

UCT GSB unveils 10 new case studies to boost business learning in Africa

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The UCT Graduate School of Business has published a collection of quality teaching case studies that are set to help business school students across the world get to grips with the social and economic realities of doing business in Africa.

The UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) has announced the publication of its first collection of 10 case studies and teaching notes designed to give business students – both in Africa and around the world – a better grasp of the challenges and opportunities of doing business in an emerging market.

The collection, which will be online and available for purchase from January 2018, is expected to draw significant attention.

Internationally, business schools make extensive use of teaching case studies as an integral part of the MBA curriculum, explains Claire Barnardo, Manager of GSB's Case Writing Centre. The students examine business cases that focus on real-world examples and present the issues with which the business protagonists were confronted. Students are then challenged to devise solutions to the case being taught, making for a rich learning experience.

"Some business schools teach mainly with the case study method," says Barnardo. "The best example would be Harvard University, where the case study teaching method was perfected. Because of the pre-eminence of developed economies and a lack of local material, most of the case studies used in business schools in Africa and elsewhere in the world mostly focus on developed western economies and societies.

"However, there is a growing and increasingly urgent demand for case studies which research current and relevant issues on the African continent, where circumstances and conditions are often vastly different from those prevailing in the European context," she continues.

"There is a shortage of such material from Africa which we are aiming to rectify."

Barnardo has been working on the collection for the better part of the year, selecting case studies drafted at the UCT GSB within the past five years that offered good potential for publication. The studies highlight a variety of different contexts, including the automotive, mining, financial, transport, hospitality, healthcare and publishing sectors, among others.

"It was an extensive and challenging process," she says. "I worked closely with the faculty involved on each case and then a panel of editors and writers to bring these studies to life and translate them into a teaching format. We have drawn the most relevant from a number of categories, including business strategy, organisational change, innovation, entrepreneurship, leadership and especially social innovation, which is one of the differentiators of the GSB itself."

The case method enables students to get to grips with what business is like in real life, dealing with complex business solutions. Students must have prepared the case beforehand and then take control of the session while faculty facilitate the debate and discussion. Barnardo points out that this method is a great deal more demanding for the teachers because of the amount of time required in preparation. But the learning experience is more rewarding too.

"Having a good case study with good teaching notes is an invaluable teaching aid in this regard," she comments. "On occasion, we are also able to introduce the protagonist of a particular case study to participate in the debate in the classroom, or we will have among the students, people who are actually employed in the business under discussion. This creates a new dimension of information and experience that can be shared."

“The case studies are informative, high-quality and well researched and the school is extremely proud of them,” says GSB Director, Associate Professor Mills Soko. “The GSB is invested in the development of quality case material to boost learning and development on the continent. This also plays a key role in the so-called decolonisation of the curriculum,” he says.

The case studies will be placed in the GSB’s own library and the first 10 to be published will soon be available for purchase. Interested parties will be able to see the inspection copy, though not the teaching notes, and will be able to buy case studies of interest to them. Negotiations are also under way to publish the case studies on international platforms, including Sage, Emerald and the Case Centre. Each platform has its own formats and specifications, which must be respected. Currently, Barnardo is determining which platforms are most suitable for each individual case study.

“It can take anything from six months to a year in working with various publishers to reach the final published version. One of our main differentiators in publishing case studies is the excellent and comprehensive teaching notes we provide for professors. We want to be known for the exceptional teaching studies we provide on local business.”

The GSB Case Writing Centre was established in 2016 with a joint investment from the Harvard Business School Alumni Africa Club of SA and the UCT GSB. Last month, one of the case studies featured in the collection on the governance failures at African Bank, was awarded [first prize](#) at the African Governance Showcase competition.

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