



2014 Annual Curriculum for Cohesion Dinner

Address of Mr. Mohammed Amin

Patron and Chair of Donors, Curriculum for Cohesion

Thursday, 26 June 2014

Good evening and peace be with you.

I want to briefly cover three things:

1. My own perspective as a donor.
2. How Curriculum for Cohesion is governed.
3. Why I think it matters so much.

My own perspective as a donor

We launched our fundraising appeal in August 2011. The first £3 donation came from Matthew and Lucy's 3-year old son Gabriel Wilkinson.

Initially, everyone else we approached said that it was a great concept but that their charity budget was fully committed elsewhere. Accordingly the next £30,000 came from me which got the project started. Since then many other donors have come on board including a number of generous people in this room



I am still giving £1,000 per month. My cumulative gifts are now just over £51,000 which I think makes me the second largest donor. Money that I believe has been money well spent.

Looking back over the three years I can already see the difference that Curriculum for Cohesion has made with our impact on the National History Curriculum, and the diffusion of Matthew Wilkinson's and the team's ideas more generally.

I believe that the book "A Fresh Look at Islam in a Multi-faith World: a philosophy for success through education" will have a major impact on the way teachers of young Muslims, and therefore also their pupils, think about Islam.

How Curriculum for Cohesion is governed

Every penny from our donors goes into the Cambridge Muslim College. They are responsible for paying Matthew Wilkinson, the academic advisors and for every other disbursement. The legal responsibility for the project rests with the trustees of the Cambridge Muslim College. In turn they look to me for advice about the views of donors.

Small decisions I make by myself. For example I approved what we spent on our logo and visual identity.

For big decisions, I consult all major donors. So far we have only had two big decisions.



Firstly, Matthew Wilkinson's rate of pay from the very beginning has been set out in our budget which has always been on our website. About a year ago I held a donors meeting just before the annual dinner to discuss and approve an increase in the rate of pay.

Secondly we needed to agree how intellectual property should be owned. For this I consulted all major donors by email.

We haven't had a donors meeting today as I don't believe in meetings just for the sake of them but am always available to other donors or anyone else who wishes to discuss the governance of the project.

Quite apart from the formalities, I have worked very closely with Matthew Wilkinson on Curriculum for Cohesion ever since we began. At times it has felt as if he had completely taken over my diary! Even though I am not an academic I have read all of our papers and discussed them with Matthew in draft. The book I left to the academic advisors.

My main contribution has been teaching Matthew to avoid using the words epistemology and ontology except with other academics. However I've seen so much of Matthew that I am afraid I might be starting to understand those words myself!

Why I think it matters so much.

Ideas matter. In the field of Islam in society and in education we are suffering from an absence of good ideas.



Last year I mentioned how the French philosopher René Descartes changed the way that everyone in the world thinks. While Matthew is not quite that ambitious there are some really important questions that Curriculum for Cohesion is dealing with in a way that is academically rigorous and concretely useful.

- How do we teach a history that includes everyone in our country?
- How do we teach RE in a multifaith society?
- What does it mean to be a Muslim in Britain today?
- How do you tell the difference between someone who is just religiously very conservative and someone who is a potential supporter of terrorism?

On issues like this Curriculum for Cohesion is providing real intellectual leadership. That is why I have given it so much commitment.

Thank you.