

Does African-isation Hold the Key?

As the old world wakes up to issues of multiculturalism and inclusivity and seeks to create new, global linkages, the internationalisation of universities and business schools has never been more important.



Dr. Morris Mthombeni

Connecting with and understanding the wider world is, using broad brush strokes, the motivation behind the GIBS internationalisation drive. This is being achieved by sharing academic and thought-leadership contributions by creating opportunities for faculty to live and work worldwide and for student exchanges and experiences to form part of the curriculum. It is also being pursued through collaborations between local and international academic institutions.

Africa lies at the centre of GIBS' internationalisation efforts. We believe it is possible to leverage our unique African lineage to produce world-class leaders with global know-how and an intrinsic appreciation of diversity in all its forms.

Why internationalisation?

In 2019, [Professor Bashir Ahmad and Ahmed Saeed Minhas](#) from Bahria University and DHA Suffa University in Pakistan painted a picture of how a cohesive global curriculum – or elements thereof – would create a global business leadership community underpinned by common understanding and language. “Global networks of business schools would create common platforms of mutual understanding and benefits,” they said, touting the positive impact for “global peace and harmony”. It would also provide a bridge for cooperation and collaboration that could forever link countries and continents. And this, in particular, appears to have been a major motivator for many institutions and countries.

In the first quarter of this year, we saw the [Indian government](#) pushing its internationalisation agenda, with particular interest swirling around achieving joint or dual degrees with institutions from Australia, New

Zealand, the UK and the US. We've seen the [Norwegian parliament](#) set the goal of supporting overseas experiences or study rotations for 50% of its university graduates and a strong commitment to [entrenching internationalisation](#) within the US. GIBS, too, is poised to benefit from this trend since, through the University of Pretoria, we are able to pursue joint degrees with partner universities.

But, as [Arnoud De Meyer](#) of Singapore Management University observed in a 2012 paper, simply announcing an international initiative is not enough. Delivery on the international strategy must be at the centre of this promise. Much like the business strategy we teach our students, it is essential that the right internal infrastructure is in place and that the partnerships produced are in line with the ethos of the institution. For this reason, the GIBS international strategy is being implemented by the international desk, which forms part of the GIBS Value Creation unit.

While we value input from outsiders such as accreditation agencies, we are primarily motivated by our purpose and mission. Since our establishment in 2000, when we sought to be a catalyst of re-connecting South African businesses with other African business and the rest of the world, internationalisation has always been central to GIBS. We believe a global outlook is crucial for effective competition and that business leaders with this mindset are better able to pursue sustainable strategies.

A strategic move

For GIBS, as a home-grown African business school, our strategic alignment with African business, our close ties with academic institutions on the continent

and alumni alive with African and global diversity makes this aspect of our approach a foregone conclusion.

GIBS already has a number of productive and long-standing associations with academic institutions around the world, as well as blue-chip companies, foundations and research bodies. Through these associations, we continue to illuminate our understanding and expertise of doing business in Africa, underpinning our teaching with an entrepreneurial mindset and a commitment to inclusive business.

How we succeed in this endeavour comes down to all-important delivery, underpinned by walking the talk when it comes to highlighting African stories, successes and challenges. It requires bold curriculum decision making and awareness of the leadership needs of both a changing global world and a continent on the rise. It necessitates being in touch with global best practise and continuous engagement with both internal and external stakeholders to ensure that our approach to learning remains potent and powerful.

This is the sort of strategic internationalisation that Fox School of Business' [Dr. Bertrand Guillotin](#) advocates for in his writing, in which he highlights the value of innovation as a precursor to impact. Ultimately, GIBS' international approach is motivated by a search for impact in our teaching, research and engagements with our stakeholders.

Africa has much to share with the rest of the world. Through internationalisation efforts, we have a platform to share our learnings and showcase Africa's successes. **GIBS**