

Looking backward - looking forward

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As the sun sets on 2022, it is important to pause and reflect on what lies behind us, and what we can expect in the future, as management educator.



2022 has seen the continued impact of the drivers of change. Technology is relentlessly reconfiguring the way we work, socialise and travel – reshaping socio-economic systems across the globe. As far as energy and the environment is concerned, the changing energy mix, shortage of resources, and climate issues are becoming even more prominent. Economically and politically, knowledge expansion and the information society are growing drastically, along with noticeable economic shifts, and globalisation. Socially and healthwise, demographic shifts, urbanisation, mobility, and changing health and wellness demands continue unabated.

We've seen a year in which inflation has surged in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. On the upside, though, we've also seen the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions and the reopening of international borders. Then the Russian invasion of Ukraine introduced the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II, which adversely impacted on the global economy and society. Subsequently, 2022 saw an accentuation of the global challenges of, among others, financial system failure, natural resource depletion, unpredictable climate patterns, inequality, extreme poverty, hunger, and a lack of education.

On the local front, 2022 saw a perpetuation of the inability of the power utility to keep the lights on, putting more pressure on the local economy and the country's citizens to make ends meet. This was compounded by political instability, crime, and corruption.

One would think that making wise and responsible decisions in turbulent times is a given by government, health, security and business leaders. But—woe to us—does an overview of 2022 depict that? Definitely not! The outcomes of these decisions by supposed leaders have had far-reaching consequences that have been chronicled in another year of wars, miseries, economic instability, poverty, and socio-political turmoil across the globe.

It was in this quagmire of unfolding adverse events that business schools had to find their way, becoming more attentive to their moral obligation to demonstrably commit to responsible management education against the backdrop of management and leadership challenges such as abuse of power, unethical practices, and a disregard for matters of sustainability.

Within the business school discourse, 2022 has seen an increased focus on responsible management education. Matters such as responsible leadership, corporate governance, ethics, sustainability, environmental stewardship, and the like have

featured prominently on the agendas of business schools and accreditation bodies. In 2022, most of the academic and accreditation body conferences, webinars, colloquia, conventions, and expos had matters of responsible management education and associated topics as main themes. The jury is no longer out; judgement has been made. Business schools know what is expected from them if they are to remain relevant.

Let me now turn my gaze forward, to 2023. At Milpark Business School, we know that we cannot 'travel' purposefully and passionately into the future by only staring into the rear-view mirror. Where you focus your gaze is where you will go and fixating on the past will only make you go nowhere slowly. We need to learn from the past and use the experience we gain to build on strengths to pursue a better tomorrow.

Admittedly, most of 2022's challenges will be dragged into 2023. However, the challenge lies in whether one passively plods along, waiting for the future to happen with a *que sera sera* attitude, or purposefully and passionately sets out to cocreate a future in which all stakeholders will benefit. At Milpark, our vision is the latter. In 2023, capitalising on our distinctive online capability, we will empower people to become more than they dared to imagine in their businesses, careers, professions, and life, unlocking their potential through trusted, leading online learning journeys. Through this, we aim to help shape South Africa's economy to grow and prosper, and strengthen its social fabric.

We will help our students to answer critical questions relating to enhanced practical wisdom, namely: Where are we going? Who gains, and who loses? By which mechanisms of power are we propelled forward, and are they desirable? As a responsible management educator, firmly grounded on the main human virtues of wisdom (prudence), courage (fortitude), moderation (temperance) and justice (liberty), we will be a catalyst for producing the calibre of leader needed in an age characterised by humanitarian crises, political disputes, wars, environmental degradation, pollution, corruption, and unemployment.

But also, the calibre of leader who can navigate exponential technological progress which, in its velocity, breadth, depth, and systems impact, is transforming entire systems within and across companies, industries, society, and countries. Finally, our graduates will be able to make constructive operational business decisions relating to staff, contracts with vendors and suppliers, short- and long-term strategies, organisational structures, investments in research and development, and financial matters. Milpark graduates will have the skills that are needed to thrive in a complex, globalised marketplace that is constantly changing.

As we bid farewell to 2022, let's take what we have learnt from the challenges we have faced to shape our educational journeys in 2023 to align with personal, professional, and societal goals.

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