



MARCH 2021

New African Bon-Bon Initiative

Prepare for the rise of the informal sector

Ploughing expertise into the Agri sector

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Message and overview by Prof Jan van Romburgh,  
director of the NWU Business School.

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# Introducing NWU Business School African Bon-Bons Initiative

The African continent is a global treasure. It deserves to be recognised by unearthing the wisdom and talent hidden in the silent voices of her people. Answers to the multiple challenges facing this continent can be found only by African people seeking and uncovering African solutions.

As experts and academics of the NWU Business School, we have decided to fully embark on this quest – our main aim to shape executive minds in Africa.

We have redeveloped our African-themed logo, which now represents the Business School's wish to embed its fingerprint in Africa. We have also revisited the distinctiveness of our solutions for African challenges. These solutions pertain to not only specialised education for executives, but also wider economic growth – with emphasis on sustainability. In this way, we want to establish ourselves as the business school leader in Africa.

To achieve this, we are putting our expertise where our mouths are!

Bon-Bons are small, tasty pieces of candy. So is this initiative: compact suggestions for Africa, each bursting with flavour.

The NWU Business School African Bon-Bons initiative have recently been launched. Our experts, researchers and academics will keep their finger on the rapid pulse of African current affairs and conduct five-minute interviews with relevant African role-players.



These interviews will be recorded and suggestions will be packaged in a nutshell to be distributed by the Business School to the media, our alumni and the public.

“We need to be relevant to our continent,” explains Prof Jan van Romburgh, director of the NWU Business School. “We have an obligation to use our expertise to address issues such as water shortages, food security, lack of leadership, health and safety, unemployment, corruption, political instability, etc. By hearing first-hand from the voices of Africa – their concerns, their needs – we will be in a position to provide innovative ideas to change Africa for the better.”





# The role of traditional leaders in our communities

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In both academic and business circles, little is understood about traditional leadership and its relevance in modern democratic society. Traditional leadership is a form of governance that is still prevalent in South African rural communities, especially in the former homelands. The general perception is that this form of governance directly contradicts a democratic system of governance, and it is often perceived to be an autocratic form of leadership.

Approximately 17 million hectares of land (14% of South Africa), previously classified as homelands, are currently under the stewardship of traditional leaders. Many business opportunities exist in these communities, such as mining, farming, tourism and FMCG retail. In order to unlock the potential, businesses might need to foster an appreciation of the possible impact that this form of governance might have on their ability to successfully establish themselves in those areas.

On 17 February 2021, Prof Jan van Romburgh, Director of the NWU Business School, and Prof Linda du

Plessis, Vice Principal of the NWU, hosted Kgosi Mabe, Chairperson of the North West House of Traditional Leaders, accompanied by Kgosi Molete, Deputy Chairperson of the North West House of Traditional Leaders and the secretary.

The NWU Business School is strongly pursuing a focus on Africa and aspires to shape executive minds in Africa. This meeting was therefore a positive step towards our pursuit, and many areas of possible collaboration were identified in the meeting. According to the House of Traditional Leaders, the expertise of the NWU Business School will enable the House to assist the DiKgosi to sharpen their administration skills and serve their communities more effectively. The opportunity to conduct research in these communities was also highlighted as a possible area of collaboration.

The discussion was both informative and insightful. According to Kgosi Mabe, the traditional system of leadership is often dismissed as being an undemocratic and autocratic system of governance because the focus is usually only on how the leader is elected. However, in his view, traditional

leadership is a deeper reflection of democratic participation because, before decisions are made, a Kgotlha (Council) is convened in which the community participates. This stands in contrast to a situation where the community is consulted only to elect a leader, who is then essentially given the power to make decisions on behalf of the community for a given period.

It is likely that a Memorandum of Understanding will be concluded within the coming weeks, identifying areas of possible collaboration between the NWU and the North West House of Traditional Leaders.

**Interviewer: Mr Orabile Manyapelolo**



# The digital revolution in Africa

Dr Alistair Gaopaleloe Mokoena is a Chartered Marketer, currently the CEO of Google South Africa. He has developed a critical success factors (CSF) framework to sustain not only South African advertising agencies in the digital age, but also those of other African countries.

The advertising ecosystem has been digitally disrupted, exposing weaknesses in the business model that African, including South African, advertising agencies have relied on for decades. As a result, many advertising agencies are losing business to new dynamic and nimble competitors who have emerged in the digital age. The CSF framework consists of the following pillars: modern marketing principles, effective advertising, agency sustainability, must-have skills for advertising agencies, key digital capabilities for advertising agencies and clients, and agency structure and process considerations.

Because of his academic and industry knowledge and experience, Dr Mokoena was approached for his view on the following:

- General overview of Africa's potential opportunities in the current and future digital revolution.
- Africa's media landscape, and how this could contribute to African-based digital economies.
- Google South Africa's contribution to the rest of Africa's economies within the digital space.

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**Interviewer: Prof JJ Prinsloo**





# Some of the skills issues for business in Africa



The worry list for business leaders in Business Africa is long. Think of expensive transaction costs that culminate in questions such as whether clients have access to hard currency for payment. Or the massive infrastructure spending needed to function more efficiently. In this regard, Fauconnier (2021) calculated that Africa should spend more than R1.9 trillion a year, taking into account the importance of logistics on the continent.

And the issue is growing more urgent. The markets in Africa must become more hospitable and cost-effective for foreign companies to attract much-needed FDI. Also, the cost and speed of doing business need to improve. The continent's agro-potential (its largest economic sector at 15% of GDP) is far greater than its prevailing production levels, and many countries are net importers of food. Food security remains a crucial concern.

According to our next Bon Bon guest, Prof Frednard Gideon, the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Namibia, business in Africa is hampered by acute skills shortages and a lack of skills transfers.

The relative shortages of the required skills, in addition to functional illiteracy, can be addressed in various ways, for example, retraining the existing workforce and adapting already acquired skills to new conditions and requirements. Furthermore, recruitment practices could be reconsidered and partnerships established between industries and

available educational facilities. Outsourcing of contingent labour such as freelance workers can also be a cost-effective way to address immediate issues in the operating environment.

Business skills in the formal sector of Business Africa need to be accompanied by more proactive attitudes (not a lack of initiative), as well as the ability not to speak out about a more senior manager in the organisational hierarchy. The ability to add value, while applying critical thinking (a charge against university graduates), is also important for Business Africa. Although effective teamwork is prioritised, there is a clear lack of teamwork skills in spite of prerequisites that individual members possess emotional intelligence. Business Africa needs a greater growth mindset through its managerial leadership corps, with agility to be a critical skill in the VUCA market environment: "It's not the strongest of the species... nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the most adaptable to change."

In fact, the above is accentuated by a leadership vacuum in Africa, among other things, to inspire your team in the workplace toward a fundamental value drive. This is where the NWU Business School has repositioned itself, with a strong emphasis on shaping executive minds in Africa. Join us!

**Interviewer: Prof Ronnie Lotriet**

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## Self-power and building trust



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### *From jobless to iconic self-initiated job creator- an informal African reality*

It is well known that the informal sector is a significant part of the workforce and that this type of employment is pivotal in keeping households above the poverty line, especially in the African continent. Many people, especially in South Africa, who find themselves in poverty are depending on government for support. This is not the case of Alexis Eluta Mbomba who in 1999 migrated from the Democratic Republic of Congo with his wife, his positive spirit and a car licence to South Africa. Today, 21 years later, he is an icon because he crafted a unique job opportunity for himself and other jobless people and sustaining it for 19 years in the busy streets of Kalk Bay, a tourist town in the Western Cape Peninsula. His venture is about safe car parking in the hub of the town where parking is a nightmare.

According to Prof Yvonne du Plessis of the NWU Business School, who interviewed Alex, he will rail in visitors who are desperately looking for parking in Kalk Bay. Alex will convince the visitors to hand-over the car (big or small) and keys, find parking, keep it safe and return the car with keys at the pick-up point to a relaxed and happy visitor. He became an icon in Kalk Bay to both international and national visitors who many have learned to know him and entrust their cars and goods with Alex whilst enjoying the seaside town.

“Obviously Alex knows how to make a living for himself and family, through his commitment and trustworthiness in this venture, but why and how did Alex manage to sustain his career and become an icon? In the interview video, the work of Alex is visible and he tells us more about how his personal value system of self-power, belief, respect, trustworthiness and endurance assisted him to be economically independent. We need more Alex’s to alleviate poverty and other socio-economic challenges in Africa,” Prof Yvonne says.

**Interviewer: Prof Yvonne du Plessis**







# Banking sector in Africa – Opportunities and pitfalls

South Africa has a very sophisticated financial services sector which is highly regulated, and to some extent was able to survive the 2008 global financial crisis better than banks and institutions in other countries. Ultimately, the South African financial services sector has seen aggressive expansion of prominent banks into Africa – evidence of the perceived potential Africa holds for the banking sector in particular.

In this Bon Bon interview, Prof Jan van Romburgh, chief director of the NWU Business School, speaks to the CEO of First Capital Bank in Africa, Mr Jaco Viljoen. Mr Viljoen has more than 20 years' experience in the African banking arena and formerly held positions in Uganda, Nigeria Botswana and currently Malawi. Mr Viljoen explains his views on the opportunities and pitfalls of doing business in Africa and also ponders into why it is important to have a relevant MBA.

**Interviewer: Prof Jan van Romburgh**



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# New members of NWU Business School Advisory Board

It is a great honour to congratulate the following individuals as newly elected members of the NWU Business School's Advisory Board.

Jeremy Sampson is currently the managing director of Brand Finance Africa the London based global group in 20+ countries (specialising in brand valuation and measuring brand strength and reputation). In addition he consults, mentors, advises, writes and speaks and is very active in the media, including hosting programmes for Classic fm and being The Brandfather weekly on Classic Business (since January 2018). Jeremy's career span across working in London and Johannesburg in marketing, advertising, graphic design, public relations, reputation management and branding.

He won numerous awards along the way in the UK, USA and South Africa. In 2010 he was awarded the prestigious Financial Mail AdFocus Lifetime Achievement Award, the only brander/designer to win the accolade, usually reserved for the advertising fraternity. Apart from the worlds of reputation, brands and branding his interests include photography, art and printmaking and the world of wine for which he has written many articles.

As a Traditional Leader, Kgosi Moshe Mabe is no stranger to serving in important roles. He has been elected for three consecutive terms as the chairperson of North West Provincial House of Traditional Leaders. His leadership spans over 20 years as Kgosi of Batlhako Ba Matutu in Mabeskraal. He has served as

member of Invest North West Board and was Chairperson of North West Provincial Heritage Agency for three years and we are sure that his experience will be utilised with us.

According to Prof Jan van Romburgh, chief director of the NWU Business School, the advisory board has always played a pivotal role in the advancement of the Business School's reputation, quality and high standards. "We look forward to the board's continuous hard work and initiatives. I wish to congratulate these two members and wish them well with their new tasks. We welcome your inputs, based on your knowledge and experience, but most of all, for the commitment and passion you have for the NWU Business School," he said.

The advisory board offers leadership and advice on the efficient and effective governance of the School:

- by helping to build bridges between the Business School and the business community;
- by means of the evaluation of and feedback on the implementation of the new strategic plan of the School;
- by providing up-to-date input on changing training and development needs;
- through the assessment and evaluation of the financial strategy of the School;
- by supporting the negotiation and promotional processes of the School; and
- by offering advice on the best practices in the business and business school environments, respectively.





# *We are proud of our alumni!*

As we continue to celebrate our alumni, we wish to introduce Prof Ahmed Shaikh, who has been a strategic and multidisciplinary management professional in the private higher education sector in Southern Africa since 2002.

Prof Ahmed started his working career as a mechanical engineer at an edible oils engineering plant. After his stint in engineering, Prof Ahmed joined an NGO focused on community development and education projects across Southern Africa. He spent ten years working in the NGO sector and served as an executive board member for a number of non-profit organisations.

During this time, Prof Ahmed travelled extensively across Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia. For the past 18 years, he has been involved in the private higher education sector in Southern Africa. He currently serves as the Managing Director of REGENT Business School.

Prof Ahmed's involvement in higher education spans across the African continent via the pan-African network of private universities (Honoris

United Universities). He served as the Deputy President of the South African Business School's Association (SABSA) and was until recently the research advisor to the Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry in South Africa.

He holds an MBA and PhD in Business Administration from the NWU Business School. He continues to write and publish articles on a range of topics, including higher education, technology in business, employability and leadership. He is currently a visiting professor with a large public university in Russia.

Prof Ahmed lives in Durban, South Africa, with his wife and three children. In his spare time, he explores his passion for classic, vintage and muscle cars.

His collection boasts a 1964 VW Split Window Kombi, a 1955 Chevy pickup, and a 1973 Capri Perana, one of only 500 believed to have been built (number BG 384). Although he admits that it is tough selecting a favourite, he says: "I guess it is my Fairmont GT because it was my first classic car that I bought 25 years ago – so it's a little more special to me."

# Agents of change: inclusivity in academia

by the Association of MBA's (AMBA)



Covid-19 has exposed a number of global inequalities and is set to deepen them further. Can higher education and academic research help turn the tide? Sally Wilson draws on findings from Emerald Publishing's Global Inclusivity Report 2020 to tackle topics of social mobility, class divides and inequalities, from an academic perspective.

Covid-19 has brought into sharp focus long-standing inequalities linked to race, gender, class, income, education, health, and technology. The pandemic's disruption to education, for example, has had an unequal effect on society, particularly impacting disadvantaged groups that lack access to a computer and/or reliable internet.

In the UK, for instance, the class divide within education has plagued headlines for months. Over the summer, the scrapping of its A-level exams for those leaving high school in favour of a marking algorithm sparked uproar when the new system downgraded close to 40% of grades submitted by teachers, with suggestions that students from disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to have their grades marked down. Such issues reinforce the UK education system's long-standing inequalities. A 2018 study by educational charity, the Sutton Trust, found that access to the best universities is not only determined by attainment but factors including where a student lives and the school they attend. The Access to Advantage report revealed that 42% of all Oxbridge places go to private school students, even though just 7% of the UK school population attend such schools.

## Universities playing their part

Inequalities in education persist worldwide and many universities are working to improve the representation of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, or first-generation students, in line with

their commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Business Schools have a pivotal role in reducing inequalities because of the high number of MBA graduates who go on to hold leadership positions within companies. Many Business Schools recognise their responsibility in encouraging diversity and have introduced measures, such as bias training and targeted recruitment drives, to attract students from underrepresented groups.

Diverse teams are widely known to be more successful. Research by software firm, Cloverpop, found that diverse groups made better decisions than individuals 87% of the time and that decisions were made twice as quickly. At a time when the global economy and societies around the world are reeling from the impact of Covid-19, Business Schools may be more critical than ever in aiding our recovery and promoting a fairer and more sustainable future for all.

## Class is a major roadblock to inclusivity

Gathering the views of more than 1 000 academics across 99 countries globally and comparing them to those of 1 000 members of the general public in both the UK and US, Emerald Publishing's *Global Inclusivity Report 2020* sought to understand the academic community's perceptions of inclusivity and the role of research in creating a more inclusive society.

It revealed that class was a barrier to inclusivity (41% of academics cited 'class' as a key barrier to inclusivity and this was the fourth biggest global societal issue). Poverty and class are largely intertwined meaning those with the least have fewer opportunities to





change their circumstances. Education lies within this cycle – the education a person receives is often linked to poverty and class, and those who are regarded as coming from the ‘lower classes’ have less chance of attending colleges and universities.

Looking at individual countries and regions showed that class is a bigger issue in the UK than anywhere else in the world, where it is the third biggest barrier to an inclusive society (cited by 61%), not far behind poverty and race, both of which were cited by 69%. Class is also regarded as a bigger societal issue for an inclusive culture in Asia. Class is the third biggest issue (45%) behind poverty (61%) and religion (47%). One of the struggles researchers can find here is that institutions operate within a ‘city tier system’, meaning that if the same person did the same piece of research, or attended the same course, at tier-1 and tier-3 city institutions, the tier-1 city research/course can be regarded far better than that of the tier-3 city despite other factors remaining the same.

### Closing the gap between intention and action

The inclusivity report looked to uncover how academia can play its part in removing barriers to inclusivity. It found that:

- 52% of academics believe research provides better evidence-based decisions.
- 25% of academics believe research provides better public awareness.
- 17% of academics believe research provides better education.

In addition:

- 86% of academics rate inclusivity as something that is important to them personally, but feel that this is not matched by their institution (68% thought it was important to their institution), or by academia in general (64%), or by funders (50%).

- 60% of academics cited ‘Biases in recruitment or promotions’ as the main barrier to a fair and inclusive workforce, followed by ‘Manager or leadership attitudes’ (57%) and ‘Too much pressure – career progression’ (46%). ‘Not enough mentoring’ wasn’t far behind, with 42%.

The view that academia can contribute to inclusivity efforts is backed by similar reports that investigate the barriers of class and poverty. AMBA & BGA’s [Poverty and Action study](#), for example, found that while only 38% of Business School stakeholders believe the business education community is doing enough to help the poorest in society, 75% think Business Schools could make a difference. Of those surveyed, 85% believe the global business community needs to do more, but only 28% were able to report that their School is already taking action.

The research suggests that there is a gap between the desire for change, and action. However, this presents academic institutions with a significant opportunity to lead change and drive inclusivity.

More research into issues around poverty, class and education will help to uncover the actions needed to promote inclusivity. Here, we can see where research and policy could drive institutional change that makes a fairer system for all.

### Does academic culture need to change?

In brief, yes, academic culture does need to change in order to further inclusivity. The research found:

- Academic culture is not inclusive (55% agreed with this statement).
- Respondents highlighted ways in which academia can make a difference. These include greater knowledge mobilisation (cited by 67%), more interdisciplinary research (60%), and more international collaboration (51%).

Without diverse voices and views, are we getting the best out of academia? How can we make sure that people from poorer backgrounds or different classes have sufficient space, at all levels?

Academic culture also has its own workplace inclusivity problems. Bias in recruitment and promotion, as well as issues with leadership, could be stifling research’s potential to deliver change because this creates an environment that is not as multidimensional as it could be.

While more than half of academics surveyed didn’t see academic culture as inclusive, an overwhelming majority believe that an inclusive society and workplace can deliver real benefits.

### The role of open gateways

It was clear from the report that academics believe progress on inclusivity relies on getting research into the hands of policymakers and decisionmakers that are able to make changes that can drive real impact. Respondents highlighted the importance of open gateways in driving change quickly and effectively. However, in this sense, there is not yet a level playing field across the globe, as some areas are further in their open research, data and access journeys than other parts.

Initiatives such as Emerald Open Research (EOR) make SDG research available to all, thereby providing academics with an easy and rapid route to get impactful research into the hands of policymakers. Another key aim of EOR is to help reduce the inequality gap for contributors and research users. Meanwhile, programmes such as Research4Life aim to create more opportunities for those who would otherwise not be able to access scholarly content by providing free or low-cost online access to academic and professional peer-reviewed content.



# Inspiring, to say the least!

**It is not every day that a visually impaired person completes a PhD in Business Management and Administration. Jan Thladi is one such person, and we are proud to say that he has completed his PhD with the NWU Business School. Here he shares his inspirational story:**

After completing my Masters of Law in 2003, I dreamt of continuing with my doctoral studies. I contemplated for many years before embarking on my PhD journey. Firstly, I was not confident enough that I could undertake a research exercise of such magnitude, since my Masters was primarily course work. Secondly, I thought I had reached a limit insofar as law is concerned and that the legal field offered no interest to me any longer. Thirdly, I believed my research skills were substantially lower than what would be expected of me.

While harbouring and sustaining my interest in undertaking a PhD journey, I attended various courses in management sciences to equip myself with the basic knowledge and understanding of this field which I had chosen as my new career pathway.

By 2016, I felt I was ready to take up the challenge. Having gathered the energy and self-confidence to undertake the journey, I drafted a compelling and persuasive business case in the form of a research proposal. Among the PhD offerings of various universities, I was intrigued by the PhD delivery model of the NWU School of Business and

Governance in Mafikeng at the time.

First and foremost, the NWU PhD delivery model is structured in such a way that it provides research capacity development to students, especially those who are non-academic (students unattached to a tertiary education institution). The colloquium process they follow covers the full cycle of the PhD journey, i.e., intensive training on research proposal formulation, research methodologies, data analysis and interpretation techniques, and presentation of research findings.

My PhD journey was worthwhile, stimulating and inspiring. As someone with a visual impairment (blind), obtaining research materials in accessible format was always going to be a serious challenge. Thankfully, many of the research materials nowadays can be accessed online. However, it was not always possible to access these research materials without assistance due to some level of incompatibility between my assistive technology and the formats of the materials.

Secondly, being visually impaired, I prefer reading materials in braille as opposed to screen-reading



format or audio format. In the beginning, I used to transcribe research materials to braille, but realised early on that doing so would be time consuming and require a large storage facility for the volumes and volumes of material. I had to alter my strategy early on in my journey and became wholly dependent on screen-reading software or audio.

Throughout my PhD journey, I have accumulated vast knowledge and understanding of the corporate governance field in which I positioned my study. I have mastered the corporate governance field to such an extent that I consider myself an expert in the field. Moreover, I have acquired the undying spirit of being meaningfully and fully involved within the various corporate governance research development landscapes such as undertaking research, imparting my knowledge through training and development of students and adults, supervising students enrolled in the field, participating in various boardrooms to offer corporate governance guidance, and ultimately establishing an institute responsible for corporate governance in South Africa to help organisations to execute good corporate governance optimally.

My PhD journey was also fulfilling. I enjoyed every step of the journey. One of the critical ingredients of this journey is maintaining a good relationship between the student and the promoter, and I had a wonderful and a harmonious relationship with my promoter. Moreover, the special and personalised support I received from the NWU Disability Unit in Mafikeng was marvelous and made me feel at home. My family also played a critical role in supporting and encouraging me to soldier on despite the challenges.

To accomplish a PhD journey requires one to be always alert and agile, to be devoted to one's work and be hardworking, to always focus on the milestones to be delivered. It was through sacrificing time, resources and social activity that I succeeded in reaching the ultimate academic achievement. I am awaiting graduation in 2021!

## Congrats Prof Leon!

**We would like to congratulate Prof Leon Jackson  
for receiving his C2 rating from the National  
Research Foundation.**



A C2 rating means that Prof Jackson has proven to be an established researcher with a sustained recent record of productivity in the field who are recognised by his peers as having produced a body of quality work, the core of which has coherence and attests to ongoing engagement with the field; demonstrated the ability to conceptualise problems and apply research methods to investigating them.



# Shared knowledge is *power multiplied*

Recently, three of the NWU Business School's experts invested their knowledge into the workforce of the National Union of Mine Workers (NUM) by offering training at NUM's Elijah Barayi Memorial Training Centre in Midrand.

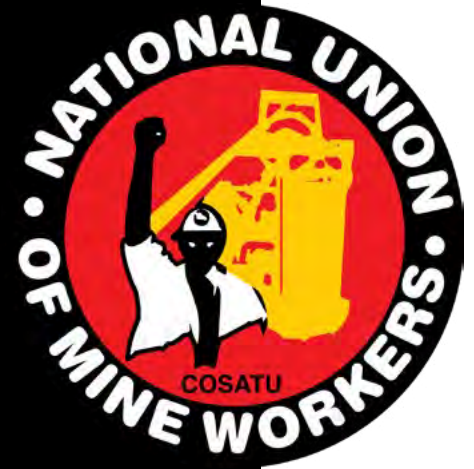
Prof Christo Bisschoff, Dr Johan Jordaan and Prof Stephan van der Merwe presented a four-day training course for two groups of NUM project managers. This follows the successful training of more than 70 delegates in Fundamental and Middle Management.

"The NWU Business School has special expertise in the field of Management and therefore believes that emerging managers, and even existing managers, need a solid foundation of business skills and informed knowledge to fully develop their intellectual capability, to add significant value to their organisation," Prof Bisschoff said.

A selected number of these delegates will proceed to the Advanced Management Programme in March. In this programme they will compose a five-year strategic plan for selected organisations which, in turn, will develop their managerial acumen towards the formulation and implementation of strategy.

Lecturers from the NWU Business School provided the groups with sound academic and professional training. The main aim was to equip delegates with skills with which they can add value to their company. Their training included how to deal with role players in the work environment and establish constructive relationships that will enhance personal and company growth. The group of NUM project leaders also learned how to use accounting data to support them in managerial functions, such as planning operations, controlling activities and decision making.

The NWU Business School and NUM signed another agreement for future training in Advanced Management. "This will further emphasise functional coordination and the gathering and critical evaluation of information to generate a firm understanding regarding company goals, the application of financial management principles, as well as various strategy analysis, such as risk assessment," Prof Bisschoff stated. "After this training, the project managers from NUM will be able to apply their knowledge by researching, compiling and presenting a professionally prepared business document, offering solutions to a practical, integrated business-related problem."

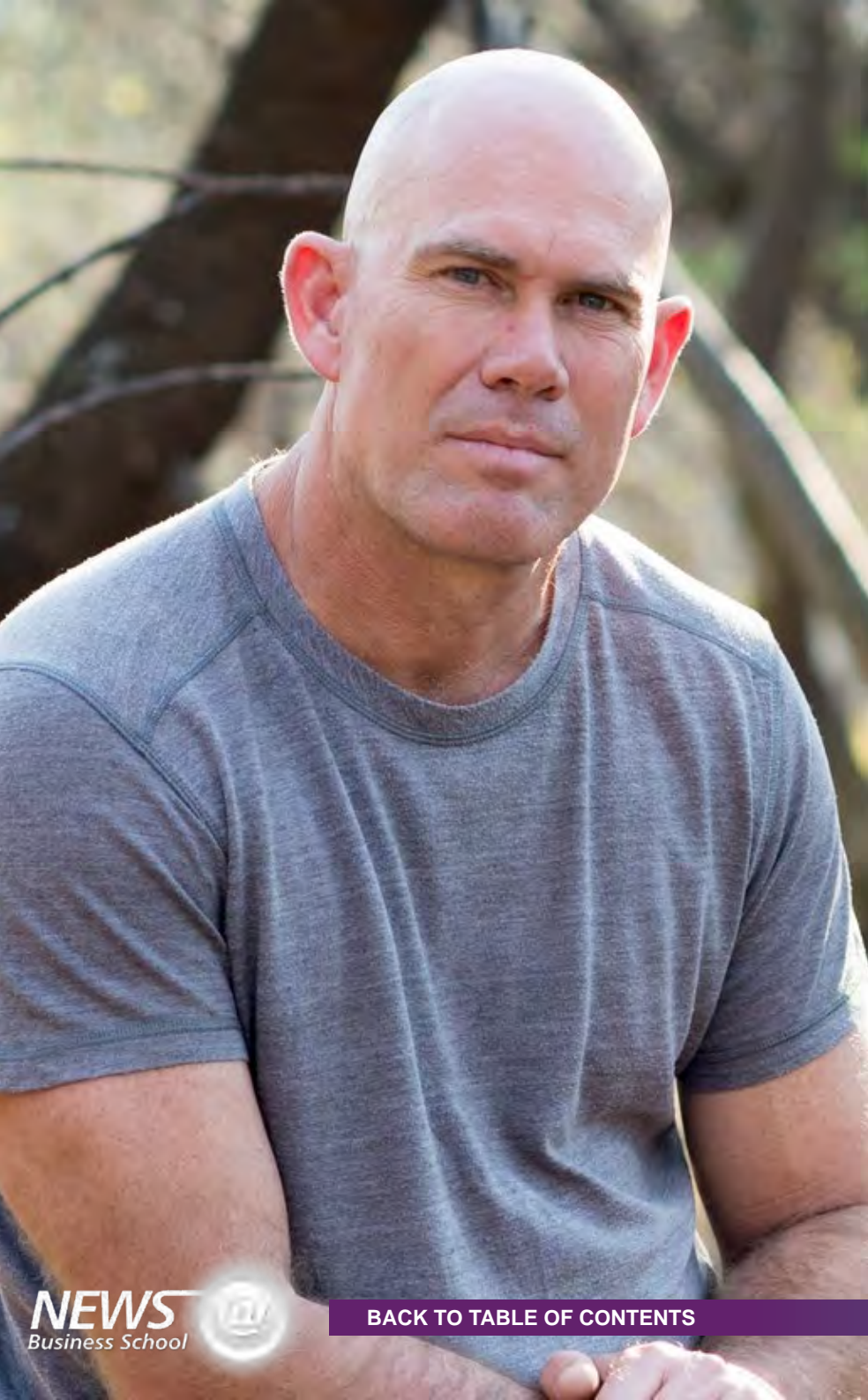


*"A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle. So, if you have knowledge, let others light their candles at it."*

Margaret Fuller







# Prepare for the rise of the informal sector

With the aim to embed its fingerprint in Africa, the NWU Business School recently hosted a virtual get-together with the theme “Business in Africa”. Alumni, academics and other stakeholders were invited – with no less than 98 participants joining. Prof Jan van Romburgh, director of the NWU Business School, stated the school’s renewed focus on Africa for 2021. “We will be able to illustrate to our accreditation bodies and to everybody that the NWU Business School is serious about this strategic objective to be relevant in Africa,” Prof Van Romburgh emphasised.

And who better to address the theme of Business in Africa than the white Zulu-boy who turned alternative entrepreneur, GG Alcock? According to Alcock’s resumé, he is political activist, community worker, African adventurer and previous shebeen owner, among other things. But he is most known for his three books, KasiNomics,

KasiNomic Revolution, and Third World Child. His activations company, Minanawe Marketing, was recently sold to an international agency network. GG is fluent in Zulu and conversant in most South African ethnic languages.

Born white in apartheid South Africa, GG was raised Zulu, in a mud hut in one of the most poverty stricken and violent parts of KwaZulu-Natal. In his memoir, Third World Child, he shares his childhood.

The true benefit of growing up like he did, was not the ability to speak different languages, but to understand the difference between culture and tradition. “Culture defines the way in which we live and behave,” he said.

In his second book, KasiNomics, he attempted to cast light on the “invisible” people at the heart of South Africa’s informal economy. “The informal

economy is all around us, like a mist drifting by our car window, hanging around on street corners, and covering the townships. It is growing at an urgent organic pace unmatched by the formal sector.”

GG’s latest book, KasiNomic Revolution, explores the revolution taking place in the great marketplaces of the informal sector. He vividly describes these marketplaces as ranging from “muti markets of herbal medicines and charms, to community based savings stokvels, to cluttered table tops of sweets, cellphones and vegetables, to retail spaza shops, the hole-in-the-wall corrugated iron supermarkets of Africa, to munching delicious traditional food at kasi kos takeaway outlets that serve everything from cow’s head, to kotas and oily delicious vetkoek”. In these townships and rural areas, GG has seen a new world, a world of “small people doing big things, transforming Africa a little bit at a time”.

According to GG, the informal business sector is the next great frontier of Africa, which regulators and corporates have not even begin to explore: “We know more about the wildlife of Africa, its habitats, feeding habits, lifecycles, ecosystems, fauna and flora than we know about the informal market.”

He iterated that Africa is undergoing an economic revolution and that we need to prepare for the rise of the informal sector. “Use it to everyone’s advantage,” he concluded, “I’m convinced that the NWU Business School can play a huge role.”

Positive feedback from the audience:

- “Excellent presentation.”
- “Very impressive presentation. Never realised what is going on in our small businesses.”
- “Fantastic presentation, thank you very much.”
- “Time worth spent, thank you! World of opportunities.”
- “This is the kind of inspiration that we need.”
- “Thank you for the presentation, GG. It is quite informative and interesting in relation to the different markets we have in the country.”
- “Wow, very informative, and provides wide range of knowledge about informal business, lot to take home. Thank you, GG, for mind blowing presentation. So excited to have been a participant here.”
- “Thanks a lot for the invite. The data provided is very intriguing. I am so blessed to be a student at NWU.”



Photo credit: Carsten ten Brink on VisualHunt.com

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# MBA Summer School – times are changing!



A record number of no less than 190 MBA students recently attended the NWU Business School's first ever virtual Summer Study School. Prof Jan van Romburgh, the newly appointed chief director of the Business School, welcomed the students and colleagues and emphasised the importance of a mutualistic relationship moving forward in 2021.

"Why this business school?" Prof Van Romburgh's asked. In answer, he outlined a few key factors that distinguish us from the rest. "Our business school is internationally accredited and we are proud to say that we do not chase numbers. Our numbers for 2021 show an increase of 70%, but replacing quality with quantities of MBAs is not of importance to our school," he stated. The NWU Business School, first and foremost, values relationships with its students, with quality and personal contact the primary focus, according to Prof Van Romburgh.

In 2020, the NWU Business School was fortunate to be recognised as a separate entity from the NWU's Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. This means, from an operational perspective, that the Business School is seen as a faculty.

The annual Summer School creates an environment for MBA students to learn from the best experts in the field. In these changing times, where people are relying increasingly on technology, the virtual nature of the Summer School allowed for guest lecturers from all corners of the world – the impossible made possible.

The keynote speakers for the opening of the Summer School were Dr Alistair Mokoena

(Country Director, Google South Africa) and Dr Willem Jacobs (COO Barrick Gold Corp).

Dr Mokoena spoke about doing business in the age of digital disruption. Greeting the MBA students as today's VIPs and tomorrow's leaders, he stated unequivocally: "The world around us has changed and we have no choice but to adapt." He referred to business models that survived the Covid-19 pandemic, namely online businesses and businesses with delivery and e-commerce capabilities.

"Improving digital presence is important in these times. We no longer live in a world where it is seen as man versus machine, but machine because of man. Technology can be utilised to improve business operations and deliver better value to customers. Life is no longer about the big eating the small, but the fast eating the slow. Becoming fast in the business world means using machine learning and artificial intelligence to become nimble and agile."

Dr Mokoena emphasised the importance of learning from failure. "Have an attitude to learn," he concluded.

Dr Jacobs' presentation was titled "The post-Covid environment: Management challenges in the contours of the new normal". He agreed with Dr Mokoena that technology should be embraced. Covid-19 has emphasised the weakness of uncontrolled social media and its ability to create confusion throughout society. This seems to point toward the withering of accountability in journalism and the gullibility of people and society.

To illustrate, he stated that the opinions of

scientists and the average person on the street seem to carry the same weight nowadays. In his view, sharing uninformed opinions on social media is feeding a monster. "That, in essence, is one of the main issues that we have to answer – how are we going to get in control of the message of the ethos of our society again," Dr Jacobs said.

One thing has become clear during Covid-19: The general rules of truth and truthful communication and leadership are being violated. "The pandemic showed

cracks in our society, globally and locally, and we need to think about that," exhorted Dr Jacobs.

He ended with a quote from Booker T. Washington: "Success is to be measured, not so much by the position that one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which he has overcome."

The Summer School kicked off on a high note with much food for thought for students and lecturers alike. Time and health are two of our most precious assets, of

which we have little control. The relevance of conducting business in an ever-changing world and environment was shown in the keynote speakers' presentations.

Prof Van Romburgh had one last remark: "Did the train miss you or were you too late for the train? This reflects on the emphasis of control that we must take back. The NWU Business School can provide students with all the opportunities for an MBA, but the question is what you do with the opportunities and what do you do to differentiate yourself from the rest."

# Four scenarios for the **post- Covid** world of work

**Fast economic rebound + low social trust = digital enclaves.** People adopt new behaviours, preferring virtual interactions and small groups. With local interests taking precedence over global concerns, the digital divide remains and offers better opportunities for the privileged few.

**Fast economic rebound + high social trust = tech-powered humanity.** People crave human connection and, with the virus well controlled, they can balance virtual and physical interactions. As companies become more efficient and tech enabled, the private sector fuels growth.

**Slow economic rebound + low social trust = a growing divide.** A prolonged recession, coupled with a fear of the virus returning, leads to massive unemployment. As industries consolidate, workers are treated as commodities, and people lose faith in government policies.

**Slow economic rebound + high social trust = 'in this together'.** Government bailouts lead to a significant focus on up-skilling to close the digital divide. High expectations regarding transparency lead to significant public-private partnerships to drive cooperative innovation centred in science and technology.





# Our take on the latest GDP data

The widely-expected official highly negative GDP data of -7% for 2020 again emphasize why SA must now urgently capitalize on the economic 'rebound' this year to move its economy into more sustainable job-rich growth territory in the period ahead. This is according to NWU Business School economist, Prof Raymond Parsons.

"The widely-expected official confirmation from StatsSA that the SA economy experienced a -7% GDP growth rate in 2020 aligns with most other recent authoritative assessments of the economic damage the country suffered last year from the drastic pandemic lockdown. The negative growth figure for 2020 as a whole again demonstrates how much economic ground was lost last year in terms

of widespread business failures, huge job losses and significant shrinkage in disposable income.

Fortunately, the economic news in 2021 is now better. High frequency data suggest that a strong recovery is underway this year, in tandem with SA's lockdown exit strategy presently reduced to Level 1. And on the health front there is the heightened prospect of vaccines being increasingly 'weaponized' against Covid-19 through vaccination, as the rest of the year unfolds. Much will, of course, revolve around the pace and scale of the vaccine rollout.

Both the positive global and domestic economic trends therefore predicate an overall 'rebound' in

the SA economy this year, albeit off a low base. On present evidence this economic 'rebound' could amount to about 3% growth in 2021 as a whole, which will permeate most business sectors as the recovery proceeds.

However, we need to acknowledge there is still a long way to go to restore national output and employment to their pre-pandemic levels. Several uncertainties still exist. The improved short-term economic outlook is therefore what SA must now visibly build on to move its economy into more sustainable job-rich growth territory in the period ahead."



The NWU Business School's management recently invited the well-known financial journalist, David Furlonger, for a social get-together.

David is currently the Editor-at-Large for the Financial Mail and Business Day. An insightful brainstorming session led to ideas where the readers of these publications and the NWU Business School will only benefit from. Watch this space...



# Ploughing expertise into the Agri sector

Recently, some of our experts were once again tasked to provide valuable expertise and knowledge to South Africa's main role players in the agricultural sector, during the launch of the first session of the 2021 Leadership Academy for Agriculture.

This was done in collaboration with training partner, "Thinking Fusion Africa", sponsored by Syngenta and Grain SA.

The Leadership Workshop was represented by Thinking Fusion Africa's Professor of Practice, René Uys, the NWU

Business School's Professor Ronnie Lotriet, Syngenta's marketing manager, Ben Schoonwinkel, GRAIN SA's CEO, Jannie de Villiers.

The event was attended by several nominees who were hand-picked to attend. According to Prof Lotriet, the significance of this initiative lies in its contribution to the leadership development of young farmers and the opportunity it offers to strengthen relationships across boundaries.

"In my presentation, I emphasised these networks and relationships, as well as the complex challenges faced by the agricultural sector in SA. Any approach should be multi-disciplinary. I also indicated that leadership in this context is the capacity to set and achieve goals, with fast and agile decision making, inspiring others to perform at optimal levels. Visionary leadership is what contemporary SA needs. I stressed the developmental role of the NWU Business School in this regard and our quality-endorsed offerings to the African markets," Prof Lotriet says.

This collaboration is another proudly NWU Business School bragging-rights project!

Please click on the play button.





# NWUBS *Executive Education Highlights*

## Internationalisation

The North-West University Business School (NWUBS) and IIBN International Institute of Business Networking have formed a strategic partnership to advance collaboration efforts in institutional internationalisation. IIBN has particular academic and programmatic areas that the NWUBS would like to tap into, providing knowledge, resources, and expertise that supports our 2021 BRICS initiatives. For the NWUBS, the partnership's scope, depth, and duration have emerged as primary elements of "strategicness." These are relationships with a long-term time horizon, a commensurate commitment of resources, regular evaluation, and deliberate efforts to introduce new activities and expand collaboration such as MBA international visits, research collaborations, short learning programmes, etc.

### **The current identified short learning programmes are:**

1. Short Course in Crisis Management
2. Short Course in doing Business Internationally with opportunities and networks with BRICS countries
3. Cash Flow Management and Sustained

Performance Management

4. Supply Chain Strategies and Business Intelligence Management
5. Corporate Information Strategies

## The fruits of Automation

In the past decades, a great deal of power and responsibility shifted from enterprise representatives to customers, B2B associates and personnel. Self-service became the standard. The first phase of Automation in dealing with foundation requests has proofed to be extremely useful. The NWU ExEd division is a crucial section for the efficient dealing of participants that routinely handles external or internal customer service requests at a large scale.

Since the implementation of the automated enquiry system as of August 2020, more than 3420 enquiries have been dealt with successfully without compiling mundane emails. The Automation's advantages are multiple, from immediate distribution of precise, relevant promotional packs to online enrolments received directly to programme assistant email inboxes. On average, 75 electronic enrolments are accepted per month. With the next phase instore, the enrollment will be integrated with the NWU's

Short course administration system (SCA), reducing tedious capturing and human error even further. Programme assistants can now concentrate on interacting with participants personally by building our brand with exceptional service delivery in mind.

All staff are now involved in dealing with enquiries as it proofed to be quick, easy and efficient. It was found that academic staff and staff from other divisions have efficiently dealt with programme queries meaning turnaround time in dealing with foundation request has improved drastically.

## Small Business Consultancy Initiative

The Small Business Advisory Bureau had one common request from clients and stakeholders to convert the existing Programme in Small Business Consultancy program to an online or blended format. The conversion process transformed the content and activities to better experience and improve skills with a participant self-paced focus. The pilot programme has been launched during January 2021 with current enrolments of 24 participants. Even though the programme is in its infancy, the online training methodology's future is promising.

The first Think Tank of 2021 of the NWU Business School took place on 18 February 2021. Fifty-six participants attended, and two speakers presented their perspectives on the topic of Political stability and democracy in Africa – opportunities and threats for business enterprises.

In 2021, Africa will have 22 national elections. Ten presidential elections will take place – in Benin, Cape Verde, Chad, Gambia, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, the DRC, and Zambia. The potential exists for high levels of political instability, with far-reaching implications for business enterprises. This was the central motivation for the above-mentioned topic.

Prof Avitus Agbor from the NWU mentioned the complexity of political stability/instability on the African continent and its related challenges. He quoted Prof PLO Lumumba, saying that the problem with Africa was that those with ideas have no power, and those with power have no ideas. According to him, many factors contribute to patterns of political instability and dedemocratisation, for example, corruption, political and electoral violence, and the lack of good governance. The solution to African problems should be found by utilising African people and African concepts.

Mr Piet le Roux of Sakeliga presented a comprehensive SWOT analysis of challenges relating to democratisation

# NWU Business School facilitates contemporary topics to help shape executive minds in Africa

and patterns of political instability on the African continent. A central theme throughout his presentation was the opportunities and threats relating to the concept of a weakening state. He explained that state failure can be seen simultaneously as an opportunity and a threat. Other opportunities include limitations on government, effective policy implementation and the creation of an environment conducive to development.

After the presentations, a few participants debated the topic. Prominent themes included state failure, the need for an African Renaissance, the crisis in neighbouring countries, corruption, and transparency. The debate lasted more than an hour, attesting to the complexity of the issues and depth of the discussion.

The question of land reform in South Africa and its implications for political stability also came to the fore. The debate was of a high academic quality and contributed to business people's understanding of the political environment in Africa.

The next topic of the NWU Business School's Think Tank will be Corruption, lifestyle audits and transparency in the South African context.

To find out more on the Think Tank initiative, please contact Ms Simoné Laubscher at 24154989@nwu.ac.za





# New appointments 2021

The NWU Business School is very proud to welcome our new appointments for 2021. The virtue of their status in teaching, research and achievement in professional activities, in commerce and industry add materially and notably to the scholarship and prestige of the NWU Business School as a whole.

**We congratulate and welcome the following appointments:**



**Prof Hamid H Kazeroony**  
**Role: Extraordinary Professor**

Prof Kazeroony received his Doctor of Management in 2005 at the University of Phoenix. His areas of specialization include organizational leadership and organizational development and change to name but a few.



**Dr Alistair Mokoena**  
**Role: Professor of Practice**

Dr Mokoena completed his PhD at the North West University in 2020. He is currently the Country Manager for Google South Africa.



**Dr Chris Lombard**  
**Role: Professor of Practice**

Dr Lombard completed an internationally recognised Doctorate (PhD- Leadership in Performance and Change) at RAU in 2004. Chris has spent 37 years during his career in assessing potential and developing human resources to achieve individual and organisational goals. He has received both the NCP and ABSA awards for achievement in facilitation.



**Dr René Uys**  
**Role: Professor of Practice**

Dr Uys completed her PhD at NWU in 1998. She is currently the Director of thinking fusion AFRICA, since 2004. Thinking fusion AFRICA undertakes consultation work in the fields of Strategy, Change Management and Organisational Effectiveness to name but a few.



**Brandon Topham**  
**Role: Associate Professor of Practice**

Brandon is currently enrolled and studying for his MBA at Edinburgh Business School – Herriot Watt University. He is also the Divisional Executive Enforcement at Financial Sector Conduct Authority.

It is not an over-exaggeration to say that the year 2020 has been one of the most challenging years of our lifetime with many different obstacles. We can be proud of what we have achieved in a year like as such.

One major obstacle that our students overcame was receiving their PhDs and MBAs. Despite the Covid-19 challenges, the Business School remained focused in communicating virtually to all our students and stakeholders (via Zoom, e-Fundi, Microsoft Teams). In the 2020 academic year, the school graduated 16 PhDs and in the first quarter of 2021 academic year, the we have processed 10 PhDs for the Autumn graduation (April - June), covering diverse topics, including marketing, financial management, health and education management, project management and information technology, corporate governance, entrepreneurship and human resources.

On the MBA front, 82 candidates will graduate at the June ceremony. According to Dr Johan Jordaan, MBA programme leader, the Covid-19 disruption has affected many students' ability to complete their research and a reasonable number of students will graduate at the graduation ceremonies that will take place later in 2021. "Selection for the 2021 was stricter than before,

# MBAs & PhDs - gearing our economy, despite 2020 challenges

with compulsory interviews for all candidates and the 2021 cohort is progressing on the online platforms. We are looking forward to meeting our students eye-to-eye as soon as circumstances allow us. Our leadership coaching programme that we offer to students is also underway and receives very positive feedback from participants."

Impressive, amazing, exceptional, extraordinary, fantastic, great, notable, outstanding, remarkable, significant, and tremendous are all adjectives to best describe the achievement of obtaining one's PhD or MBA. We will continue to deliver qualifications of the highest standards during 2021, with 10 PhDs still in the process.

"The NWU Business School's Research Office sincerely thank all our hard-working students who conquered the challenges of COVID-19! We are very proud of our graduates and look forwards to see them bringing the necessary changes in their organisations, communities and lives of ordinary people in their communities with the knowledge they acquired. These graduates are not only from South Africa but across the African continent," Dr Joseph Lekunze, Research Manager and PhD Programme Leader said.

