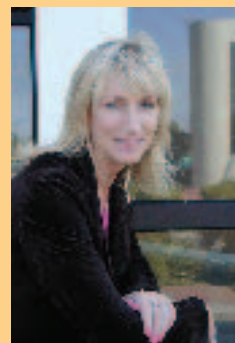


Trends in business education: What is changing?

- Amanda Matthee

Competition, globalisation, economic uncertainties, demanding students and the search for top faculty are forcing us to rethink business education and its value. How has this changed the landscape of business learning?



Jeanette Purcell



Prof Eon Smit

In the last two years, applications for MBA programmes have decreased slightly, potential MBA students have become sophisticated clients, and more students opt for part-time and distance learning MBAs. Then there is the competition for and shortage of top faculty," says Jeanette Purcell, CEO of the international accreditation agency, the Association of MBAs (AMBA). She recently travelled from London to talk about international trends in business education at the 40th anniversary of the University of Stellenbosch Business School (USB).

According to her, the future of the MBA depends on:

- A modernised MBA that reflects today's business environment
- A real commitment to quality assurance
- Top business schools that differentiate themselves and that are truly global
- Enlightened employers and governments who are committed to lifelong learning and who understand the contribution which education makes to successful organisations, the economy and society.

Professor Eon Smit, director of the

USB, says international accreditation, internationalisation, just-in-time executive education, research output and the search for top faculty are among the main issues with which South African business schools are currently dealing.

"The stringent requirements of the three main accreditation bodies – EFMD (EQUIS), AMBA and AACSB – are causing business schools to become more homogeneous. As a result, top schools are forced to focus on their unique advantages.

"Accreditation is based on rigorous audits by international experts. It's not based on perceptions. I believe it is only through a process of auditing that an objective guarantee of international quality can be achieved."

Professor Smit says the international character of the USB is, inter alia,

shaped by its relationship with its overseas business school partners, the high percentage of international students, the number of international study tour groups visiting the USB, the flow of international faculty to the USB and USB faculty teaching at overseas business schools.

Professor Wim Gevers, USB's associate director: Academic, highlighted three new trends within the MBA itself.

"To meet the needs of the business industry,

"Accreditation is based on hard, rigorous audits by international experts. It's not based on perceptions. I believe this is the only objective guarantee of international quality."

MBA programmes, particularly in South Africa, should incorporate the development of leadership, entrepreneurship and mentorship abilities.

"The MBA must focus on leadership skills and the personal development of leaders. It should nurture entrepreneurial skills because a growing economy depends on the new ideas generated by entrepreneurs. In addition, the MBA must deliver mentors because black economic empowerment is also putting increasing pressure on managers to become mentors.

"The USB MBA has a particularly strong focus on leadership, entrepreneurship and mentorship."

- *The USB has EQUIS and AMBA accreditation.*



Foto: Anton Jordaan

After MBA, what next?

Internationally, business is making greater demands on those who aspire to top positions.

One of the ways in which the University of Stellenbosch Business School builds intellectual capacity is via its full-time PhD, for which bursaries are available on a competitive basis. The School also offers a 5-day doctoral research training programme for prospective PhD students. In addition, the USB will soon launch an Executive PhD with emphasis on employable knowledge.

"The PhD in business administration is becoming a sought-after qualification internationally, as public and private enterprises strive to achieve higher levels of business excellence through research," says Prof Hein Oosthuizen, who is tasked with the launch of the new Executive PhD.

The demand for shorter business learning programmes to sharpen crucial business skills or to act as refresher courses has also increased phenomenally. USB Executive Development Ltd (USB-ED), the company that manages the USB's shorter management programmes, offers three 'streams' of programmes: comprehensive management programmes (for entry-level managers, senior managers and executives), specialist programmes (e.g. project, wine, financial, supply chain and labour relations management) and leadership programmes (e.g. strategic leadership and human capital management).

Mylpaal 40

USB kyk padlangs terug

– Douglas Davis

Dat die USB vandag 'n onaanvegbare posisie onder die top sakeskole van die wêreld beklee, is grotendeels te danke aan die kaliber direkteure wat hom in sy bestaan van 40 jaar gelei het. Dit was merkwaardige, soms moeilike jare.

Die ontstaan in 1964 van die Bestuurskool het hoegenaamd nie met 'n oormaat geesdrif gepaard gegaan nie. Inteendeel. Daar was min begrip vir wat eerste direkteur prof Jan van der Meulen wou doen. Sy pogings is as 'onakademies' afgemaak, en dat dit nie by die US tuishoort nie.

'n MBA-graad het egter werklikheid geword en in 1964 het die eerste 14 MBA-studente met hul deeltydse studies in Bellville begin. Slegs deeltydse dosente, plaaslik en oorsee, is gebruik.

Die eerste vier heeltydse personeellede is in 1970 aangestel – Van der Meulen (direkteur), Helgaard Muller (senior lektor), 'n sekretaresse en 'n assistent.

Tweede direkteur prof Rob Tusenius het 'n baanbrekers-

program oor entrepreneurskap in 1973 as deel van die MBA-kurrikulum ingestel. Dit is wyd in die pers gerapporteer met opskrifte soos "The school that puts practice before theory".

Muller het in 1975 die derde direkteur geword en dié pos 13 jaar beklee – die langste nog van enige direkteur. Gedurende sy termyn is die USB 'in die bobbejaanhokke' agter die Karl Bremer-hospitaal in Bellville gehuisves.

'n Splinternuwe gebou en toegewyde personeel het in 1989 op prof Arminius Archer gewag toe hy die USB se vierde direkteur geword het.

Sy opvolger, Dave Tromp, het internasionale ooreenkomste gesmee, soos ook die huidige direkteur, prof Eon Smit, wie se agt jaar in die "warm stoel" gekenmerk is deur snel verandering.

"Die personeel moes aanpas by die bestuur van 'n openbare maatskappy vir nie-graadprogramme, en die vereistes wat 'n groeiende internasionale studentekorps en kliëntebasis aan hulle stel," sê Smit.

"Benewens akademies, gee mense van topposisies in die werkswêreld nou klas want die toekoms behoort aan daardie skole wat akademiese kundigheid met praktiese ervaring op die hoogste vlak aanvul."



Foto: Anton Jordaan