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Transcendental Value Creation: Not business as usual

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The hard truth about healthcare in the Middle East and North Africa

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UAEU College of Business and Economics: Pioneers in graduate education

Geralyn McClure Franklin, Ph.D., the Dean of the College of Business and Economics at the United Arab Emirates University, says that, as the country's foremost university, UAEU is leading the way in pushing the boundaries of business and management education forward.

UAEU has offered undergraduate business programs since 1977 and graduate programs from 2001. Today, the College of Business and Economics (CBE) has a vision supported by a tradition of top quality teaching, a strong research base, and a community outreach approach. These academic programs are designed to meet the needs of the UAE. Dean Franklin has managed business programs at four different American institutions for more than a decade prior to coming to the UAE. Her wealth of experience has guided her approach to the CBE at UAEU. Her approach can be summed up in the following way: "One criticism of higher education is that it is not always practical. However, I believe that a business school should effectively operate as a business. That's what I've tried to do in my career so far and what I've tried to do here by focusing on the business college as being an entrepreneurial venture within a larger organization."

Geralyn McClure Franklin, Ph.D., the Dean of the College of Business and Economics at the United Arab Emirates University.

The value of a degree

The CBE in Al Ain offers bachelor's degrees in accounting, economics, finance and banking, management information systems, and also statistics. The main campus also offers a business administration degree where students can major in entrepreneurship, human resource management and development, as well as marketing and supply chain management. All of these programs are fully accredited. As Dean Franklin has explained, "We have accreditation from AACSB International, the premier global accreditation body for business programs. The CBE was the first business college in the GCC and MENA Region to be accredited by AACSB. Today, the CBE has the distinction of being the only business college in the region accredited in both business and accounting. We know that employers often question the value of a degree. Accreditation from AACSB means that a business degree from UAEU is internationally recognized and meets rigorous international standards."

AACSB International – The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) – was founded in 1916 and currently accredits 746 of the world's best business colleges (only 182 colleges hold accreditation in accounting). This is less than 5 percent of over 15,000 business programs around the world globally that AACSB recognizes.

Moving business education forward

According to Dean Franklin, "As the national university, we serve the needs of the country. We are leaders in moving business and management education forward. Our graduate programs are excellent examples of this and include several regional 'firsts'." The CBE launched the UAE's first MBA program in 2001 and has seen more than 375 MBA graduates to date. The first MBA program in Manufacturing Excellence was launched in partnership with Tawazun Holding in 2012, while the first English-language MPA program in the GCC and MENA Region began in 2013. The CBE also opened the first DBA program, by an AACSB accredited institution, in 2011.

Graduates from the MBA or MPA programs set themselves apart from their colleagues in the workplace. According to Dean Franklin the background of graduate program applicants varies enormously: "There is a concentration of graduates with a bachelor's degrees in business as well as those without a business degree (e.g. engineers) who want to progress into managerial or higher-level management positions that benefit from gaining an MBA. The MPA is usually for individuals who already have a bachelor's degree in accounting and understand that professional accountants, with graduate training, can ensure institutional success in today's globally competitive and constantly evolving business environment. Those who have non-accounting backgrounds can also enroll but must take on additional coursework."

Business leaders are made, not born

It is not only the employee, but the organization as a whole, that benefits from their up-and-coming managers doing the MBA at UAEU. Dean Franklin believes that, "Business leaders are made, not born! An MBA from UAEU allows organizations to get the best management and business education for their employees. Every

organization needs leaders. Employers have the opportunity to train employees for the overall benefit of the organization. They will also be networking with others and sharing best practices. We find that the more broad-based the employees' education the more flexible and adaptable they become. Additionally, from an investment point of view the MBA is more cost effective than taking several stand-alone professional courses."

There is also a Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) designed for senior-level executives and research-oriented professionals. The DBA is the highest professional qualification available in business today. According to Dean Franklin, "The goal of the program is to expand students' knowledge of management and equip them with broad research skills in order to address complex issues in today's highly competitive, global marketplace."

The DBA is a four-year, blended, part-time program taught in English. Stage 1 of the program has two years of coursework. Stage 2 involves two years of work on a dissertation. Dean Franklin added that, "The focus of a DBA dissertation is more practical than a research-oriented Ph.D dissertation and therefore has practical implications for the workplace, ensuring a worthwhile return on the employer's initial investment."

Tomorrow's leaders

As part of the UAE's national university the CBE strives to maintain standards of excellence despite a constantly evolving business landscape. This is achieved by collaborating with government and industry to ensure that degree programs meet their needs. The MBA in Manufacturing Excellence was specifically designed, in collaboration with Tawazun Holding, to meet the needs of the UAE's manufacturing sector. Dean Franklin added that, "We are now in talks with other organizations to determine if a customized MBA is required. We have to keep thinking beyond the present and what we've accomplished thus far. We are looking to offer new specialties in our MBA program. We also want to expand our Master's offerings from the MBA and MPA degrees to a more specialized MS degree in areas of high demand. We want to add majors such as 'sustainability' and 'human resource development' that meet the needs of the country. We ask ourselves, 'what type of training and education people will need in the future?' Needs analyses are currently under way in these areas to identify what is required." Regardless of what the future of business holds, graduates from the CBE will be well qualified to be the leaders of tomorrow. ●

"As the national university, we serve the needs of the country. We are leaders in moving business and management education forward. Our graduate programs are excellent examples of this and include several regional 'firsts'."

Do you want to know the real truth about healthcare that no one dares to talk about?

The hard truth about healthcare in the Middle East and North Africa

Raouf Khalil, Founder and CEO of Mobile Doctors 24-7 (MD 24-7) said the core problem with healthcare in third world countries is the total misalignment between patients, payers, and providers.

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. This witticism that is attributed to Albert Einstein comes to mind when considering the problems facing healthcare in some parts of the MENA region.

"Every year, the insurance carriers meet with their enterprise clients to inform them that their premiums have to increase because the medical loss ratio is too high. Renewal will include higher premiums and/or a reduction in benefits to the employees. This pattern is not sustainable," says Raouf Khalil, Founder and CEO of Mobile Doctors 24-7 (MD-24-7). As of December of 2015, Goldman Sachs investment bank was standing by its prediction of $20 a barrel bottom[1]. According to Mr. Khalil, this new economic environment demands change to the cycle of wasted healthcare spending.

Insurance carriers are not only forced to increase premiums, but also take legal action against certain hospitals. According to a local publication, insurance firms in KSA are suing providers for ordering unnecessary, expensive laboratory tests and treatments for minor illnesses[2]. In some areas of the MENA region, insurance companies and their clients are facing massive inefficiencies. Last year, Haidar Al Yousuf, the Director of Health Funding at the Dubai Health Authority, revealed that $40 billion of many third-world countries' spending on health, due to inefficiency, is not properly utilized: "A lot of doctors prescribe a lot of medication – they order a lot of tests, but there is no matching of what is actually needed by the patient and what is being done,"[3] he said.

Increasing spending increases utilization

In certain sections of the Arab world, the trend is to increase spending as Al Masah Capital forecasts that the private-sector healthcare market will be worth $61bn in 2020[4]. Raouf Khalil believes that spending more is not the solution: "Investment in healthcare is the current trend, but when you build more hospitals and clinics, it's going to increase utilization. There are going to be less patients walking into each facility, which means that the administrators have to give patients the 'full' treatment." Dr. Ziad Alobeidi, Mobile Doctors CMO and Co-founder, explains that providing incentives for overutilization creates an ethical dilemma for medical professionals: "The practice of medicine is a privilege which carries important responsibilities. All doctors swear by the Hippocratic Oath, which is a moral code of conduct for doctors that describes the basic ethics of medical practice: to help sick people and to avoid harm." Dr. Alobeidi added that The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines, prefaces its guidance to the effect that treatment and care should take into account patients' individual needs and preferences. Patients should be provided with the *best possible care*.

Ethics, economics, and public health

In the interview with CEO Report, Raouf Khalil explained the core problem is the total misalignment between patients, payers, and providers. Most doctors' employment agreements with clinics and hospitals include fee for referral, which creates further incentive for overutilization. Patients usually receive what they can afford, not what they need: "Everybody suffers. The main stakeholders are the consumer and the payers, and ironically, these two want the same thing – they both want to avoid unnecessary spending: receiving MRI exams or prescribing antibiotics solely for profit. The healthcare providers are often the issue," he said.

> **"At Mobile Doctors, we bring the trust back to the doctor-patient relationship by following current NICE international guidelines and adopting a patient-centred approach. Our doctors are not incentivised to overprescribe or over-investigate and will only tell patients the truth about what they need."**

Beyond ethics and economics, this is also a significant public health issue: according to a recent WHO report, antibiotics are losing their effectiveness due to unnecessary prescriptions[5].

Evidence-based medicine is the only *prescription*

Khalil insists that the solution to healthcare is not a healthcare solution but a change to consumer behaviour by providing them what they want – 24/7 access to an integrated delivery system because this is the only way to ensure a proper balance between quality and cost. Dr. Alobeidi affirmed, "At Mobile Doctors, we bring the trust back to the doctor-patient relationship by following current NICE international guidelines

Dr Ziad Alobeidi, MBChB, MRCGP, DFFP, FBACD, Co-founder & Chief Medical Officer of Mobile Doctors 24-7.

and adopting a patient-centred approach. Our doctors are not incentivised to over-prescribe or over-investigate and will only tell patients the truth about what they need." The statistics agree that the majority of routine doctor visits can be handled over the phone. Reports show that only 10% of 999 calls in the GCC are for true emergencies[6]. In these instances, doctors can diagnose, prescribe treatment and even medication (when necessary) right over the phone or via video consultation without the need for an office visit. For Raouf Khalil, the situation is simple, "If you are a consumer (or their employer), do you want to go to a doctor who is receiving commission or a doctor who strictly practices evidence-based medicine? It is this dilemma that needs to be addressed in the future in order for healthcare to accommodate the big picture of the world economy." It certainly does not require Einstein's intellect to see that utilizing healthcare spending efficiently is the definition of *sanity*. ●

[1]Tan, Huileng. "Goldman Sachs expects oil prices to fall further as OPEC stands pat." CNBC, December 18, 2015. http://www.cnbc.com/2015/12/17/goldman-sachs-expects-oil-prices-to-fall-further-as-opec-stands-pat.html.
[2]"Insurance firms to sue corrupt hospitals." Arab News, October 8, 2015. http://www.arabnews.com/saudi-arabia/news/817231.
[3]Flanagan, Ben. "Up to $40 Billion of Arab world's spending on health care wasted." The National, February 28, 2015. http://www.thenational.ae/business/economy/up-to-40-billion-of-arab-worlds-spending-on-health-care-wasted.
[4]Ibid.
[5]Saberi, Mahmood. "Antibiotics abuse in UAE a serious health hazard." Gulf News, November, 17 2013. http://gulfnews.com/news/uae/health/antibiotics-abuse-in-uae-a-serious-health-hazard-1.1256015.
[6]"Emir, Yemen leader hold phone talk." Gulf Times, October 18, 2014. http://www.gulf-times.com/story/412796/Emir-Yemen-leader-hold-phone-talk.

*Blossom*ing by investing in people

Zahra Hamirani, founder and director of The Blossom Nursery, said UAE's largest nursery group are positioned to be leaders in this growing industry and sector.

Blossom Nursery and Education group is far from the conventional corporate and this has yielded positive results. While they track profit, they have two other indicators that are derived from Triple PPP (People, Planet, Prosperity). This places particular emphasis on green awareness: "If you want to be a sustainable company, you need to really focus on the longer term." said Zahra Hamirani. Blossom has several external links: a CSR report, the GRI index, membership in the UN Global Compact, the Emirates Environmental Group, and the Dubai Chamber on green awareness. "But it's not about corporate strategy. This is really about allowing the team and children to find things that galvanize interest and build curiosity: one of our teachers did a wonderful lecture on green makeup using olive oil and cinnamon as a lipcolour. What can we learn from this? That there is intended purpose but also much else that can be done if we think outside the box. We all have something to offer and this allows for us flourish together." said Hamirani.

> **"Our motto is Believe. Achieve. Become. And we live by this daily."**

Flourishing by being inclusive – the rise of women in the workplace is creating a shift in business culture. The Blossom Nursery is a highly successful company that is managed by women and this is not a coincidence. Many of the staff members are mothers first. "I strongly believe in the premise that 'you cannot be what you cannot see' and have actively hired women in all roles in our company. We enable an environment that nourishes women through flexible contracts, shifts, and leave allowances." This leads to a higher quality in staff and expertise that you would not normally afford as well as a culture that understands the balance of home and work.

Balancing structure with curiosity

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework applies formal methods at an early age. The Blossom Nursery tries to balance the practical need to assess progress with the subtleties of child development. "We felt it was important to have a transparent, internationally accredited system that is Blossom's framework. We do baseline assessments, report cards, and plan according to the EYFS, but we also found it has limitations. It is formal and standards-based, and that's often not the best method for learning. So the EYFS is tempered with our program called Skygarden." explained Hamirani. There is a sensory program to ensure that children have a number of sensory experiences, and allows for different parts of their brain to work, which is the underpinning tenant of this breadth (EYFS) and depth (Skygarden) of learning.

Expanding and making wishes come true

The Blossom Nursery is already the largest nursery group in the UAE with five centers and two more in the next quarter planned. There is also the teacher training facility called Bee Academy, a UK Cache training program that allows people to get affordable qualifications and guaranteed paid placement hours or a job thereafter. But expect more from Blossom in the future: "The Blossom growth plan is ambitious because we see great potential in the industry and sector and feel passionately that we are positioned to be leaders in this. In addition, we are expanding our food business, which caters to working families, and looking to expand horizontally to a school for children who learn through multiple intelligence right up until Year 6." There is also the Make Our Dreams Come True campaign to teach children that attaining dreams requires a process. "Our motto is Believe. Achieve. Become. and we live by this daily. The campaign scales back: 'I can be the fastest person in the world' to something that is achievable and workable in small successes thereby finding the pathway to make these dreams a reality.

Zahra Hamirani, founder and director of The Blossom Nursery.

Timberwolf: Leading the pack

Wolfgang Douglas, CEO and Operations Director of Timberwolf LLC, said "It's not that we stay ahead of the competition. There are no companies in my field like us."

Wolfgang Douglas, CEO and Operations Director of Timberwolf LLC.

Any individual who has taken a stroll around popular, tourist areas in Dubai (and the Gulf States) has witnessed the brilliant, custom work of Timberwolf. This 4th generation internal wood-flooring and external decking specialist locally manufactures in Dubai as well as internationally trades with custom-designed, flooring products. They have worked on countless one-of-a-kind, landmark projects: Burj Khalifa, Atlantis Hotel, Emirates Terminal 3 Dubai Airport, DIFC and Meydan Hotel & Racecourse as well as many of the most internationally recognized branded retail stores such as Juicy Couture, Timberland, Sun & Sands Sports - Nike stores, Galleries Lafayette, Marina Homes, Mudo City and Bloomingdales.

Diverse, bespoke, custom

Wolfgang Douglas, of the Douglas family that started the UK-based establishment in 1927, brought both manufacturing and distribution facilities to the UAE in 2007 under the locally branded Timberwolf LLC. The rapidly-growing construction industry does not concern Mr. Douglas: "It's not that we stay ahead of the competition. There are no other companies in my field like us. This is because I custom manufacture. I don't offer products. I ask a question: 'what do you want?' They tell us what they are looking for, and we produce it. When a client comes to me, within the realm of timber, it is for the projects that other companies cannot do. Timberwolf has taken on projects of such scale that have never been done before worldwide. It is pioneer work." He said.

This company's dominance of the custom-tailored timber market, according to Wolfgang Douglas, is the result of diversified, specialist services. Douglas asserted, "Timberwolf is ahead because we are diverse. We have evolved into a timber specialist that has a presence and is active everywhere in the Gulf States. However, there is no doubt that the pearl of the Gulf is Dubai. It is 30 years ahead. A company like this would not exist in the UK either because, just like Dubai, Timberwolf is unique. We've streamlined our business to suit this market, so if I was to describe this company with three simple words, it would be diverse, bespoke, and custom."

Internal growth through internal investment

This customized business model has led to eight, solid years of growth with no instances of horizontal price movement (i.e. sideways trading). "We are constantly growing, but growth isn't just in external numbers because that is not organic and it is not healthy. Growth is being able to offer specialist services that were never available before." But to Mr. Douglas, it is an investment in human resources to acquire global talents that is essential to success: "We employ people from all over the world: United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Poland, Argentina, Slovakia, Portugal, Ukraine, Brazil, Spain and many more. When a client meets with Timberwolf, they're meeting an international group of seasoned experts: Architects from Argentina because they have been the best timber specialists in their field. I pay top dollar because I am working on the best jobs." The future of Timberwolf is easy for Wolfgang Douglas to predict. "Last year, Timberwolf made record-breaking business. In 2016, with the specialist-landmark projects that we are undertaking around the region, we expect the turnover to be 250 million dirhams. This steady growth is because we are streamlined, compact, and recession proof." Wolfgang Douglas and his wolves are here to stay and will continue to provide custom-tailored timber for the most luxurious projects in the Gulf. •