role in encouraging organizations and individuals to set in motion more direct initiatives for poverty alleviation and general socio-economic uplift. It is only possible through producing more and more **PROFESSIONALS**. It is said and seen by many that on an average one properly trained professional creates 200 jobs approximately. Thus more the professionals among Muslims today would mean more job opportunities for the masses.

On top of the above, the training (*tarbiyat*) for producing **PROFESSIONALS** is of almost the same significance as education (*ta'aleem*). Nonetheless, as proposed above, the professional bodies must have a legacy of giving professional training precedence over simple education. This spirit has to be carried out to other Muslim member countries to share the resources and avoid redundancy. Unless we do not pay attention to it we would have Muslim individuals with high degree of calibre but they would not be useful to the society because they will migrate to *Darul Harab*.

FAILED STRATEGIES FOR EDUCATION IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES

In the quest for development, primary education is absolutely essential because it creates the base. But higher education is just as important, for it provides the cutting edge. There is a widely held view that Muslim world did

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not place enough emphasis on primary education. This is correct in certain Muslim societies due to shortage economic means. The resources set aside for primary education was simply inadequate but not because the focus was on higher education and producing professionals. It was an error of omission, not commission. In any case, this is not an either-or choice. We need both.

In fact, half a century later after most Muslim nations became independent; it is clear as daylight that those leaders were right who laid down about the importance of universities. If the world thinks of Muslims as a global player today, it is because universities created educational opportunities and thus professionals of all kinds. We now reap the benefits of what was sown then. Even so, we must recognise need for improvement with our university system.

In doing so, it is necessary to make a distinction between two quarter centuries. In the first 25 years, we made two mistakes. The first mistake was the near absence of alternative modern educational opportunities at school levels, as more and more students drifted into conventional schooling system caught in the dilemma in later part of their life. The second mistake was to allow a proliferation of universities, nation-wide, even when there were not enough resources to ensure a critical mass as minimum in terms of enrollments, scale and standards. There was a misguided importance attached to numbers. The importance of quality was almost forgotten as every university, good or bad, was treated at par. The dilemma then, as now, was educating large numbers without diluting academic standards.

In the next 25 years, two things went wrong. The first was the mistaken belief that professionalism should be moved out of education system and be left to the individuals to learn while they are in working environment after leaving universities, as we attempted to create stand-alone institutions of higher learning pampered with resources. In the process, we forgot an essential principle that there can be no good professionals without proper training on a continuous basis and no good contribution to our economies and societies. For there are synergies between education and professional training that enriching each other? And it is the professional bodies that are the natural

home of professionals to provide a platform for academics and professionals to interact.

The second thing that went wrong was that, essentially, what happened to the Muslims' decadence worldwide happened to management of our universities in absence of qualified professionals. This was inevitable. Universities are not stand-alone islands. Nor are they immune from the law of averages. They simply mirror society. Our universities witnessed the same erosion of work ethic, the same dilution of values and eventually work ethics, the same chipping away at norms that was experienced by individuals and society. In some democratic and also in an ill-matured societies we presumed our universities as place of education instead, they became arenas of politics. As the political process slowly but surely intruded into the day-to-day life of universities, their governance became a political agenda of balancing act. As competing interests strove for control, a system for sharing spoils and extending patronage emerged. The casualty was the teaching-learning process and ignoring the importance of producing professionals to work in private sector and entrepreneurship development.

There is serious cause for concern as the gap between our universities and the best in the world outside has widened. Some symptoms are striking:

> First, curricula, which have remained almost unchanged for decades, have not kept pace with the times, let alone extend the frontiers of knowledge.

> Second, the milieu is not conducive to learning or creativity.

> Third, the boundaries between disciplines have become dividing walls that constitute barriers to entry, as also exit, while knowledge is developing at the intersection of disciplines today.

> Fourth, the academic calendar is no longer sacrosanct, for classes or for examinations, and there are slippages in schedules; so much so that, at places, results are declared with a time-lag of 12 months.

Fifth, as in most public institutions, there is almost no accountability, because there are no rewards for performance and no penalties for non-performance.

Lastly, the infrastructure is not simply inadequate; it is on verge of collapse. What is more, there is a serious resource crunch, which leaves universities with little financial flexibility

In general, about 75 per cent for operating expenditure is on salaries and pensions. Of the remaining 25 per cent, more than 15 per cent is absorbed by pre-emptive claims such as rents, electricity and examinations. The balance, less than 10 per cent, is not even enough for maintenance, let alone for development. But that is not all. In most universities, plan (investment) expenditure is less than 5 per cent of non-plan (maintenance) expenditure. Such a small proportion of investment in total expenditure can only mortgage the future.

We cannot turn a blind eye to this reality of the rule of exception. There are of course institutions of excellence in professional education in Muslim societies, which are a source of pride. But that is no compensation, for these islands of excellence do not add up to a continent of excellence. Such institutions are valuable complements but cannot be substitutes for universities which provide educational opportunities for people at large. The icing is important but it cannot replace the cake. Therefore, it is imperative that we introduce correctives in our university system.

In the wider context, however, there is reason for hope rather than despair. For one, the same university system turns out some students who excel wherever they go, whatever they do. Their success stories have become folklore. This is, perhaps, a tribute to the enormous reservoir of talent in our young people. For another, the same university system has helped develop educational capabilities and entrepreneurial talents which created the initial conditions so essential for the success of economic reforms.

We must, therefore, do everything we can to combat the inertia and cynicism that characterises our institutions and universities are no exception to this rule. To begin with, it is essential to believe that a better world is possible, but it is just as important to recognise that there are no magic wands, no messiahs. What it needed is good leadership and cohesive teamwork, combined with a determination on the part of university communities to work together for a common cause. There is, after all, something Islam enjoins that even Allah helps those who help themselves.

PROFESSIONALIZATION OF MANAGEMNT

Concurrent with the rise of our industrial society and the large-scale complex organization, has necessitated the development of professionalism as a means for delineation of role specialization. There is a close relationship between the issue of managerial ideology and roles and the concept of professionalism. The essential elements in an ideal profession are:

1. Professions have a systematic body of theory. Skill is achieved through a lengthy process of training. The skills that characterize a profession flow from and are supported by information which has been organized into an internally consistent system, called a body of knowledge. Preparation for professionalism be an intellectual as well as a practical experience must conform to this element.

2. The professional has an authority based upon superior knowledge, which is recognized by his clientele. This authority is highly specialized and is related only to the professional's sphere of competence.

3. There is a broad social sanction and approval of the exercise of this authority. A community sanctions the exercise of this authority within certain spheres by conferring upon professionals certain powers and privileges. Control over entry into the profession, licensing procedures, and the confidentiality of communication between the professional and the client are the examples of these.

4. There is a code of ethics regulating relations of professional persons with clients and with the colleagues. This to avoid behaviour such as the Hippocratic Oath of the medical profession. Thus self-discipline is utilized as a basis of social control.

5. There exists an element of organizational culture sustained by organizations. A professional is a member of many formal and informal groups. The interactions of social roles required by these groups generate a social configuration unique to the profession, a professional culture.

Is Management a Profession?

If we use the above ideals of professionalism, presently, it is difficult to classify modern management as a profession. Practically we see that people who have no formal professional training in management, sometimes, become a very successful manager. Thus the management as a profession has not developed these five elements to the extent of the traditional profession and groups like traditional medicines practitioners-doctors, administration of justice- judges. Nevertheless, if we view the concept of professionalism in a continuum, it is apparent that the trend over the past several decades has been toward greater compliance with these elements of professionalism. There is a growing body of systematic knowledge concerning the management and administration of complex organisations; the authority role of the manager has been legitimated in our culture; this role has the sanction of the community; there is a growing number of professional management associations, particularly in the various specialized aspects of business; and finally, there is a nucleus of the development of self-control, due to deliberate attempt made by management schools all over.

I trust these submissions will not be construed as impeding attempts to "up-lift" the presence of management communities-these are attempts to canalize well meant energies. Today about 1/5th of global market and vast resources of Muslim countries worldwide needs Muslim managers for more optimal utilization of God gifted resources.

In the above context, I have decided to examine the above missing issues in Muslim world and I would like to share with you, with learned participants in today's convention, that these issues must be tackled quickly for Muslims to

prosper. I shall hope that an analysis of following issues will result in some useful endeavors.

I intend to suggest that to accomplish the stated objective of producing professional Muslim managers an analysis must be carried out in following series. It must proceed in the following sequence:

1) Positive documentation of plight of Muslim managers.
2) Educational status of these Muslim managers.
3) Work participation by Muslims.
4) Health status of the Muslim workforce.
5) Women's educational background and work participations.
6) Role and contribution of overseas management institutions:
7) Establishment of BDIM(Brunei Darussalam Institute of Management)
8) Training and continuous improvement at different levels in the future

The preceding issues are highly interlinked and one will be incomplete without the other.

STRATEGIES FOR PRODUCING MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

There is a need to develop management profession in the country to be used as catalyst for future development of the country. To do so we need a vehicle for implementation and establishment of BDIM is proposal of the paper to serve the following functions.

1. **Ensuring Effective Leadership:**

I believe that future generation will do much to enhance management reputation, and the reputation of proposed BDIM (Brunei Darussalam Institute of Management). We understand the pivotal role that management plays in driving the economy and is active in numerous ventures internationally. The able leadership of His Majesty will be a key figure in progressing both Fellowship and Membership of BDIM, raising professional standards and putting its members on the boardroom for the future development agenda. Here, members will work to implement a stakeholder focused approach, to introducing, after consultation, vision, values and behaviors across the

institute and embedding it as part of a strategy that reflected members' wishes.

2. Raising Standards in the Management Profession

Our Fellowship community is vital to helping BDIM to raise standards in the management profession. They must launch the BDIM Professional Management Standards Improvement and continue to work closely with the Management Standard Setting Body (MSSB) to develop the government as well as privately sponsored by industry-wide occupational standards for management development. MSSB is ensuring that senior managers can employ qualified and skilled managers in the profession. This will help BDIM to progress with its plans to develop a 'license to practice'. BDIM Fellows are vital to shaping this exciting future development.

3. Improving member benefits

Following feedback from the above survey, BDIM has to significantly improve the benefits available for all members. I would encourage to do as follows:

- Take a look at developing the **Professional Knowledge Hub.** This must be the institute's website and leading source of managing intelligence aiding research for reports and papers through the thousands of business journals and company reports.
- Shape members' quarterly managing agenda by contributing their knowledge and experience on essential managing issues at website.
- Conducting courses on regular basis to create its clout in the industry. It may also work as a place of professional networking and;
- Oblige the local corporate sector to encourage their professional categories of employees to join BDIM and reimburse their subscription fee.

4. Defining the direction of BDIM

BDIM must be focusing its efforts on improving member benefits and promoting the value of BDIM membership and qualification in the workplace. Toward this direction its international linkages, e.g. Asian Management Association and World Management Organisation, etc will be utmost important.

PROGRAMMES AND ACTION PLAN

A working committee must be set up to come up with an action plan. The committee must take into account parameters like faculty strength with percentage of qualified people possibly with doctorates, research papers published; courses conducted, consultancy work experience with industry as strength and physical infrastructure, et cetera, and arrived at the following list in the order of merit:

Political Will

This will play a major factor in arriving at a final decision. Since His Majesty's patronage is utmost important and therefore for political support and existence of BDIM at the capital city, it has to make a careful move before declaring professional status for any of the institutions.

Location

Geographical location is also an important factor in the decision for easy access. Establishing branch in K.B. area may be looked at afterwards since the city hosts many professionals in K.B. and nearby areas.

Quality

This is also an important factor that will decide the fate of the institute. All the parameters of a proposed institute shall be compared with the standards achieved by existing management institute elsewhere in the world. Some of these institutes are known for excellence in the following criteria: faculty, students, research, academic excellence, funding, etc.

Faculty

One of the problems likely to be faced during faculty recruitment is the availability of suitable candidates for teaching/ training jobs, since the country produces only small number of professional aspirants and majority of them opt for lucrative industrial positions.

There may be an option. That is a small talented pool of 'foreign-qualified' doctorates available, but they tend to settle in a metropolis or with reputed institutes in foreign land. Furthermore they are not for long term solution since they may opt to go elsewhere for better perks in future. An increase in the number of faculty members will free some of the teachers/trainers to work on other important assignments, such as developing curricula, attend seminars/conferences, carry out research, etc.

Students

Any management institutes are also known for the quality of students admitted through

Competitive and merit basis. BDIM may conduct its own qualifying entrance exams.

However, experts may ask how this matter of institute can be settled. Moreover, students entering through national level exams are more adaptable compared to other cultures, low risk-taking and thus more successful in their careers.

Research

One significant parameter for the progress of professional institute is the research output by the faculty, measured in terms of numbers of research papers published in national/international management journals, awards received, etc.

The number of patents filed by institute for consultancy work is not much less compared to research-oriented world-class university.

Funding

One of the biggest stumbling blocks for this institute is lack of adequate funding. Most of the companies set aside training budget and the institute may like receive a portion of it for them to outsource these companies' training needs per year. Also, a major portion of this amount must be spent on staff salaries, maintaining infrastructure, etc, leaving very little amount for upgrading research facilities or hiring of new staff.

Therefore there exists a need for angel donors for many other kinds of financial problems. His Royal Highness should be the last resort for it. With the additional money available, the BDIM will be able to recruit additional staff, add more buildings, hostels, computer labs, etc.

Get it Started

At the end of it the author is willing to extend possible help and facilitate the committee to come up with details of types of membership and proposal for drafting a working paper and institute's constitution to manage BDIM.

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