

Human governance at the forefront

ON Sunday, the Chinese calendar moved into the Year of the Water Snake from that of the Water Dragon. As with any new year, this year too, carries an air of celebration and festivity. For many business people, the year of the snake is hoped to bring along a smooth ride ahead after a tumultuous year of embattling the dragon's antics. But does the world really hold promises for a better future?

It does not take rocket science to know that if we keep doing the same thing over and over again, the results will always be the same. This is precisely the scenario depicting a typical education framework offered by business schools worldwide. Despite continued criticism by employers of inept graduates with much room for improvement in adaptability and work ethics, business education curricula remained almost unchanged from what it was a long time ago.

It is for this reason among others that the decision makers and Senate

members of UPM voted for the establishment of a fully autonomous business school, the Putra Business School (PUTRA) to take over the activities of the former Graduate School of Management (GSM), UPM. The paradox between the

agendas of business schools and research universities led GSM to move away from the traditional academic-oriented business school regime.

Today, PUTRA is in a better position to chart a new path to meet the country's need for a business school that is of relevance to the requirements of industry. PUTRA has gone back to the drawing board to question the very purpose of its existence. That

the business fraternity has overtaken the role of governments in effecting the rakyat's well-being is now a *fait accompli*. Many business corporations' turnover and even profit exceed certain countries' GDP.

What this means is that proverbially, everyone in any nook and corner of the world can catch a cold from the sneeze

of these business leaders. In view of such a business backdrop, PUTRA propagates an educational system that brings out the meaning in human leaders. Towards this end, decision making and arrival at judgment must shift beyond the existing mainstream management norm of externally-imposed rules only and unrealistic robotic efficiency expectation into a new world order — human governance.

WHAT IS HUMAN GOVERNANCE?

Imagine realising that everything you thought you knew about human behaviour and management was wrong since it was founded upon the axioms of classical science which are found flawed and now debunked scientifically. If inanimate objects which are to follow physical laws are shown to be influenced by the method of questioning, think of how inappropriate it is for business schools to continue teaching that humans will behave in a predicted rational manner.

Perhaps the confusion came about when corporations were accorded the same rights as humans that we humans began to believe that we were only resources to serve the corporations.



Being subservient to the corporations, we have no choice but to comply with the rules of corporate governance solely. Any corporate misdeed is greeted with reactionary and stringent rules. The internal guiding light to do what is right as humans — human governance — has long been side-lined. Regardless, it is about time that the right worldview of humans and business is brought back. And who if not business schools are in the business to take on that role?

In cognisance of the fundamental flaws in the underpinning of business education, we at PUTRA are professing for a shift in the worldview of reality. We accept that the world is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) hence no one-size-fits-all rule will suffice.

To chart a path that no one has taken, a leader must move beyond standard operating procedures. Leaders must live on terrain, not a map, and this requires them to live the human in them.

With this realisation, PUTRA has taken measures to address the inadequacy of the traditionally-drawn management education syllabus. While awaiting a total revamp of the curriculum, we offer an interim intervention in the form of a new course that brings awareness to students of what it takes to actualise human governance. Although it is premature to say that we are able to effect change to our students' mindset, we take comfort that at least we are taking steps to redeem our earlier transgression of denying students of the right worldview of reality.

At PUTRA, the word *adab* — to put things in the right and proper place — encapsulates what we are about and how we are going about transforming ourselves and our pedagogy in our own way. PUTRA is still in its infancy, but we are greatly inspired to continue nurturing human leaders based on Eastern philosophy, steeped in spirituality that is paralleled by quantum physics.