

Strategic Planning in Brunei Darussalam: History, Experience and Lessons Learned

Haji Mohd Rozan bin Dato Paduka Haji Mohd Yunos & Ivana Milojević

Abstract

This paper provides an overview of strategic planning in Brunei Darussalam. It is based on an ‘insider’s view’ – including participating in the formulation of the first strategic plan for the Brunei Prime Minister’s Office and nearly three decades of experience with planning in Brunei. First, the history of planning both globally and in the context of Brunei is summarised. Second, the paper then proceeds to outline the benefits and challenges of strategic planning processes and outcomes as well as to define and simplify what strategic planning is and could potentially be. Third, the 5D model of strategic planning, which is aimed specifically at Brunei’s civil service, is described, so that it can be used by civil servants to prepare their strategic plans. Fourth, the paper concludes with some crucial lessons learned whilst engaging in the process of strategic planning. These lessons are intended to further enhance the benefits and positive outcomes obtained from strategic planning in Brunei in the future.

Keywords: *history of national development planning, strategic planning, policy making, implementation, Brunei Darussalam*

Haji Mohd Rozan bin Dato Paduka Haji Mohd Yunos is the Executive Director of the Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS). Prior to CSPS, he served in the Brunei Government for almost 30 years and held many senior positions including Permanent Secretary at the Prime Minister's Office. He has written almost 300 articles on the history and culture of Brunei and the region as a columnist at the former national newspaper, The Brunei Times. He has published three books on Brunei history and has co-edited several other books. His research interests include public and social policies and history. He graduated with a BA in Law and Economics, Keele University, an MBA from Heriot-Watt University and an MPA from Harvard University. He is also currently undertaking his PhD in Islamic Governance at the Institute of Policy Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

Dr Ivana Milojević is Head of Brunei Futures Initiative and Senior Researcher at the Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies, Brunei Darussalam. Prior to moving to Brunei in 2016, she was Visiting Professor at the Center for Gender Studies, University of Novi Sad, Serbia (2008-2016), Visiting Professor at the Graduate Institute of Futures Studies, Tamkang University, Taiwan (2015) and an Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Arts and Business, University of the Sunshine Coast (2009-2016). She obtained her PhD in Education from the University of Queensland, Australia in 2003. Dr Ivana Milojević is the author of over seventy journal articles and book chapters, as well as the author, co-author and/or co-editor of a number of academic books.

1.0 Introduction: Planning History in Brunei

The literature review shows that very few academic articles overview or analyze the history and practice of strategic planning in Brunei. This is mostly due to the fact that strategic planning is very recent in Brunei. It emerges from the successes and failures of national development plans. It was not until the year 2000 that proper strategic plans started to be developed by some of the larger Ministries. For example, the first Strategic Plan for the Prime Minister's Office at the 'Ministry' level was put forward in August 2004, covering a period of ten years (2005-2014) (PMO, 2004). However, the history of planning in Brunei began before that. It is important to understand this history as it provides the context for the current and future strategic planning in Brunei. Indeed, it is important to remember that "the results of past strategies create the context for future ones. History helps shape the future." (Othman, 2010. p. 8). Or, in other words, a knowledge of history helps to "avoid repeating mistakes made in the past, think of the ways to surmount problems [of today] and plan the future wisely" (EPB, 2010, p. i). The overview of planning history in Brunei is thus critical for overcoming past and present failures in policy making and implementation as well as for moving forward.

This article first summarises the history of planning both globally and in the context of Brunei. It articulates the four main periods of national plans, the significance of national development plans and how vision was used to enhance the long term view of these plans. Second, the paper proceeds to outline the benefits and challenges of strategic planning processes and outcomes as well as to define and simplify what strategic planning is and could potentially be. It thus outlines the move from the plan and vision to strategy. Third, the 5D model of strategic planning is articulated. This approach is intended specifically for Brunei's civil service to help civil servants prepare their strategic plans. Fourth, the paper concludes with some crucial lessons learned whilst engaging in the process of strategic planning.

1.1 The Four Main Periods

The history of planning in Brunei follows the overall political and economic history of the country, which can generally be segmented into the four main periods: 1. Pre-1906, 2. between

1906 and 1959, 3. between 1959 and 1983, and 4. post-independence (Othman, 2010, p. 12). Historical records for the first historical period are sparse (Yunos, 2011, p. 223; Hussainmiya, 1995, p. ix) but they do indicate that Brunei was a “well administered and developed country in the 16th Century with its people enjoying prosperity” (Othman, 2010, p. 13). Indeed, in order to manage and administer the vast Brunei thalassocracy of the 15th century, a strong government accompanied by administrative machinery was in existence (Yunos, 2011, p. 276; Yunos, 2013, p. 137). For a variety of reasons (de Vienne, 2015; Leake, 1990; Saunders, 1994; Singh, 1984; Yunos, 2011), the prosperity of Brunei deteriorated towards the end of the 19th Century when “the power of Brunei’s empire started to weaken and the era of territorial shrinkage began” (Othman, 2010, p. 17). The deterioration was both a result and a cause of power battles and power abuses by local and foreign players. This led to “almost terminal decline” (Saunders, 1994, p. 87). Even in 1904, the impression of Brunei was “one of poverty at all levels with little hope of improvement in the future” (ibid, p. 104). Importantly, during this deterioration phase, there was “no overall planning but a mere landlord-tenant relationship [within the customary feudalistic administrative system] (Othman, 2010, p. 17). Left to function by itself for a long period, the system resulted in “Brunei [falling] into dire straits ... where power abuses and corruption in tax and revenue collection prevailed” (ibid). This is but one example showing that ‘ad-hoc’ and reactive measures (as well as the lack of clarity over direction towards the future) significantly weaken the state and its governing bodies.

This situation changed in the second historical period, during the time of the British Residence (1906-1959). Due to a combination of demographic, political and economic factors, between 1906 and 1941 only around 20,000 people (Brunei Annual Reports) resided in the whole country. Remarkably, it was not until 1960s that “the population [caught] up with its mid-1850s level (estimated at 25,000 inhabitants)” (de Vienne, 2015, p. 208). The British re-introduced administrative planning, for example, Malcolm Stewart McArthur, the first British Resident in Brunei, assisted in the process of restoring “political and territorial stability to Brunei” while simultaneously introducing “a wide-ranging program of financial and administrative reform” (Ooi, 2004, p. 868). Indeed, in his effort to “develop Brunei towards modernization”, McArthur (re)introduced planning by developing the necessary infrastructure, including “the establishment of civil and criminal courts, police station, postal office, customs office and wharf” (Othman,

2010, p. 20). As a result, even before the commercial exploitation of oil began, Brunei had started to show signs of economic recovery with the subsequent British Resident “proud to report that trade was ‘growing by leaps and bounds’ ... and that Brunei has now safely embarked on a course of real prosperity” (Horton, cited in Othman, p. 23).

The discovery and beginnings of commercial exploitation of oil marked another turning point for Brunei. The numbers of Bruneians returning to the country slowly started to increase in the 1930s, and by the 1930s Brunei was one of the largest producers of oil in the world and in the British Commonwealth especially. This is when Brunei started its ascent from “rags to riches” (Leake, 1990, p. 43). Until WWII, Brunei continued to make steady economic progress. This would have continued had it not been for the war and the destruction of Brunei by both the Japanese and the Allied Forces. The British and the Allied Forces bombed the Japanese installations as well as razing the remains of Brunei Town. When Australian forces moved in, in 1945, the only building left standing in the town was a Chinese temple (Yunos, 2014, p. 105). Everything else in Brunei Town was ruined; oil wells in Seria Town were also set ablaze and engulfed with fire (ibid). Other conflicts throughout Brunei’s long history as well prevented Brunei from properly developing (Yunos, 2014, p. 150).

These previous experiences have not been lost within the subsequent planning efforts in Brunei. For example, the Strategic Planning Framework for the Prime Minister’s Office of Brunei Darussalam (2005-2014) highlights “peace and security [having been] ensured for all” as one of the key past achievements for the previous three decades (1984-2004). This achievement is second only to “the international recognition [of Brunei Darussalam] as a capable sovereign state” (PMO, 2004, p. 14). Maintaining peace and security via a host of internal and external/diplomatic measures remains one of Brunei’s top priorities for the future. As stated in the opening sentence of the Brunei’s “Vision of National Success”, such vision prioritises “a nation that is peaceful and secure, at peace with its neighbours and respected by the world community” (PMO, 2004, p. 35).

The role of planning was crucial to help Brunei come out of the previously mentioned and enormous crisis post WWII. Indeed, “[d]espite the dire condition of Brunei at the end of the War,

conditions in Brunei improved much faster than was thought possible” (Yunos, 2011, p. 118). Of course, the very first duty of the post-war Brunei government was to feed and restore the bare necessities of the people. In the period after WWII the rehabilitation of Brunei Town started; nearly 200 shop houses as well as new government offices were (re)built. As a result of these efforts, by early 1953, Brunei showed few signs of the war. The increased emphasis on planning coupled with the proper management of the economy propelled by the oil revenues saw the financial position of the Brunei Government improve by leaps and bounds. The complexity and the change were not lost on the government of the day, which realized that a longer term development structure was needed. This led to the creation and launching of the first five-year national development plan in Brunei in 1953.

1.2 National Development Plans and Their Significance

The significance of the first National Development Plan (NDP or RKN) cannot be overstated. Since the introduction of the first five year NDP Brunei Darussalam has progressed from “being a backwater, underdeveloped and impoverished third world country to a country straddling the developed and the less developed - with a high level of per capita gross domestic product (per capita GDP) and a high quality of life” (Haji Hashim, 2010, p. 30). Observers of the time “were astounded by the magnitude of the task initiated”, describing the progress under the first NDP as a “bloodless revolution unmatched anywhere else in the world” (Hussainmiya, 1995, p. 120). The success is all the more remarkable when having in mind the small size of the Brunei population at the time (ibid.).

The first national development plan was launched in 1953 and covered the five year period from 1953 to 1958. With “the foresight of Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin III, the State Council in 1953 allocated \$100 million to be spent during the following five years, seeing the birth of Brunei’s 5 Year Development Plan” (Othman, 2010, p. 3). The main objectives of the plan were to: 1. bring Brunei out of its lowly status in Southeast Asia; 2. modernize Brunei within the framework of the Malay Islamic Monarchy; 3. improve the living standards of Bruneians; and, 4. develop non-oil and gas industries (EPB, 2010, p. 159). A British expatriate, Mr. E.R. Bevington from the Fiji Colonial Office, was appointed as the Commissioner of Development. As Commissioner, it was

his responsibility to carry out the new plan worth \$100 million with the funding voted by the State Legislative Council.

The first National Development Plan gave special emphasis to the expansion of education and medical services; the implementation of resettlement schemes; the provision of water supplies; the improvement of agricultural methods and fisheries; the extension of roads and communications; the construction of bridges, buildings and electrical stations; and the installation of broadcasting and telephone systems (Yunos, 2014, p. 106). More than 59% of the budget went to infrastructure development whilst Health, Education and Welfare received 21.77% of the funding (ibid). As summarized by Saunders (1994, p. 129) the first NDP:

“...included provisions for Brunei development of an infrastructure, without which commercial investment would not be attracted; thus roads and communications were to be improved, and water and electrical supplies extended. Social provisions included the expansion of education and medical facilities, and non-contributory pensions for the aged and disabled ... local crafts were to be revived, and agriculture was to be improved and diversified.”

Crucially, the plan also focused on improving the social welfare of Bruneians. As a result, the living standards of Bruneians improved tremendously. A pension scheme was granted under the plan to persons over 60 and the disabled (Yunos, 2014, p. 106-107). Once again, the importance of such planning for the beneficial future outcomes cannot be overstated. The scheme is still in place and enjoyed by many Bruneians despite not having to contribute anything to the scheme. The scheme which originally paid \$20 per month in 1957 now pays \$250 a month to any Bruneians who have reached the age of 60 and to those who are disabled.

Furthermore, many of the important buildings and infrastructure in Brunei were conceived and built during the first national development plan (Yunos, 2011; Yunos, 2013; Yunos, 2014). This includes the trunk road from Brunei Town to Tutong to Belait with all its bridges. The new wharves at Brunei Town and Kuala Belait were also built. Muara was studied as a potential port for the future. The first airport at what is now known as the Old Airport was conceived.

Automatic telephone exchanges were put up in Brunei Town and Kuala Belait. More than 30 new schools were also built during these times. Finally, a new hospital at Kuala Belait was constructed¹. The foresight of the first NDP is apparent in already identifying that Brunei should start diversifying its economy and not be dependent on the oil industry. The plan highlighted several schemes including better use of waste gas; improving agricultural methods; the replanting of rubber and a higher focus on the fishing industry.

Despite its many successes, one area from the first and subsequent National Development Plans has remained problematic. Unfortunately, most of the plans to diversify the economy did not work well. The waste gas was supposed to help start an aluminium industry and the manufacture of cement and nitrogen fertilizer but the projects did not materialize. Rubber prices fell drastically after the Korean War and the plan to replant rubber immediately failed. The goal of making “the necessary transition to a new diversified economy” (PMO, 2004, p. 14) remains an imperative to this day. Each subsequent NDP has aimed to overcome the “Dutch disease” (Lawrey, 2010; Mahadi, 2011) of overreliance on a fossil fuel economy – it is to be expected that the future NDPs and strategic plans will need to somehow address this issue further.

The second national development plan for 1962 – 1966 succeeded the first one with the aims of developing the economy and improving social conditions of Bruneians. The first two national development plans did not immediately follow each other. It was not until the third national development plan that the five year plans followed immediately after the last one ended (Yunos, 2014, p. 107). The third national development plan began in 1975 and ended in 1979 and this was followed by the fourth national development plan (1980 to 1984). In a nutshell, the 2nd NDP (1962-1966) “continued its orientation towards the provision of economic and social infrastructures as foundations for future development” (Othman, 2010, p. 290). To do so it focused on three principal targets: 1. diversification of the economy from oil, 2. maintaining a high level of employment and, 3. promoting the participation of the private sector (ibid). Such planning certainly helped with the overall development of Brunei. For example, “during the interim period between the 2nd and 3rd NDPs, national income continued to rise, nearly double in 1971 ...while GDP per capita rose by nearly 50%” (ibid, p. 33). The fourth and the last NDP in

¹ For more detailed historical accounts consult Yunos 2011, 2013, and 2014.

the pre-independence historical period (1980-1984) continued to aim at achieving high employment levels, reducing income inequalities, and diversifying the economy – “the same national goals as stipulated in the previous NDPs” (ibid, p. 37).

The planning in this pre-Independence historical period was difficult for several reasons. First, the colonization, coupled with internal weakening of the Sultanate during the 19th Century (Singh, 1984, p. 33), interrupted the traditional system of the governance in Brunei. The history of Brunei civil service can be traced back to “more than 600 years ago to Sultan Muhammad Shah, Brunei’s first Sultan” (Yunos, 2011, p. 276). And, if the “pre-Islamic Sultanate is included, the Brunei civil service in whatever form must have been functioning more than a thousand years ago” (ibid.). The colonization officially ceased in 1984 with the ending of rule by the British, who had administered Brunei since 1906 (Yunos, 2011, p. 289), and whose influence provided both dependency and “salvation” from extinction (Singh, 1984, p. 34). But all the way up until WWII, the rulers’ preoccupation was to “get a viable and financially independent government and a modern administration and [they were] not much focused on planning and development” (Yunos, 2014, p. 51). It was not until Brunei’s first NDP (1953-1959) that there was a departure from the general ad hoc manner in which British Residents spent money (Yunos, 2014, p. 52). Second, it was not until 1959 when Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien obtained and signed Brunei’s written constitution that Government became more or less run by the people of Brunei. In 1959, the 1906 Treaty was replaced by the Brunei Agreement, which resonated to the theme of “Brunei for Bruneians” and enabled internal self-government (Yunos, 2014, p. 44). Third, the early civil service or civilian government after the constitution “virtually collapsed at the onset of the [1962] rebellion” (Hussainmiya, 1995, p. 309). For example, there was a failure to inform the people of Brunei of the crisis the country was experiencing. This has been regarded as a classic case of “the near breakdown of an immature civil service and an information machine which had never been trained in mass dissemination of news or opinion” (ibid. p. 310). Fourth, there was no ‘proper’ modern civil service then resulting in an over reliance on foreign experts, primarily British and Malaysia expatriates. During the time of post-WWII reconstruction, for example, there was not only a shortage of all kinds of materials, machinery, shipping, labour and artisans but also a shortage of professionals, including town planners (Yunos, 2014, p. 51). At the same time, politically, during the British residency, the British were more interested in maintaining the

status quo than helping Brunei properly develop. As well, there was a discord between Brunei and Malaysia in the 1970s which resulted in the departure of most Malaysian expatriates, creating a big vacuum in the Brunei Government at the time. Fortunately, the Brunei government started sending people overseas to obtain needed qualifications in the 1960s – the graduates started coming back to Brunei in the 1970s and joining the Government. While technical colleges started in the 1970s as well, it was not until post-Independence that the establishment of the University of Brunei Darussalam enabled Brunei to start developing a capacity to train its own policy makers and planners. At around the same time, during the 1970s and 1980s, the need for a “comprehensive framework to guide the process of physical development became evident” (Yunos, 2014, p. 54). It was then that “population growth, traffic volumes, public utilities and urban housing [started] to dominate the needs of the populace” (ibid.). Such growth, coupled with the previous history of dependence on external experts, created a situation in which some level of reliance on foreign expertise remained. This too is another issue that needs to be addressed now and in the future.

The fourth historical period of planning in Brunei – 1984 to present – saw the formation of ministries and a number of cabinet changes, major ones taking place in 1986 and 1988. With Brunei’s independence in 1984, the system of government, which was “carried out in the traditional Malay manner of advice tendered through a Chief Minister and senior officials established in 1959, was replaced by a move to a Cabinet style of government” (Yunos, 2013, p. 139). But it took a number of years for ministries to start to function properly. For example, in 1987 there were only eight people in the Ministry of Communications – a Minister, a Permanent Secretary and six officers. Nowadays, there are five big divisions within the ministry and some hundred people employed. In those early days, ministers kept on changing so it was difficult to develop strategic plans both due to the very small number of people working at the ministries as well as due to ministers themselves not staying long enough within specific ministries. It was only after the second cabinet reshuffle in 1988 that most ministers were appointed for a longer period, for example, the Minister of Communications held his post from 1988 until 2005. This enabled more ministers to become interested in strategic plans and long(er) term planning. Once again, it is important to stress (and apparent from this previous example) that the stability of government and long-term planning go hand in hand.

The fourth historical period of planning saw development of six NDPs: the fifth (1986 to 1990); the sixth (1991 to 1995); the seventh (1996 to 2000); the eighth (2001 to 2005); the ninth (2007-2011) and the tenth (2012-2017). All these plans reaffirmed the Government's commitment to involving and developing the private sector, developing a healthy, educated and skilled workforce, and, diversifying the economy. The investment in the implementation of the plans has recently been significant and increasing. For example, starting from BND100 million allocated in 1953, BND 5.5 billion was allocated for the implementation of the sixth national plan in 1991 and BND 6.5 billion for the implementation of the tenth national plan in 2012 (Othman, 2010, p. 49; PMO, 2012, p. xvi)². During this period, GDP in Brunei rose from the record low of USD 0.11 billion in 1965, reaching an all-time high of USD 19.04 billion in 2012 (Trading Economics, 2017). Since that all time high, the GDP has been decreasing each year (USD 18.1 billion in 2013, USD 17.1 billion in 2014 and USD 12.9 US billion in 2016). This indicates that yet another major shift in planning and managing both internal and external challenges is currently required.

1.3 Enhancing Planning via Long-term Vision

Perhaps such a major shift in planning already started with the Ninth National Development Plan for 2007-2011. The argument has been proposed by Othman that this was the first national plan to move away from the traditional approach of five year development plans and provide a long-term development framework for 30 years (Othman, 2010, p. 64). However, Othman's argument is not entirely valid. The long-term 20-year development plan started already in 1985 (Economic Planning and Development, 2017). This 20-year long-term Development Plan, which started just a year after the country gained independence, aspired to further "improve the quality of life of the people, while at the same time seeking to widen and further enhance the country's economic base" (Europa Publications, 2003, p. 210). Its overall aims included:

"the achievement of balanced and sustained socio-economic development through a more outward-looking economic diversification strategy; the continued development of

² Note: Figures in this paragraph are not adjusted for inflation.

physical infrastructure and public facilities; the implementation of effective human resource development; the implementation of social development projects; the utilization of appropriate technologies; and the continuous protection of the environment” (ibid.).

But this plan also highlights a crucial issue that accompanied most of Brunei’s NDPs – the issue of implementation. For example, during the seventh NDP, out of the total of 1,501 development programmes and projects approved for implementation within this plan, “53% were completed, 12% were approaching completion and 12% were being implemented by the end of the Plan period, whilst the remainder were either still at preliminary stages, suspended or cancelled for various reasons” (ibid.). This is one of the key lessons that Bruneians can learn from the past and attempt to improve in the future - a further focus on how to actually successfully implement strategic plans as well as long-term visions and goals is needed. Some suggestions on how to better implement the existing strategic plans and national long term development visions are discussed in the last section of this paper.

Despite some difficulties with implementation, Brunei is one of a very few countries in the world that provide, at a national level, a bold and long-term vision for the future. Indeed, it is “one of the great benefits of the political stability inherent in Brunei [...] that it allows long-term planning so that given the right institutional environment and clear vision, everything from education to energy and land can be brought together to achieve national goals” (Lawrey, 2010, p. 26). The Brunei Darussalam Long-Term Development Plan contains the following: the National Vision, also known as Wawasan Brunei 2035, the Outline of Strategies and Policies for Development (OSPD) and the National Development Plan (RKN). Through the Wawasan Brunei 2035 the government of Brunei aspires to achieve “a nation with a well-educated, highly skilled and accomplished people as measured by the highest international standards; enjoying a high quality of life among the top ten countries in the world; and having a dynamic and resilient economy which is ranked among the world’s top ten countries in terms of per capita income” (PMO, 2012, p. xxix). Or, in a nutshell, to achieve: 1. Educated and highly skilled population, 2. High quality of life, and 3. Conducive business environment. In order to do so, eight strategies have been identified to “ensure that all aspects of development can be implemented in an organized and effective manner” (ibid). They include: education, economic, security,

institutional development, entrepreneurship and local business development, infrastructure development, social security and environmental strategies. The first OSPD (2007-2017) aimed to further assist with the implementation of the National Vision by elaborating the eight strategies through 50 policy directions. This direction for development is to “continuously be coordinated and developed by the government, the private sector and relevant organizations” (PMO, 2012, p. 7). This means that the process is not a ‘one off’ static event, but, and this should be emphasised, an ongoing process of moving forward via ‘trial and error’. Furthermore, an overarching national development plan is crucial as it brings the nation together: “it is not just planners, everyone in the country needs to share the roles in national planning and development” (Yunos, 2014, p. 54). This is important because, understandably, “it takes focus, unity, creativity and commitment to attaining goals and achievements in our efforts to build the nation” (ibid).

Certainly, in order to carry out such an ambitious vision as outlined in Wawasan 2035 and large projects such as RKNs strategic planning is necessary. As previously stated, ‘proper’ strategic planning in Brunei is very recent, starting at the beginning of the 21st Century. What pushed the need for strategic planning forward was the development of Pensejajaran Programmes or Alignment Programmes in early 2000. These programmes have shown that most Ministries in fact did not have strategic plans and even the Prime Minister’s Office was criticized for not having one. The PMO, however, quickly addressed those concerns and was probably one of the first to engage an external consultant. Professor Chee of Universiti Brunei Darussalam became the first such consultant assisting the PMO to develop a proper strategic plan. He did so by using the “balanced score card” approach (Kaplan & Norton, 1992; Kaplan & Norton, 1996). Since then, most ministries repeated the same process and the same methodology for their respective areas. Currently, the main task for policy makers in Brunei is to further refine these approaches and address a set of issues related to weaknesses in strategic planning up until now.

2.0 The Strategic Planning Context

For all practical purposes, National Development Plans served as strategic plans for the country in the past. As previously discussed, Brunei did not have the proper resources to develop detailed strategic plans within government and ministries until very recently. But even in countries with a

longer history of strategic planning, for example, in the USA, detailed strategic planning did not properly enter the government until the 1980s (Blackerby, 1994). Before that, strategic planning remained mostly a private sector undertaking. It may be pertinent to remember that the very early history of strategy was mostly linked to military enterprises. “Strategy”, deriving from Greek “strategos” meaning “general of the army”, was in itself a shift from narrow technical and tactical advice on how to manage troops to win battles (ibid). “Strategos” were to have a bigger picture view – helping manage battles to win wars. Instead of focusing on products and outputs, strategos were to focus on results and outcomes. Eventually, their role evolved to include civil magisterial duties as well. However, before such duties fully extended into the realm of the political, they first entered the realm of business. In the 1920s, for example, Harvard Business School developed the Harvard Policy Model which defined strategy as a pattern of purposes and policies characterizing the company and its business (ibid). Strategy became the common thread of underlying logic that holds a business together as well as determines its organizational structure. In the 1950s the focus shifted away from organizational policy and structure towards the management of risk, industry growth, and market share (ibid). This is where strategy, once again, looked at the “bigger picture” rather than narrowly focusing on organizational structure. The 1960s were the period when the so-called Industrial Economic Model took off, focusing on analysis of competitive power relationships – such as the relative power of customers and suppliers, threats posed by substitute products and services, new industry entrants and market rivals (ibid). All these power relationships and competitors were investigated in order to develop distinct and competitive business strategies.

To conclude with this brief overview of the history of strategy, strategic planning evolved from its earlier military origins to become a standard tool for businesses. All or most of the companies in the Fortune 500, for example, use strategic planning to enhance their businesses. Finally, strategic planning in the business context also evolved: from the early Harvard Policy Model in the 1920s towards the Portfolio Model in the 1950s and Industrial Economic Model in the 1960s. More recently, strategic planning started to evolve towards integrated or systems thinking approaches. For example, Haines’ Systems Thinking Approach to Strategic Planning was developed to better manage “strategically day to day, month to month, and year to year” by

integrating planning with change and management with leadership (Haines & McKinlay, 2009, p. i).

Such novel approaches are really important for the present and the emerging practice of strategic planning. First, policy making within the context of the government is neither about winning battles in wars nor about winning against other competitors. And while these may be occasional functions that government will take part in – in the areas of foreign policy or economic development and trade agreements – governments are about groups of people who govern communities and their relationships with other communities. The role of government is to provide and administer public policy which is about “communities trying to achieve something as communities” (Stone, 2012, p. 20). In that sense, while the competitive model works for winning battles and profits, the function of the government is – or should be - more unifying and integrative. If, for example, policy making is to be successful, it must include a whole range of community members, rather than privileging one group over another. No government is perfect in this regard; however, the inclusion of as many stakeholders as possible has become an imperative in contemporary policy making.

Parallel to this, there is indeed an increasing demand for governments to “run more like businesses” – getting more “bang for the buck” via “evidence based” policies. In our current VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) global world, such demands are likely only to increase (Mack et al, 2016). What is also to increase, and has been increasing, is the complexity of strategic planning itself. In Brunei and elsewhere, governments in the past mostly wrote comprehensive plans that dealt with the efficiency of land use and services or developed programme plans, usually limited to narrow chains of authority on the organizational chart. But there has been a steady movement away from organizational planning within governments towards understanding the world of markets, customers and stakeholders, and organizational cultures, as well as potential present/future threats and opportunities. This is why one of the key steps of strategic planning, as refined by the Haines systems thinking approach for example, is to assess the current state and as many potential “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats” (via SWOT analysis) as possible. Such a process is important as it enables organisations to build on strengths, eliminate or cope with weaknesses, exploit the opportunities and ease or lower the

threats (Haines & McKilnay, 2009, p. 177). The assessment is directed internally, towards the organisation, as well as externally, towards the environment. In a nutshell, the analysis is conducted in order to identify any element or characteristic which will either help or hinder the organisation in its attempt to achieve its ideal future vision (ibid) – as previously outlined through the visioning process.

The overall goal of strategic planning, of course, is to reach a desired future, 5 to 10 or even 20 and 30 years ahead. The “ideal future vision” step’s main task is to “formulate those dreams that are worth believing in and fighting for” (Haines & McKinlay, 2009, p. 101). This is where the desired outcome of becoming a “customer [or stakeholder]-focused, high-performance learning organization” is set up, and where the cry of “It can’t be done!” becomes both irrelevant and unacceptable (ibid). Rather, instead of discussing limits, the focus should be on discovering what the possibilities for the organization engaged in strategic planning are, as well as how to turn the desired vision into reality once it is created (ibid). Previous failures should thus not become an obstacle in envisioning further and in finding new ways to implement the vision.

This seems easier said than done, as the process from moving from point A to point B is never simple. However, whether A to B is achieved in a straightforward way, which is fortunate, but rather rare, or, more likely, achieved in a complicated and roundabout way, the main point is to move, or attempt to move towards better states of being and functioning. As previously discussed, one of the key issues in regards to planning in general, whether at the national level, ministerial level or organisational level, is the issue of implementation. The failures in implementation in Brunei can be connected with several factors. First, many plans have been done by external consultants, especially in the past when capacity amongst local Bruneians was lacking. By the very definition, consultants are usually commissioned for limited periods of time. However, as we could see from the history of planning, continuity in implementation is one of the key factors for its success or uptake and longevity. So instead of leaving plans “half done” Bruneians need to persist in seeing plans already put in process through. It is important that Brunei now has institutions such as Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) at Universiti Brunei Darussalam or, indeed, the Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS), a government funded but independent think tank. IPS, for example, provides invaluable degree programmes which are

centred on public policy, public management and Islamic governance (IPS, 2017). CSPS focuses on undertaking independent and objective policy research and analysis of strategic issues concerning Brunei Darussalam – “especially those outlined in Brunei’s long term development plan” or Wawasan 2035 (CSPS, 2017). The significance of such local institutions cannot be overstated as they are institutional key players in providing the maintenance of local capacity and its continuity. And so, if strategic planning and its implementation are to be strengthened in the future, so should Brunei’s local institutions which enhance the ongoing local capacity.

Other factors which have impacted on the lower rate of successful implementation of strategic plans in Brunei could be identified as follows: limited engagement of stakeholders; not sufficiently wide input from various community groups and government departments; lack of rigorous process of envisioning the future via the implementation of a host of foresight tools and methods; lack of thorough and accurate review of the current situation as well as future challenges; and finally, a lack of commitment by senior leaders in the organization itself.

3.0 The 5D Model of Strategic Planning

To counteract these issues, those involved in planning need to understand the process of strategic planning. There are a number of strategic planning models that can be used and one such model is the 5D Model of Strategic Planning. In a simplified format, the method focuses on the five interconnected processes of discovering, dreaming, designing, documenting, and delivering. The process is systematized in the following chart:

Strategic Planning Simplified



Table 1: 5D Strategic Planning Process

Even though it is about achieving a future vision, strategic planning has to start with the here and now, i.e. with the ‘discovery’ phase. That is, if the plans are to be successful, they must address a specific compelling need or needs, review thoroughly what is happening in the organization, be clear about the mission or “who we are/why we exist” and investigate changes in the external environment. This then has to be linked with the desired vision of the future which takes into account people’s needs and concerns. Existing vision, programmes, capacity and finances are also to be considered in detail. “Where we want to be” has sometimes been limited to basically being an extension of the present and sometimes it has not been sufficiently cognizant of future threats and possibilities. Foresight processes – focused on ‘dreaming’ and ‘visioning’ -thus need to *precede* strategic planning processes. This should be done in order to ensure strategic planning is “future proof”, i.e. not outdated even before the plans are written, let alone implemented. Most importantly, the public, as the government’s main stakeholder, needs to somehow be involved, especially in the ‘design’ phase. Such lack of involvement by the broader community has been one of the key reasons behind failures of strategic planning programmes in the past. As summarized by Stephen Haines and James McKinlay (2009, p. 5) “people support what they help

create”. This is really critical because it has been recognized that policy makers and analysts often “unintentionally frame policy problems from a narrow world view, and often it is their own” (Terranova, 2015, p. 372). For example: “Government policy analysts in Australia are generally white, middle-aged and financially secure, so there is a tendency for policy responses to be designed accordingly. [But] for a community that is increasingly multicultural and globally connected, the risks of this approach are obvious” (ibid). Similarly, it has been recognized that, for example closer to Brunei, in Singapore:

The role of Government will need to broaden from one of “regulator, arbiter and provider”, to a more facilitative role by convening and providing the platforms for citizens to explore, initiate and collaborate. The mindset will also need to shift from one of control to one of influencing for outcomes. While the government remains largely the steward of the public commons, there will be a need to rethink authority over and accountability of the collective interests of the community and country. (Kuah, Chin & Huifen, 2015, p. 335).

Certainly, Brunei is a very different society to both Australia and Singapore; however, the lesson of including as many stakeholders as possible in the planning process, especially people who are going to use government services, is the same. This is where many strategic planning efforts failed to yield desired outcomes in the past - they reflected more what policy makers wanted to do rather than what the public needed. The Brunei government sector employs over half the local working population (Oleynik, 2004, p. 220), which means that the other half of the population, both working in the private sector as well as officially unemployed, needs to be consulted. The 5D model of strategic planning assumes stakeholder engagement in all 3 main boxes and 5 phases. In order to ‘own the process’ the public can assist with assessing the current state (1st phase), dreaming specific visions for areas not otherwise covered and agreed upon (2nd phase), and then finally get consulted during design, document and delivery (3rd – 5th) phases. Indeed, there is an increasing demand globally, to address the “collective voice of citizens and stakeholders” in order to “improve both accountability and performance” of policy makers (Paul & Steedman, 1997, p. 27). For example, the most important institutional factor underlying the dramatic growth in the “East Asian miracle economies” has been identified as the presence of a

‘deliberation council’, or “a collaborative arrangement linking government, business and civil society” (Campos & Gonzales, 1997, p. 7). Even with all its specific historical, developmental and cultural features, nothing prevents the Bruneian civil service from enhancing its linking with business and community groups, for the benefit of all Bruneian citizens.

Simultaneously, the importance of the role of capable leaders cannot be overstated: “wise leadership and a supportive and capable government and civil service ... are complimentary and necessary to each other to bring about the development, to which the nation aspires” (Yunos, 2013, p. 140). Specifically, good – clear, consistent, understanding of the other's worldview, dialogical – communication is needed between permanent secretaries, deputy permanent secretaries, directors, senior and financial officers – as each group has an invaluable role in strategic planning processes. There should be an alignment between units and officers actually designing strategic planning and senior leaders to ensure their successful implementation. And, financial officers also need to advise about the financial feasibility of strategic plans. Without the financial backing, a strategic plan will almost inevitably “fall victim to the dreaded SPOT [Strategic Plans On Top Shelves ...gathering dust!] Syndrome” (Haines & McKinlay, 2009. p. iv and p. 4). On the other hand, the implementation will be more likely if these different groups share the same ideas and visions. In summary, involving as many groups and stakeholders as possible who need to ‘own’ the process of strategic planning as well as the outcomes, both within and outside of the organization, remains one of the key elements for the successful implementation of strategic plans in the future.

Finally, none of the above will be relevant if a long-term commitment from the collective leadership of the organization is not obtained (ibid, p. 5). This means getting the minister to commit to the strategic plan, getting permanent secretaries to commit to it, getting directors to commit to it, and finally, ensuring that everyone in the organization is aware of the existence and the importance of the strategic plan. Ideally, most of the employees in the organization will participate in the creation of the strategic plan, making the ownership, the commitment and the implementation all the more likely. Broadening the input via community engagement will also well help with the implementation – given that the ‘ownership’ of the plan will widen.

4.0 Conclusion: Trialing and Evaluating Effectiveness

Brunei has made remarkable strides not only to survive incredible historical challenges threatening its very existence, but to also become, in a relatively short period, a developed nation. Much more needs to be done, especially when it comes down to implementing Brunei's national long-term development vision Wawasan 2035. Strategic planning, properly done, can assist in this process. The 5D model of strategic planning is one simplified process which may be used to address the previous shortcomings of planning in Brunei, given the country's specific social context and history. The next step is to trial it with governmental agencies and a range of stakeholders so its effectiveness can be evaluated. The evolution of planning in general and strategic planning in particular, in Brunei and elsewhere, shows that public policy making arena is often "fraught with confusion, contradictions, and consternation" (Gerston, 1997, p. 3). This is why strategic planning needs to be understood as a policy-making *process* – continually to be trialed and improved. It is to be expected that a similar trajectory awaits the proposed 5D model of strategic planning – the readers of this article and policy makers are invited to trial it and improve on it, taking it out of "orderly boxes and precise diagrams and into the universe of issues and policies that float in and out of the policy-making arena" (ibid., p. ix).

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