

EMERGENCE OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND GNH BASED PROFESSIONAL LIFE IN BHUTAN

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ABSTRACT

The development of professionalism in multiple disciplines like Engineering, Medical, Management, Accounting and others, need a holistic perspective to thrive through professional associations and bodies. These associations exist throughout the world. Irrespective of their fields, they support and nurture human potential in their respective profession and add value to the human capital. Professional associations are rendering multiple services in tune with advocacy, public relations, present and upcoming opportunities, library facilities, professional information sharing and professional development. As a country, Bhutan is a pioneer in developing the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH). With this philosophy, the initiation and emergence of professional associations can drive human potential towards leadership in their areas of expertise. This will help to deliver results much faster, and with higher success towards the fundamental goals of GNH like Sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, Conservation of environment, Preservation and promotion of culture and Promotion of good governance. This paper focuses on the emergence of Professional Associations in Bhutan to meet the goals of GNH based professional life.

Introduction:

Professionalization has been a much-debated and discussed topic than any other topic in the world but one must understand the meaning and role of professionals and professional associations in depth. In 1768, the Chamber of Commerce of New York,

United States, was formed by 20 merchants, and it still exists. The Royal Society of London was established in 1662 under royal charter. As The Economist states, “labor and the journey of labor is now termed as human capital, via passing the number of phases of labor to men, men to staff, staff to personnel,

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personnel to human resource and finally, we call it human capital”, and gradually it has become more specialized and new occupations have emerged; it has resulted in the creation of some of these professional associations and professional bodies.

The business dictionary states “Organized professions like Management, Accounting Engineering, Law, Medicine, etc. certify successful completion of its requirements and awards a license usually prescribe a mandatory code of conduct for their members.” Relations with stakeholders must be established with the help of professional associations to understand, to debate, and to have a dialogue so as to find a legitimate solution for varied issues.

Meline C. Batten, CAE states, when individuals come together to discuss mutual concerns, no matter what the common element is, the nucleus of an association is formed. Professional Association Research Network supports this work. Professional bodies are defined as those organizations involved in the advancement of the knowledge and practice of professions through developing, supporting, regulating, promoting professional standards and ethics.

Harvey (2004) states Professional Associations have been variously defined based on their role: "A group of people in a learned occupation who are entrusted with maintaining control or oversight of the legitimate practice of the occupation”.

According to Harvey, L. Mason, S. Ward, R. (1995), "To safeguard the public interest," organizations which "represent the interest of the professional practitioners," so "act to maintain their own privileged and powerful position as a controlling body”.

According to Barry, T. and L. Garcia-Febo (2012), Globalization has reduced the focus on national boundaries and encourages members to join associations beyond their borders.

Broady-Preston (2010) states “the need for global standards including terminology and qualifications in professions”.

Professional leadership as the major agent can contribute to economic growth and social uplift in years to come through optimization of potentials of professional workforces. The professions must consolidate and unify as

well as educate, support and lead their members and create leadership. Hence, professional associations are to redefine themselves in terms of how they support and lead the profession from front. In 1979, 4th king of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, said "We do not believe in Gross National Product, Gross National Happiness is more important and the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) was first stated in the Constitution of Bhutan enacted on 18 July 2008. So successfully leveraging the potential of Bhutanese professionals through leadership, GNH based professional life development and consolidation will potentially forge a redefined role for professionals, and influence the development of strong and clearly identified goals through professional associations in Bhutan.

Don Dillon (2010) summarizes some of the functions of Professional Associations' as given below:

Functions of Professional Associations:

1. Advocacy. Professional interests must be protected and promoted with the help of some organized body allied to management, engineering, health professionals, accounting or any other profession to encounter and support us in our day-to-day practice. Apart from it, such organizations can work as a think-tank to the government to help it in framing policies, improvement or delivery pertaining to the specific profession.
2. Expansion of opportunities. An association can open new doors for opportunities in the field of research and professional improvement by conducting seminars, symposium, conferences or brainstorming sessions to update knowledge.
3. Information. Associate members can receive accurate and prompt information about the issues leading to better decisions that positively affect the practice of the profession.
4. Professional development. It helps in high-caliber, international experts to be brought to the domestic association for knowledge cum expertise sharing.
5. Public relations. Associations can maintain sound relations with all the stakeholders and stakeholders' issues can be addressed efficiently and

effectively.

Benefits of Professional Associations

Normally an association offers membership to the professionals for the below-given reasons:

Advice and Information:

Many associations have online as well as offline materials offered to members like professional news, reports, government policy updates, career information, jobs, and details of events. Some, like the Chartered Management Institute, offers a comprehensive online research facility to its members.

Career Development:

Continuous professional development is essential for successful career growth through development programs, training courses and assessments along with professional credibility.

Magazines:

Associations come up with excellent monthly or quarterly magazines that share professional knowledge through an annual subscription. Alongside, industry news and

articles, the magazines often have a vacancies section – ideal for finding jobs relating to your particular sector.

Membership charges:

Professional bodies charge for assessment and accreditation, and there is an annual subscription fee.

Networking Opportunities:

Professional development events can be useful for making new contacts and learning more about what's happening in the specialized area. National expos and conferences also offer excellent networking and research opportunities for a seasoned professional and even new entrant.

Professional Recognition:

Proper assessment process for membership of an association demonstrates that you have the requisite experience, qualifications and skills. Membership shows that you have reached a certain level of expertise in your profession, and adds to your credibility. So it is vital for a professional to have professional recognition in Bhutan.

The GNH survey report, 2015 depicts the plight of GNH Index, Headcounts and

Fig -1 Categories of GNH Index, Headcounts and sufficiency

	GNH-2010			GNH-2015	
	Definition of group- Sufficiency in:	Percentage of population who are:	Average sufficiency of each person across domains	Percentage of population who are:	Average sufficiency of each person across domains
Deeply Happy	77%-100%	8.3%	81.5%	8.4%	80.9%
Extensively Happy	66%-76%	32.6%	70.7%	35.0%	70.8%
Narrowly Happy	50%-65%	48.7%	59.1%	47.9%	59.1%
Unhappy	0-49%	10.4%	44.7%	8.8%	45.2%

Source- GNH report 2015

Fig -2- Satisfaction with different aspects of Life

Satisfaction with different aspects of life					c ²	P-value	df
	Dissatisfied/ Very Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Very satisfied/ Satisfied	Total			
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)			
Satisfaction with health					8.19	< .05	2
2010	10.14 (724)	11.45 (817)	78.41 (5597)	100 (7138)			
2015	9.12 (652)	10.55 (754)	80.34 (5744)	100 (7150)			
Satisfaction with standard of living					15.42	< .001	2
2010	4.47 (318)	12.53 (891)	83.00 (5903)	100 (7112)			
2015	4.50 (322)	10.44 (746)	85.06 (6081)	100 (7149)			
Satisfaction with major occupation					6.70	< .05	2
2010	4.46 (318)	9.59 (684)	85.95 (6128)	100 (7130)			
2015	4.97 (355)	10.63 (758)	84.39 (6025)	100 (7138)			
Satisfaction with relationship with immediate family members					10.30	< .01	2
2010	1.22 (87)	2.25 (160)	96.53 (6878)	100 (7125)			
2015	1.12 (80)	3.10 (221)	95.77 (6821)	100 (7122)			
Satisfaction with work-life balance					33.80	< .001	2
2010	5.65 (403)	10.57 (754)	83.78 (5975)	100 (7132)			
2015	3.79 (270)	12.13 (864)	84.08 (5995)	100 (7129)			

Source- GNH report 2015

sufficiency in Figure number one, and Figure number two shows the Satisfaction with different aspects of Life in Bhutan.

The benefits will help a seasoned professional or even an early bird to improve his professional skills.

Figure number one shows that percentage of people unhappy and narrowly happy has decreased marginally and there is two

percent increment in extensively happy. In Figure two, there is a significant increment of level of satisfaction from 2010 to 2015 in respect to standard of life and work life balance but still more has to be achieved in the multiple categories.

The benefits will help a seasoned professional or even an early bird to improve the professional skills. Work life balance is

expected to be enhanced through the association with Professional bodies leading to an enhanced GNH level in Bhutan.

Pillars of Professionalism:

1. To set and uphold standards of professional practice.
2. Enhance the quality and status of its members.
3. Professional registration body can provide assurance that its members' services will be of a certain standard.
4. Code of ethics for its members and takes disciplinary action against transgressors
5. Quality and consistency of service in new or rapidly growing professions.
6. Educate the public about the demands and complexity of profession.

List of Associations:

- Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)
- Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)
- American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)
- Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM)
- Chartered Management Institute (CMI)

• American Medical Informatics

Association (AMIA)

• Journalist Association of Bhutan

• Handicraft Association of Bhutan

Advances in technology, deregulation and increasing competition in the context of globalization, increasing cynicism among members, and distrust of the motives and behavior of the administrators of professional bodies, and neglect of natural environment are also matters of concern to keep and maintain the ethics of a profession. Finally, by setting and enforcing standards of practice, and defining the scope of its members' skills and services the association of professionals can set a benchmark for its profession.

In such a scenario, the functions, benefits and pillars of the professional association will lead to new horizons of knowledge-based learned society aligned with the Principles of Gross National Happiness in Bhutan. These professional associations also meet the international standards.

Challenges for Professional Associations:

1. Direction- Professional associations January 2018

encounter a common challenge that is, the poor direction of such professional association. The role, functions and contribution of the associations must be completely aligned with the society and national culture.

2. Regulation-Regulations are also vital information for the functioning of organizations; formation of associations based on rule-books may lead to nepotism and red-tapism.
3. Education and training- Providing quality of training and education to the specialist on the expert areas is also an uphill task because they do not require fundamental knowledge but they look for special knowledge or expertise which they do not possess.
4. Technical and other services –Providing world-class technical and other services in a small country is really a difficult task as there is a dearth of the resources and the professional association will have to depend on top national level resources as well international level resources.

Challenges are part and parcel of every walk of life. In the same way, an association has to

pass through the same but the expertise and professional skills of the particular profession will help it to overcome the issues and turbulence to reach the set objectives of the professional association.

Conclusion:

Global consistency and unification of the professionals for leveraging the expertise and knowledge connections are demand for GNH based sustainable learned societies as there is a dearth of such international level professional association in Bhutan to achieve the goals like Sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, Conservation of environment, Preservation and promotion of culture, and Promotion of good governance. The creation of such associations will really work as a think-tank to attain national-level goals more efficiently and effectively hence delivery services and governance can be stronger based on the principles of GNH in Bhutan. This paper reveals that Bhutan should have more Professional Associations in the relevant areas of development such as Management Association, Engineers Association,

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