

E-education Without

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Higher Education institutions must do things differently in being more responsive to industry and commercial enterprise education and training needs.



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For sheer innovation in ideas in a wide range of disciplines varying from business to pleasure, Pakistan has a lot to learn from the UAE, this country is certainly the "new frontier". One can never cease to be surprised by news in the Emirates every other day. Strategic planners in education should look at the model of the recent international 3-day student conference "e-education Without Borders 2003" (EWB 2003) in Abu Dhabi organized by the Higher Colleges of Education (HCT) in Abu Dhabi. The brainchild of HE Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan, the UAE Minister for Higher Education, this extraordinary idea was crafted into shape by the brilliant Vice-Chancellor of HCT, Dr Tayyab Kamali. Being personally closely associated with Shaikh Nahayan for over five years in a professional capacity in a financial entity, one now takes it to be the norm that this outstanding leader always combines his experience and knowledge with an inherent instinct to achieve what others would consider amazing. With a profound vision for the future, His Highness gave the ebullient Dr Kamali the necessary space and freedom to design EWB 2003 not only to be a portal for global initiatives in implementation of technology in education and lifelong learning to be explored but also a platform for discussions and creation of focus group for dialogue that would create a unique education environment in the global community.

HCT has also launched an "e-education Without Borders World Forum" to create "knowledge clusters" of world leaders in the education community. The Conference was an instant success, leaders from different domains debated broader strategic issues and trends at the crossroads of education, science and technology, arts and humanities to sharpen intellectual skills and secure the dissemination of knowledge. The Forum's primary purpose is to build an enduring network of education and business leaders who have a common interest in (1) continuing and expanding the success of the "e-education Without Borders" student conference and (2) providing leadership for international entrepreneurial education and experience. The defined objectives are, viz (1) international networks of business and educational leaders (2) website and non-line journal publishing select papers (3) worldwide mobility of knowledge (4) international scholarship programme and (5) creation of new type of international "school" without borders, for building international business entrepreneurs, not owned or funded by any one institution or country. In addition a 'Knowledge Clusters' panel has been set up to explore key themes, contextually dependent on the other, viz (1) encouraging the worldwide connection of students and faculty (2) connecting international e-education research and (3) facilitating e-education communication connections across borders.

About 650 students attended the student confer-

ence, 350 coming from 63 countries other than the UAE. Pakistan had a large contingent of 28 students, many of whom won prizes for their presentations. It was sad that the senior delegates invited from Pakistan, Ms Zubaida Jalal, Pakistan's Education Minister and Dr Atta ur Rahman, could not make it because official permission could not be accorded in time. They missed the opportunity of experiencing a unique educational and entrepreneurial-mix model in action. However renowned educationists and IT experts from Pakistan like Salman Ansari, Dr Junaid Zaidi, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad, etc benefitted as invitees from Pakistan. Dr Tayeb Kamali states that "the biggest problem with most corporations today is that they are governed by mediocre ideas". He goes on to state that "meeting the challenge of diffusion effectively depends on developing organizational cultures that continually encourage people to cross "walls and stovepipes" (functional boundaries), not just to tell each other the news, but to inquire and come to greater levels of mutual understanding". He stated that the keys to success in building a technology-literate organization were targetted to (1) engage faculty early (2) develop a cooperative network through technology-enhanced learning, and (3) capitalize on early successes to advance institutional goals.

Higher Education (HE) institutions must do things differently in being more responsive to industry and commercial enterprise education and training needs, their workforces having knowledge and skills that transcend national and international borders. What do experts in education and enterprise have to say on e-learning and the nexus with technology and entrepreneurship? Dr Paul Elsnor equates the American vision for e-learning with "advances in technology and the fact that the web is always on the move; learning could become an everyday part of our lives. Technology is shifting control of learning from the institution to the individual". In discussing the 'knowledge economy' Alison Wolf, said that, "politicians' faith in education is fuelled by a set of clichés about the nature of the twenty-first-century world; globalize, competitive, experiencing ever faster rates of technical change. It seems, education is to be a precondition of economic success, and indeed survival". David Blunkett, the then UK Secretary of