

VSB: A Business School with an Entrepreneurial Mindset

As I go back home to the national university, the University of the Philippines, I bring with me a wealth of experience as an administrator, an academic and, most importantly, a leader of the Virata School of Business (VSB). With this experience, I envision VSB as a business school with an entrepreneurial mindset. When we think of entrepreneurship, the first thing that crosses our minds is a start-up, that is, a new business or enterprise. However, entrepreneurship also entails a mindset that includes creativity and innovation, comfort with risk, and communication and collaboration, among others. It is through this entrepreneurial mindset as espoused by the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (www.nfte.com) that I move for a vibrant VSB.

For VSB to be a business school with an entrepreneurial mindset, I plan to focus on the following traits: (1) critical thinking and problem-solving; (2) flexibility and adaptability; (3) communication and collaboration; (4) creativity and innovation; and (5) future orientation.

On Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

VSB will always be the top business school in the country. Students flock to it. Faculty choose it. Industry wants its graduates. VSB as a business school that is both a critical thinker and a problem solver must be at the forefront of national development by leading discussions and providing solutions to challenges that affect businesses whether big or small.

The curricula must be attuned and relevant to the 21st century where foundation courses are further intensified and are coupled with courses that are both inter and multidisciplinary such as arts and heritage management, data science, and international relations. Outcomes must go beyond traditional forms of assessments where students will undergo service-learning activities, and experiential and action-based learning activities, such as the incubation of social enterprises to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and acting as consultants to various organizations in solving real problems, respectively.

Faculty development will be a topmost priority through additional provisions for studies, trainings, and immersions abroad to reduce inbreeding. VSB has nowhere to go but to learn from outside the Philippines since it is already the best in the country. Lifelong learning among faculty and staff will be funded and prioritized because they are crucial in creating reflective, collaborative, and analytic mindsets needed in VSB.

On Flexibility and Adaptability

The change from CBA to VSB is an example of how the institution is willing to adapt and change to overcome both present and future challenges. As dean, I would espouse a college that is open to ideas and a school that adapts to changing environments to further improve its national relevance and global reach.

A flexible and adaptable curriculum for students would have provisions for additional electives outside of the college as well as the ability to study or be immersed abroad for an extended period. Students who take time off to study or undergo practicum abroad (or even an extended practicum in the Philippines) would have their graduation delayed. Graduate students cannot take electives outside of the program and the schedules are not flexible. I want students to have more autonomy in choosing their courses and designing their programs by having a curriculum that is customizable and unique according to their needs and preferred outcomes.

As a flexible and adaptable college, VSB will harness technology to challenge the model of business education in the country. The college will be at the forefront of making the most out of disruptive technologies by offering courses in various delivery formats to increase the reach of the school beyond Diliman and BGC. The college should maximize the use of learning management systems and integrate MOOCs in its programs. Courses, especially graduate programs, should be stackable so they can be taken anytime and the provision of both online and face-to-face micro-masters programs through VSB-created MOOCs should be made available not just to students of VSB but to the country and the rest of the world.

On Communication and Collaboration

VSB must make sure that its stakeholders are widely informed of its activities, projects, and programs. In my experience as dean of another business school, I was surprised by the dearth of engagement of VSB to the wider community. VSB has very strong ties with industry, government, and other organizations but I seldom see its engagement with other business schools in the country. I envision VSB to be the center of management education in the country by not only training the best and the brightest students but by reaching out to the other 1,200-plus business schools in the country. The college should share its best practices in teaching, research and extension to professors and researchers in the field of management. With this engagement, VSB will have a wider reach by training teachers to become responsible management educators through value and evidence-based management, and ethical leadership befitting honor and excellence that the University of the Philippines is known for.

Students would have more opportunities to communicate and collaborate by learning outside the college, the University, and the country. I would like students to be exposed to various academic and non-academic institutions in their course of study in VSB. A flexible curriculum would pave the way for increased collaboration activities. This also means that VSB must strengthen its engagement with schools in the region, in other parts of Asia and the Pacific, as well as Europe and the Americas. Our students deserve to see and experience the world outside of the university because a global outlook is necessary in today's world.

The partnerships of VSB with industry is already topnotch but I would like the college to go beyond traditional businesses. The school should also have more partnerships for teaching, research, and extension with micro, small and medium enterprises, government, NGOs, and communities. Business is not just about Wall Street, Ayala Avenue or BGC but it should be about the wider community as well. This would further increase the relevance and reach of VSB through the respect it shares as well as gains from these engagements.

On Creativity and Innovation

I envision VSB as a truly creative and innovative business school by providing areas for students to think, play, and act by having creative hubs and makerspaces. This would also be provided to academic staff. The college should start its own incubation and innovation center for alumni, students, and simply anyone who has a business idea that could change the world. This would be created in relation to what the university already has (e.g. ISSI and NEC) and would focus on enterprises that answer the challenges of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Design Thinking will be embedded in the curriculum and the process of solving problems in the college would be through this approach. Faculty and staff would undergo this training to make the organization more agile, flexible, and innovative. Every graduate, faculty, staff, and member of VSB would have a mindset that always looks for continuous improvements both in their professional and personal spheres.

On Future Orientation

VSB is already number one in the country but this is not enough. I have been very active in accreditation and assessment in various national and international bodies such as PAASCU, AUNQA, and AACSB. I will push for both national and international accreditation and assessment when I become dean of VSB. These are ways of checking our processes and making us better in the long run. It is not enough that it is number one and it is never enough that it rests on its own laurels. I will open VSB to accreditation and assessment to continuously improve its policies, processes, and programs to be a business school that is responsive to the changes being brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

As dean of VSB, I would propel the school towards this entrepreneurial mindset. A mindset that would pave the way for changes that are not only essential but necessary to bring forth a business school with global reach and national relevance.