Why aren't business schools able to fulfil expectations?

WHEN business schools were first created, their purpose was to help train business practitioners in more systematic and holistic methods on how to run their business entities. Over a period of years, business schools first trained better business people in two main areas — wisdom and ethical values — before the training with a focus on entrepreneurs began, and through all these steps, business schools flourished, especially so in the 60s thanks to the economic boom.

In the 1960s, the increased supply for business schools were a good fit thanks to the demand, as well as the fact that there were few changes in the workings of business, and lecturers could teach what they were taught when pursuing their business education. This is where the problem lies with business schools now — the economy is still booming, especially in Asia, but the changes in the industry has increased with a far greater rapidity. Now technology changes at a brisk pace, and so do the expectations of stakeholders and the students themselves. This is the gap that is felt so keenly between business schools and businesses themselves, as business schools are not able to cope with the changes, and employers complain about the standard of students that graduate. The fact is that a university education takes three to four years to complete — so how do we fulfil the industry needs?

One of the main reasons we don’t stand out as an attractive option to the business industry is that we don’t know how to initiate higher value creation. For us to do that, we have to organise a transformation of our management and business education, and when we do it, we have to be creative and innovative in producing future employable graduates. There are four components that we should focus on in this endeavour, namely transformation of institutions in terms of structures, systems, and processes; transformation of business students; an academic teacher transformation programme and an industry practitioner transformation programme.

For students, we should make admissions more rigorous and competitive, ensuring the likelihood of them to lead and succeed. Most people don’t realise that like many other careers, business is a calling. You have to have certain traits to become successful, have leadership qualities, and a strong character to make a lasting impression in the world of businessmen and entrepreneurs.

The industry practitioner transformation is one area that also needs immediate attention. The role of the industry expert is important to business education. While there are many from the industry that may be interested in sharing their experiences and knowledge about the real business world, many would not be able to do so in a structured and systematic way. There is a dire need for a small group of industry experts to collaborate with institutions of higher learning on how to work together so that future graduates can see the seeds of learning planted by their teachers and speakers. This is one CSR that many do not see as an important investment in human capital development.

We at UNIRAZAK believed that these transformations are much needed and critical towards building better employable graduates and a brighter future for our entrepreneurs and leaders of tomorrow.

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