

# Having a vision is about managing resources

**INSPIRING THE FUTURE:** Having a set of principles will ensure future goals are met with few blunders

**W**HEN it was first announced on Feb 28, 1991, it seemed so far away. Vision 2020 brought together the experiences of the Five-Year Plans and the Outline Perspective Plans and the rising expectations and aspirations of the nation.

Throughout the nation, across all organisations leaders formulated visions. Many creative civil servants and business leaders at all levels inspired themselves with visions in alignment.

Then education director-general Tan Sri Dr Wan Mohd Zahid Mohd Noordin and his team formulated the educational vision with eight thrusts in response to Vision 2020:

- UNITY;**
- MANAGEMENT** and leadership style;
- CARING** service;
- EMPOWERMENT** (from technical rationality to reflective rationali-

- ty);
- KNOWLEDGE** culture;
- CARING** schools;
- CULTURE** of excellence; and,
- A MONITORING** system.

For as long as the director-general was influential, the educational vision was the common language of that generation of educational leaders throughout the land.



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What is historically true of the changing influences of professional leaders is true also of political leaders.

With the changing of the guard and the shifting realities in the socio-political environment came changes in priorities, focus, approaches and principles.

Yet, there are some matters in education that are sustainable and some virtues that are sacred and eternal.

Six years away from 2020 is indeed brief development time. Vision 2020 is not divining the future but is about changing behaviours and putting in place fundamentals

today so that when the future arrives we are prepared with the Noah's Ark of survival and readiness for the new world.

Envisioning the future is not wishful thinking but is about managing present resources and human potentialities for future realities.

Educators have been visualising schools, universities and work places of the future, beyond 2020. One such significant contribution which leads minds beyond the locked timeline of 2020 is *Educational Leadership at 2050: Conjectures, Challenges, and Promises* by Rosemary Papa, Carol A. Mullen, Fenwick W. English and Theodore Creighton.

Although it sounds like science fiction, a realistic educational vision around which education development can be focused upon is articulated in the United Nations Organisation for Education, Science and Culture's Declaration of the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations of 1997.

One example of a visionary principle is in Article 4 of the declaration entitled, Preservation of Life on Earth: "The present generations have the responsibility to bequeath to future generations an Earth which will not one day be irreversibly damaged by human activity.

"Each generation inheriting the earth temporarily should take care

to use natural resources reasonably and ensure that life is not prejudiced by harmful modifications of the ecosystems and that scientific and technological progress in all fields does not harm life on Earth."

As there are medical, engineering, legal-judicial blunders — the blunders of the professions — there are also educational blunders.

Blunders are often created because of the arrogance of power and expertise, unwilling to listen to contesting viewpoints and alternative approaches to problem solving or proposals for new initiatives. The mindset that "might is right", blinds those who make decisions based on the wisdom that "right is might".

The visionary principles in universal declarations will deter national systems from making educational blunders.

Individuals, families, communities, nations and even the global communities make various kinds of educational blunders.

In all domains, some of these blunders are identified and confronted, some are swept under the carpet, some are denied, but blunders are blunders which will be recorded by history.

There are unwitting blunders, blunders by intent, blunders by professionals, politicians, ideologues, experts, as well as ordinary people.

There are blunders regarding philosophies, policies, practices, curriculum, assessments, teacher education, and cultures.

A way of reducing blunders is to nurture minds to understand the overarching paradigm of sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". (Brundtland Report, 1987)

The education vision must be at the centre of development, enlightening every citizen to see human and national development as intertwined: society, environment, culture, economy, scientific and technological advances.

Actions taken today to solve problems of various kinds and magnitude, like poverty, unemployment, and technological underdevelopment determine the fate of future generations.

The best of educational systems are those with enlightened policies and practices in the interest of students and the future generations, with consensus of the majority of citizens across political divides.

Also, the best of systems are about motivation and inspiration, not control or conspiracy, for by its very nature, the development of authentic human potentialities requires the energies and accountabilities of each individual person.

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