

Business schools put their heads together to solve wicked problems

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One of Africa's top business school, the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business (GSB), has partnered with one of Canada's top business schools, the Rotman School of Management, to offer the new Postgraduate Diploma in Management Practice specialising in Innovation Leadership.

The 12-month programme has both the Dean of the Rotman School of Management, Professor Roger Martin, and the Director of the GSB, Professor Walter Baets, teaching core principles.

Baets says that the collaboration between the two schools is aimed at approaching innovation from a fresh angle. "For the first time, two top schools are coming together to combine two different perspectives on tackling innovation, with expertise from both schools being used to build and teach on the programme," he says.

Innovation is a much sought after skill in leaders, but training in the area is severely lacking, says Baets. The Innovation Leadership programme aims to correct this.

"The course is premised on the notion that the world is a holistic entity and you have to treat it as such. Can business leaders innovate, not technologically, but in our business models? Can we, for instance, design from the bottom of the pyramid, not just the top? Questions such as this are crucial for the survival and sustainability of companies," says Baets.

The course is geared towards tackling wicked problems; and the programme consists of four modules, each bringing different perspectives to bear on the topic.

Rotman brings its expertise to two modules: integrative thinking and business design, and the GSB brings its experience in systems thinking and organisational learning, all of which come together into one comprehensive programme.

Jennifer Riel, Director of Content and Communications at Rotman, and lecturer on the programme, says "We thought it would be interesting to bring these different aspects together, and then ask participants to reflect on their own decision-making processes - to bring their own personal ways of tackling these problems into the course."

She says that "wicked problems are the complex social and developmental business problems that change as you work through them. To begin to solve these, one has to apply new ways of thinking."

The modules are spaced over eight months, with a six-week inter-modular period during which a work assignment and position paper will be set to take participants' learning and reflection to deeper levels.

The programme begins in December 2012 and runs until December 2013. To apply or for more information, please contact Samantha Van Der Ross on 021 406 1274, or email her at customised.learning@gsb.uct.ac.za.

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