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# Collaboration between business schools and organisations to maximise the impact of the MBA programme

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A research project submitted to the Gordon's Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

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# ABSTRACT

Despite numerous successes and appreciable advantages of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree, the reputation of the MBA has deteriorated in the eyes of businesses, as its relevance has been questioned and businesses often fail to see students applying acquired skills practically back at work.

While previous research has focussed on the experience and opinions of MBA students themselves, this research sought insights of businesses and business schools, specifically considering the value of collaborative relationships for strengthening the MBA's impact.

This research aimed to understand how collaboration can improve the impact of the MBA, first by affirming the successes of the MBA, confirming its importance to business and then exploring current challenges. Previous initiatives have been unsuccessful in reviving the MBA's ailing reputation, as they were isolated initiatives, lacking the support and involvement of other MBA stakeholders.

This research, therefore, investigated the requirements for a collaborative relationship to be willingly entered into and sustained, looking particularly at in-house programmes which were successful in encouraging collaboration and involvement of stakeholders.

From the research findings, the Collaborative Impact Model was designed to set out how a collaborative relationship can be established and maintained, optimising the impact of the MBA while also minimising its many challenges.

## KEYWORDS

Leading and development, collaboration, MBA

# DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROBLEM

## 1.1 Introduction

In recent years, the MBA programme has come under quite severe scrutiny with regard to its relevance in the workplace. For a long time, the MBA has been considered the flagship of business and management education; however, its value-add in recent years has been questioned (Baruch, 2009). While there is evidence of definite benefits for all stakeholders in an MBA—students, schools and organisations—the growing perception created through the various shortcomings of the MBA including the following: 1) concerns of a lack of understanding of the distinct purpose of the MBA; 2) concerns of the programme not producing the necessary skills for the marketplace; and 3) concerns of lower entrance requirements resulting in deteriorating reputations.

What *is* clear is that there appear to be several gaps in the MBA programme, and in particular, the relationship between the business schools and organisations funding MBA students and employing MBA graduates. This study seeks to understand ways in which business schools and organisations can collaborate to ensure that each stakeholder extracts maximum benefits from the MBA programme. Several studies have focused on MBA students and much of the literature centres on the perspectives of the MBA students. This study will look into the views of business schools offering an MBA programme and organisations that employ or fund students for their MBA.

## 1.2 Background to the research problem

Temkin (2011) suggests that an MBA gives an individual a distinct advantage over those who do not possess the degree. Furthermore, Temkin (2011) suggests that the qualification is important across industries for people aspiring to general management, senior management and CEO roles. However, the quality and seriousness of the degree has been negatively impacted by business schools which have produced MBA graduates who have not made the expected noticeable difference to the workplace (Temkin, 2011).

James (2011) supports this view by suggesting that the MBA has traditionally been regarded as a 'golden ticket' to career advancement but that in reality this has not been

the case. He comments that the MBA is over-rated and 'out of touch' with the demands of business in actual practice. Furthermore, he suggests that the MBA fosters poor management practices (James, 2011).

James (2011) provides five reasons why an MBA is a poor investment. The first reason, he believes, is a poor return on investment from the programme. While many people study an MBA with the promise of earning higher salaries, this does not necessarily materialise. While MBA graduates earn more money than colleagues who do not possess the degree, those who take on loans and financial commitments to fund their MBA do not necessarily reap the benefits thereof in that the degree does not always translate into significantly improved salaries and in fact often results in work disruptions.

The second reason is that theory does not translate into practice. Too much emphasis, he feels, is placed on theory rather than developing practical skills for the workplace. He suggests that case studies taught in the MBA programme, often 'dated', do not necessarily have relevance in today's economic climate (James, 2011).

The third reason identified by James (2011) is that the MBA is a 'one-size-fits-all' degree: it promises to develop students into competent leaders, but if students have not experienced management for themselves, the content of the courses will be predominantly theoretical and the students will not be able to apply what is learned in class to the business world. He also feels that management consists of practical, real-world experiences, experiences which, according to James (2011), would be difficult if not impossible to replicate in a classroom setting. James (2001) feels that without adequate experience and exposure to management, a student will not be able to fully appreciate the content taught and yet, according to James (2011), the MBA promises to transform graduates into successful managers irrespective of their experience.

The fourth criticism levied by James (2011) against the MBA is that the programme promotes irrelevant and unsustainable fads resulting in companies implementing interventions which are often disruptive and which require re-engineering upon their likely failure. These companies, then, go around in circles rather than progressing forward (James, 2011).

The final criticism levied against the MBA is that James (2011) believes that business schools foster cheating. He cites research by the Academy of Management Learning and Education which revealed that 56% of all MBA students admit to cheating. James

(2011) claims that students in the MBA plagiarise work, copy from other students and bring prohibited material into exams. He believes that MBA programmes unwittingly encourage this by tolerating unethical behaviour and that allowing this to happen may ultimately result in WorldCom and Enron type scandals. Ultimately, the attainment of the degree by any means necessary suggests that the pursuit of an outcome is based on performance rather than the manner in which it is achieved (James, 2011).

Arguing the contrary, 79% of the participants in a forum by GMAT Club (2011), in response to James (2011), disagreed that the MBA is a bad investment. Respondents conceded that James (2011) makes a few valid points. However, they believed that the MBA provides graduates with the enviable opportunity to change careers. Further, it provides graduates with the potential to choose jobs for that which they enjoy and regard as meaningful. They suggested that undertaking an MBA is more about finding a career that is enjoyable and less about the money. In addition to this, the MBA provides students with a break from their current routine and encourages them explore their potential. Additionally, respondents believed that an MBA allows for social interaction with a diverse set of new people, affording opportunities for individuals to develop and sustain invaluable business networks and friendly relationships (GMAT Club, 2011).

In response to criticism of the MBA, respondents of the GMAT Club (2011) forum questioned the appropriateness of the 'return on investment' requirements levied against the MBA, arguing that the MBA is more about career choice rather than return on investment. In regard to the practical applicability of the programme, they felt that this point relates to *any* degree programme and that the MBA programme is a school programme and *not* a virtual reality simulation of the real world. They agreed that leadership cannot be taught but rather has to be acquired. Respondents defended business schools by suggesting that business schools are tasked with the challenging and undeniably difficult mission of staying relevant, current and engaging year after year, and that deciphering trends as opposed to fads is a difficult, if not impossible, challenge.

Respondents did not agree with the point relating to cheating in the MBA, arguing that the best business schools emphasise group work and encourage collaboration rather than competition. They stressed the importance of being team players in achieving goals. Finally, they felt that business schools do indeed take precautions against plagiarism and cheating and that business ethics is not really about what is taught in

the MBA, but rather a larger societal issue. Some participants felt that both sides presented valid points and consequently uncertainty exists as to whether or not an MBA is worth pursuing.

The contrasting views of Temkin (2011) and James (2011) to those views of the GMAT Club (2011) highlight a 'disconnect' between MBA students the business schools are developing and the acquired skills that are expected and suitably required by business. This suggests a gulf between the practical applicability of the MBA and while possessing an MBA degree does give a graduate an advantage over lesser qualified colleagues, the qualification itself does not necessarily translate into benefits for business (Temkin, 2011; James, 2011). Negative views pertaining to the MBA raise questions as to the relationship between business schools and organisations. It appears that there is a lack of collaboration between these institutions, and that business schools are not delivering adequately to the expectations of organisations. Furthermore, there is a lack of evidence that these expectations are being agreed upon at all. MBA alumni and students definitely view the MBA much more positively than their employers and there does not, at this point, appear to be a 'silver bullet' in terms of bridging these contrasting perceptions.

Ramanathan (2011), in responding to Australian newspapers questioning the value of the MBA, suggests that for individuals the MBA allows for career shifts, while for businesses, thankfully, there have at least been positive shifts in terms of how these business perceive the MBA. There remains, however, a need for strengthened collaboration between business schools and businesses. In order to avoid commoditisation of the MBA, business schools must continue to invest in resources—faculty, alumni and infrastructure—with the goal of providing a differentiated and experiential learning experience (Ramanathan, 2011).

Donovan and Stewart-Smith (2010), in reviewing the results of two surveys pertaining to the MBA, suggest that while many employers still hold the MBA in high esteem, there are significant gaps between employers' views of the benefits of the MBA in relation to the views of business schools and students. They further suggest that despite a general satisfaction with the MBA and an understanding in organisations of the curriculum of the MBA, there is discomfort in relation to the skills acquired in an MBA and the market in which graduates are seeking employment. Employers are cautious at best when ascribing merit to the MBA, and employers' views on MBA

graduates' attitudes and salary expectations reveal a growing gap in how much each of these parties values the learning from an MBA (Donovan & Stewart-Smith, 2010).

In addition to this growing gap, Donovan and Stewart-Smith (2010) suggest that the most striking finding from the surveys is that the requirement of MBA internships is well accepted by *both* organisations and students. The results revealed that 77% of organisations and 79% of students/alumni responded positively to the idea of an internship programme linked to the MBA, commenting that these internships were a potential vehicle through which business schools could bridge the gap between the expectations of organisations and MBA students/alumni (Donovan & Stewart-Smith, 2010). Donovan and Stewart-Smith (2010) further suggest that business schools and the MBA programme are critical to economic and skills development and that a key success factor in achieving this is to ensure that organisations and students have a common understanding of the value of an MBA. What is clear is that there is a critical need for business schools, organisations and students to work together to achieve the economic and skills benefits so desired and needed by all parties.

Contemporary press and recent surveys concerned with the MBA highlight that the majority of stakeholders in an MBA acknowledge the benefits of the MBA; however, due to the lack of collaboration, these benefits do not appear to be materialising. There is an undeniable need to collaborate, to make learning practical and relevant in the context of a changing global economic climate. This research will seek to understand some of the challenges faced by the MBA and investigate if indeed collaboration is the key to bridging the gaps between business schools, students and organisations in the MBA.

Some MBAs, it seems, have got it right. Despite the negative press, there have been isolated cases of MBA programmes getting the mix between practical learning and skill creation for the workplaces. Bennis (2012) describes the reforms that Dean Nitin Nohira implemented at Harvard Business School to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Nohira, he explains, implemented a form of 'action learning' whereby students are required to undertake a newly designed course to complement their MBA curriculum. Students, in groups, are required to plan, design, implement and lead an entirely new enterprise, with the objective of this learning intervention being to assimilate all the learning from the MBA through action by 'doing' those things students learned in the classroom. Semester debriefings allow students to reflect on their successes and failures (Bennis, 2012). So, while there are criticisms of the MBA,

arguments in favour of the MBA are just as compelling. As with Nohira's interventions, it appears possible for business schools to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

## 1.3 Motivation for the research

In reviewing the background information and popular press, two themes emerge which require research:

1) The first distinct theme that emerges is the transfer of learning. There appears to be a gulf between theory and practice and the view of antagonists is that students are incapable of taking back to the workplace that which they have learned. In those cases, organisations and students are unable to reap the full benefits of the MBA.

2) The second theme that emerges is the relevance of the MBA programme. Antagonists again view the skills and the content of the MBA as irrelevant to the actual needs of business, arguing that content is outdated and, in many instances, even disruptive to business as it relies of fads.

The common need that has developed is the need for collaboration between business schools and organisations. This raises several integral questions:

1) What does it mean to collaborate?
2) Under what circumstances does collaboration occur?
3) How does this affect the transfer of learning?
4) What are the various ways in which stakeholders can collaborate to realise more benefits of the MBA and ensure that these benefits are realised more efficiently and effectively?

Given the themes that have emerged, this research will seek to understand the circumstances under which learning is best transferred from school to work. Using this information, it will further investigate the ways in which collaboration between business schools and organisations can help business schools better prepare MBA students so that MBA students are more effective in the workplace.

## 1.4 Aim and objectives of the study

The purpose of this study will be to explore different ways in which collaborative learning can achieve the maximum output from an MBA programme for business

schools, students and organisations involved with an MBA programme. At this stage in the research, collaborative learning to achieve the maximum output from an MBA programme will be generally defined as 'business schools and organisations working together to ensure that all stakeholders, including students, maximise their respective benefits'. Conger and Xin (2000) believe that if this is successfully achieved, students will benefit from the application of theory to practice, and business schools, whose students successfully apply what they learn to real and practical business situation, will invariably become preferred suppliers for an MBA. Businesses will benefit from an enlightened employee who will add to the company's human capital, bringing in new and creative ideas to the organisation and ultimately work together to drive the business' strategic objectives (Conger & Xin, 2000). However, the challenge remains in the practicalities of these collaborative relationships to ensure maximum benefits from the MBA are realised.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction – An understanding of learning

Jarvis (2006, p. 13) defines learning as being "the combination of processes whereby the whole person-body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs, and senses) experiences a social situation, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotionally or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the person's individual biography resulting in a changed (or most experienced) person". Jarvis (2006) suggested that experiences can be transformed into learning three ways, singularly or in combination—thinking as a way of learning, doing as a way of learning, and feeling as a way of learning. The combination of these three ways of learning results in various types of learning, including critical thinking, action learning, problem-solving learning and reflective learning (Jarvis, 2006).

## 2.2 Theories and schools of adult learning

Several theories and schools of adult learning are explored in contemporary literature. The following section describes the various schools of learning and motivates those schools which are most appropriate of this study.

### 2.2.1   Androgyny and pedagogy

Marquardt and Waddill (2004, p. 187) explain that adult learning, androgyny, is concerned with how adults learn, "recognise and acknowledge that a number of factors influence how adults learn differently from children", or pedagogy. They indicate that according to Knowles (1970, 1984), the distinguishing factors between androgyny and pedagogy include adult learners being self-directed, adults engaging in education with either a life, problem or task-centred orientation to learning, and adults finding internal motivators as the most potent, internal motivators which include "…self-esteem, recognition, better quality of life, self-confidence, and self-actualization" (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004, p. 187). This study relates to androgyny as the MBA is an adult-based learning programme.

### 2.2.2 Orientations of learning

According to Marquardt and Waddill (2004), over time, five major schools, or orientations, of learning have emerged, namely cognitivist, behaviourist, humanist, social learning and constructivist. Marquardt and Waddill (2004) suggested that these schools are distinctive, yet some of their perspectives and approaches have common features. According to Marquardt and Waddill (2004) *cognitivists* believe that people are capable of insight and perception and that they can attribute meaning to their experiences. This school is mainly concerned with people using internal processes to acquire, understand and retain knowledge.

*Behaviourists* are concerned with learning through people controlling their external environments (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004). The three assumptions underpinning the behaviourist school are the following: changes in behaviours are indications of learning; elements in the environment determine learning; and repeating and re-enforcing learning behaviours help contribute to the learning process (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004).

*Humanists* believe that people seek self-actualisation through learning and therefore determine what they learn (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004). Furthermore, they believe that learning is self-directed, placing emphasis on the development of a person as a whole (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004).

*Social learning* theory is concerned with how people learn through interactions with other people (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004). They believe that people can learn by imitating other people like role models and mentors (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004).

*Constructivists* believe knowledge is contextual and that an individual's internal understanding of reality allows a person to assign meaning to learning (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004). Reflection is vital to this school of learning and the importance of changing oneself and the environment are emphasised (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004). According to Orey (2008), there are three key elements to constructivism, namely activity (practice), concept (knowledge) and culture (context). Transfer of learning, then, takes place where tasks are authentic and have a meaningful context (Orey, 2008).

The context and purpose of the MBA is vital in understanding if collaboration exists between stakeholders, and in determining the effectiveness of this collaboration. The

context has a significant effect on the transfer of learning and thus the perceived benefits to stakeholders. Where collaboration is authentic and meaningful, we would expect that transfer of learning will occur, thereby lending this approach to the constructivist views of learning. Given that this study is concerned with understanding the collaboration in the MBA (context) and key features may include changing the thinking of the individual stakeholders (knowledge) as well as the curriculum and environment of the MBA (practice), a constructivist approach to learning suits this study.

## 2.3 Transfer of learning

O'Connor and Cordova (2010) identified variables that address the personal needs of the individual and the business needs of an organisation in the learning process. Figure 1 demonstrates the interrelationships amongst the variables that impact learning, according to O'Connor and Cordova (2010). They identify three inputs to learning: 1) the individual's characteristics; 2) the work environment; and 3) the academic learning environment. What this model suggests is that learning occurs when there is synergy among these variables. When these three learning inputs—individual characteristics, work environments and academic learning—overlap, learning is optimised (O'Connor & Cordova, 2010).

**Figure 1:** The relationships of individual characteristics, the work environment, and the academic learning environment on the transfer of learning, as supplied by O'Connor, B. N., and Cordova, R. (2010).
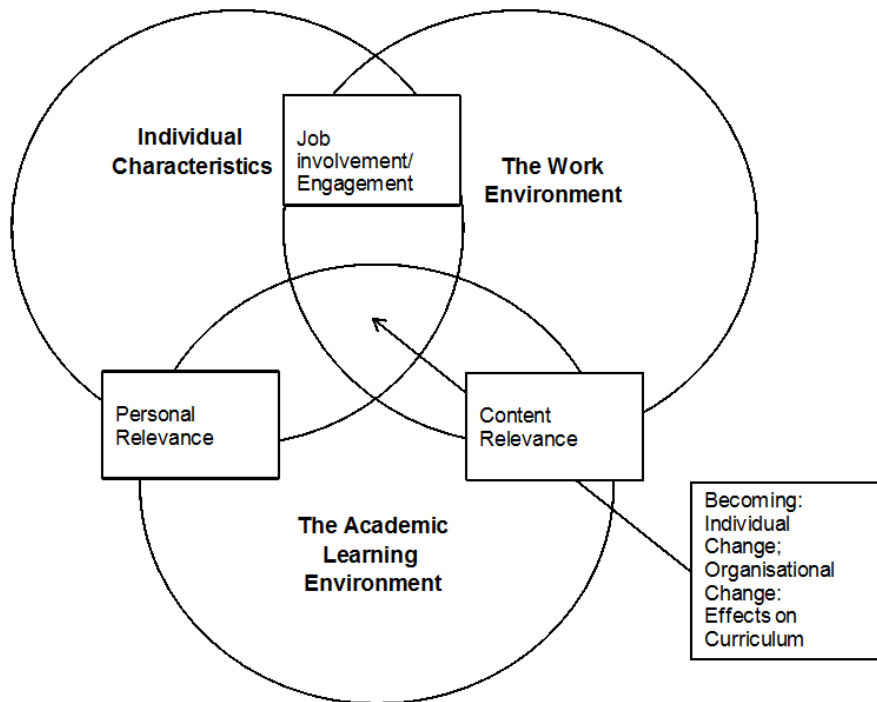


### 2.3.1 Job involvement/engagement

Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, and Taris (2008) suggested that research on employee burnout resulted in research on engagement. Two distinct schools of employee engagement appear to exist, with both schools considering employee engagement as "employees being in a positive work-related state of being or fulfilment" (Bakker et al., 2008).

### 2.3.1.1 Burnout theory

Bakker et al. (2008) suggested that the first school of thought links employee engagement with burnout, seeking to understand burnout and how interventions can shift an employee out of a state of burnout into a state of engagement. They suggested that employees who are engaged view and respond to their work differently, much more optimistically, than those who are burned out. Engaged employees have an

energetic and effective connection to their work, viewing work as engaging and challenging, while employees suffering from burnout are disconnected from their work and view their jobs as stressful (Bakker et al., 2008). Leiter and Maslach (2008) intimated that employees' psychological relationships to their jobs could be conceptualised as a continuum between the positive experiences of engagement and the negative experiences of burnout. They site their earlier works Leiter and Maslach (2005) in suggesting that this continuum had three dimensions: exhaustion-energy, cynicism-involvement and inefficacy-efficacy. The significance of these three dimensions is that they seek to understand an individual's psychological state of being in the context of work and unpack the individual's conception of himself and others (Leiter & Maslach, 2008).

Leiter and Maslach (2008) suggested that their earlier focused on the negative aspects of the continuum. They suggested that the individual strain dimension is exhaustion and is described as a state of being where an individual feels over-extended with depleted emotional and physical resources. According to Leiter and Maslach (2008) the interpersonal dimension of burnout is cynicism, referring to an individual's negative or detached response to the various aspects of his job. They suggested that inefficacy is the self-evaluation dimension and is described as an individual's feelings of incompetence, lack of productivity and lack of achievement on the job. By implication, energy, involvement and efficacy are the opposite of exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy (Leiter & Maslach, 2008).

Leiter and Maslach (2008) investigated the factors leading to enhanced energy, vigour and resilience in the workplace and found, first of all, that a critical dimension to engagement was job-person congruence. They suggested that if a person maintained a good relationship with his job, he was more likely to resolve minor issues and remain engaged. They suggest that interventions should be considered when an individual outgrows his current position as this will otherwise result in a deteriorating relationship with a current role (Leiter & Maslach, 2008).

### 2.3.1.2 Engagement theory

The second school of thought views job engagement as an independent and distinct concept in relation to burnout (Bakker et al., 2008). Bakker et al. (2008, p. 188) quoted Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonza´lez-Roma´, and Bakker (2002) who define an employee's

engagement to his work as "positive, fulfilling, affective-motivational state of work-related well-being that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption". They refer to engagement and fulfilment existing in contrast to voids which result in feelings of burnout such as emptiness. They referred to vigour as a feeling of energy, mental resilience, and an individual's willingness to make a conscious effort in his job, even in the face of difficult or nerve-wracking situations. They suggested that dedicated employees experience numerous positive feelings including significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge, all of which result in strengthened involvement in work. 'Absorption' refers to individuals being happy and immersed in their jobs, so much so that they may experience difficulties in parting or detaching themselves from their work (Bakker et al., 2008). Bakker et al. (2008) further argue that vigour, dedication and absorption are direct opposites of exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy.

Bakker et al. (2008) clarified that employees who are engaged make greater efforts with more intensity at their jobs because they identify with these jobs. They further suggest that there appeared to be a common understanding that job engagement involves two distinct dimensions: an energy dimension and an identification dimension. Job engagement results from high levels of energy and a strong identification with one's job (Bakker et al., 2008). In contrast, however, Macey and Schneider (2008) intimated that the meaning of employee engagement is at best ambiguous amongst practitioners and academic researchers, arguing that practitioners and academic researchers often have inconsistent and competing definitions of the meaning of employee engagement. They raised questions as to whether employee engagement is a unique concept or rather the re-packaging of various other constructs like burnout theory. Macey and Schneider (2008, p. 4) sought for commonality among the various definitions of engagement by referring to the construct of employee engagement as "a desirable condition" which "has an organisational purpose, and connotes involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort, and energy, so it has both attitudinal and behavioural components".

According to Macey and Schneider (2008) engagement is more than just being involved in one's job and being committed to an organisation. The emphasis has been increasingly on passion, absorption and effect (Macey & Schneider, 2008). They further indicated that while to some, engagement and satisfaction were one in the same, engagement was far more than just being satisfied in one's job or being loyal to an employer. They proposed that engagement meant that an employee displayed passion

and commitment: employees who were engaged would invest in themselves and expend their efforts beyond just 'doing their jobs' to ensure that their employer succeeded.

Macey and Schneider (2008) break engagement down into various categories in order to further clarify the various distinct meanings of engagement. They intimated that state engagement related to high levels of energy and enthusiasm rather than just satisfaction, moderate at best. They suggested that most surveys concerned with engagement focused merely on satisfaction and consequently were misdirected, not yielding useful information.

Next, behavioural engagement was associated with a concept of adaptive behaviour (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Adaptive behaviour means that when employees are engaged, they will go beyond the status quo of their jobs to engage in activities through which their current positions might evolve and add value to an organisation (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

According to Macey and Schneider (2008) trait engagement comprised a number of inter-related personal traits including conscientiousness, autotelic personalities and pro-activeness. Trait engagement refers to employees' inclinations to experience their work in an energetic, positive and proactive manner, tantamount to be adaptive, going above and beyond their current role description (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Macey and Schneider (2008) suggested that trait engagement is a cause of and directly related to state engagement and that it is indirectly related to behaviour engagement. Engaged employees, according to Macey and Schneider (2008), are key to giving a company the competitive edge over rival companies. They suggest that companies getting engagement right with its employees will be able achieve accomplishments which their competitors will find difficult to replicate. Macey and Schneider (2008) suggested that it is relatively simple to follow a price change or product strategy, but infinitely more difficult to replicate a state and behaviourally engaged workforce.

O'Connor and Cordova (2010) suggested that job engagement occurs when an individual's characteristics and job environment overlap. O'Connor and Cordova (2010) suggested that where high job involvement and intelligent career planning existed, individuals were more likely to apply what they had learnt to their jobs. Furthermore, they argue, learning is impacted by an individual's ability as well his position within a

community, as it is within a community that people learn from each other. When these communities are in conflict, learning is inhibited (O'Connor & Cordova, 2010).

## 2.3.2 Personal relevance

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004, p. 59) intimated that learner engagement is a critical and complicated component of education and that there is a need to better understand how "students behave, feel, and think". The detail of these constructs will help educators develop more aligned interventions to ensure that learning is maximised (Fredricks et al., 2004).

### 2.3.2.1 Self-determination theory

Sørebø and Hæhre (2012), researching personal relevance of students playing educational games, proposed that competence, autonomy and relatedness were critical in arousing intrinsic motivation in students. Deci and Ryan (2000) refer to 'relatedness' as the desire of an individual to feel connected to others, while 'competence' is referred to an individual's desire to feel effective in achieving goals and ambitions. They refer to 'autonomy' as the desire of an individual to self-initiate and self-regulate his own behaviours.

Sørebø and Hæhre (2012) suggested that students' interest in a subject, in conjunction with their intrinsic motivation in that particular type of teaching intervention, are important components of how relevant students considered the subject and the interventions were in regard to their chosen field of study. Sørebø and Hæhre (2012) argued that the arousal of intrinsic motivation is more important than a student's initial interest in a study in making the study relevant.

Gagné and Deci (2005) argued that the core elements of self-determination theory are extrinsic and intrinsic motivation as well as a set of basic psychological needs that underlie motivation. Sørebø and Hæhre (2012, p. 347) refer to 'motivation' as the reasons for carrying out an activity and defined 'intrinsic motivation' as "…the motivation to engage in a task for its own sake out of interest and/or enjoyment—and not as a means to another reward". Roca and Gagné (2008) argued that extrinsic motivation has four dimensions. The first dimension is where the reasons for carrying out an activity may be external, as in seeking to achieve an external reward. 'Identified' is based on a feeling of personal importance (Roca & Gagné, 2008). 'Integrated'

suggests a harmony with one's self, making a conscious decision to undertake an activity (Roca & Gagne, 2008). Finally, according to Roca and Gagné (2008), 'introjection' suggests that an activity is carried out to avoid a feeling of shame. Roca and Gagné (2008) further supported the notion of these basic psychological needs of relatedness, competence and autonomy in finding that the adoption of intrinsic motivation, or internalising, the self-determined types of extrinsic motivation, like identified and integrated, depends on satisfying the aforementioned needs.

### 2.3.2.2 Personal interest

Ainley and Ainley (2011) found that students who had an embedded interest in a particular subject were more likely to enjoy that subject and explore the topic, enhancing their knowledge and understanding thereof. When students believed that the topic they were studying had personal relevance and meaning in their lives, they were more likely to experience interest and enjoyment from engaging with the subject (Ainley & Ainley, 2011). Silvia (2008) likewise suggested that interest motivates people to explore new ideas and engage in new experiences. A lack of interest results in people doing the same things they are used to, repetitively, as if in a 'rut' (Silvia, 2008). 'Interest', as a trait, relates to unconventional curiosity, meaning that an individual interested in a particular topic is more open to that new experiences, increased learning surrounding that topic (Silvia, 2008). Silvia (2008, p. 59) finally intimated that if something is interesting, it is more likely to be viewed as "…complex, unfamiliar, negative, and disturbing" rather than just "simple, positive, and calming". This implies that for something to be interesting, it would move an individual out of his comfort zone.

Sørebø & Hæhre (2012, p. 348) conceptualise personal interest as "being interested in a subject or course like the MBA". They differentiate personal interest from intrinsic motivation by suggesting that personal interest is to experience something as important while intrinsic motivation is to experience something as enjoyable. They conclude that personal interest is a precursor to intrinsic motivation.

Personal relevance occurs when the individual's characteristics and the academic learning environment overlap (O'Connor & Cordova, 2010). Cheng and Ho (1998) performed a regression analysis on two attitudinal factors (training value and training motivation) and two organisational factors (opportunity to transfer and transfer reward) to determine if these affect the transfer of MBA knowledge into work. What they found

was that the greater the perceived value of training, the more likely the individual was to apply this training.

Hidi and Renninger (2011) suggested that interest can be nurtured and developed through interactions with others and through the design of the learning environment. They also suggested that interest appears to enable students to connect with the subject, a connection which results in learning. Interest was found to be a mediator in learning and was reciprocal to self-efficacy, goal-setting and students being able to regulating themselves (Hidi & Renninger, 2011). However, Hidi and Renninger (2011) found a gap between appreciating the impact of interest and the enabling of educators to realise methods for supporting students and designing learning environments which cultivate this interest.

### 2.3.2.3 Situational interest

Hidi and Renninger (2006) reported that situational interest is a powerful construct that can be manipulated by educators. They suggest personal interest tends to be more stable and predefined while situational interest could be manipulated through the application of instructional materials and thus was under the direct control of the teacher.

### 2.3.2.3.1    The role of educators in creating and sustaining situational interest

Hidi and Renninger (2006) suggested that, in general, studies related to interest have yielded several highly useful findings for educators. Educators can help maintain students' attention to challenging topics and subjects either by providing support to students so that they experience induced situational interest or by providing students with feedback so that their interest is piqued and as such, sustain the situational interest (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). They suggested that educators can create an environment which fosters the curiosity of students and provides a comfortable learning space in which to ask questions in relation to their curiosity. Another option available to educators is to utilise resources that encourage and promote problem-solving and the generation of strategy (Hidi & Renninger, 2006).

### 2.3.2.3.2　Key characteristics of educators which foster situational interest

Rotgans and Schmidt (2011) conducted research to determine whether social congruence, subject-matter expertise and cognitive congruence increased situational interest in students. They found that cognitive congruence significantly influenced situational interest. Rotgans and Schmidt (2011, p. 38) cited Schmidt and Moust (1995) in defining cognitive congruence as "the ability to express oneself in a language students can understand, using concepts they use and explaining concepts in ways easily grasped by students". Cognitive congruence, they argued, positively impacts learning. As a further consideration in increasing situational interest, Rotgans and Schmidt (2011) concluded that by improving an educator's subject matter expertise, the educator's cognitive congruence would increase and thus indirectly impact situational interest. Subject matter expertise could be enhanced either through additional resources and materials or through more detailed and in-depth briefings where a deeper understanding of the subject or problem is achieved (Rotgans & Schmidt, 2011).

### 2.3.2.3.3　The four-phase model to develop and deepen learner interest

Hidi and Renninger (2006) presented the four-phase model for developing and deepening learner interest: 1) triggered situational interest; 2) maintained situational interest; 3) emerging individual interest; and finally 4) well-developed individual interest. They define the various phases of interest, detailed the needs of a learner in each phase and provided suggestions as to what educators could do to sustain interest at each phase.

### 2.3.2.3.3.1 Triggered situational interest

Hidi and Renninger (2006, p. 114) define <u>triggered situational interest</u> as "a psychological state of interest that results from short-term changes in affective and cognitive processing". They intimated that triggered situational interest is predominantly externally supported, triggered by providing learners with information that is extraordinary and causes a surprise, by character identification or personal relevance or by creating an intense situation. They suggested that learning environments making use of various kinds of resources including puzzles, working in groups and computers

have been successful in triggering situational interest. They see triggering situational interest as a precursor to re-engaging content.

### 2.3.2.3.3.2 Maintained situational interest

According to Hidi and Renninger (2006, p. 114) <u>maintained situational interest</u> refers to "a psychological state of interest that is subsequent to a triggered state, involves focused attention and persistence over an extended episode in time, and/or reoccurs and again persists". They suggest that by ensuring that tasks and activities were meaningful and ensuring that learners were personally involved, situational interest could be maintained. Like triggered situational interest, maintained situational interest is predominantly externally supported, conducive to learning environments which include activities like project-based learning, collaborative group activities and one to one tutoring (Hidi & Renninger, 2006).

### 2.3.2.3.3.3 Emerging individual interest

Hidi and Renninger (2006, p. 114) suggested that <u>emerging individual interest</u> refers to "a psychological state of interest as well as to the beginning phases of a relatively enduring predisposition to seek repeated reengagement with particular classes of content over time". They suggested that characteristics of this phase include positive emotions, stored knowledge and stored value. In this regard, students will re-engage topics and subjects based on their previous positive experiences with that topic (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). While an emerging individual interest is typically self-generated, it may require some external support including peers and experts who could contribute to a better understanding of the topic (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). As such, the learning environment should provide access to knowledgeable peers and experts to further stimulate emerging individual interest (Hidi & Renninger, 2006).

### 2.3.2.3.3.4 Well-developed individual interest

The last phase in situational interest as defined by Hidi and Renninger (2006, p. 115) refers to <u>well-developed individual interest</u> as "the psychological state of interest as well as to a relatively enduring predisposition to reengage with particular classes of content over time". At this stage, according to Hidi and Renninger (2006), an individual has a great deal more positional emotion and stored value and knowledge from past

experiences than in any other phase. They suggested that an individual in this phase of interest will undertake learning effortlessly and this phase will ensure that the individual is able to sustain long-term activities in a constructive and creative manner. Like emerging individual interest, well-developed individual interest is typically self-generated and promoted through a learning environment which provides access to resources for extending and enhancing an individual's understanding. This environment should provide learners with vital interaction and challenges which result in knowledge escalation (Hidi & Renninger, 2006).

### 2.3.3  Content relevance

O'Connor and Cordova (2010) suggested that content relevance occurs when the work environment and the academic learning environment overlap. Lindel and Stenstrom (2005) view content relevance as information being learnt at school being directly applicable to work. O'Connor and Cordova (2010) concluded that what is being learnt at school and expected at work are mutually dependent—where there is a lack of understanding of what is being taught and when this material  does not relate directly to an individual's work, learning is diminished.

Key to this research is the finding of O'Connor and Cordova (2010) that when individuals were studying in a challenging graduate programme, they felt alive and rejuvenated. A major disconnect arose when an alive student encountered a work environment that failed to take advantage of the individual's capabilities and personal being (O'Connor & Cordova, 2010). Students expressed the need for job engagement, course content relevance, and personal relevance and when all of these were aligned, students reported that "they had changed—become—the person they wanted to be" (O'Connor & Cordova, 2010, p. 368).

### 2.4 Learning concepts

### 2.4.1  Developmental learning

Konkola, Tuomi-Gröhn, Lambert, and Ludvigsen (2007) refer to a concept called 'developmental transfer' which focuses on the collaborative efforts of organisations to create new knowledge and practices rather than the individual transferring knowledge to the organisation. They suggested that over time, boundaries have been created

between school and work, so transcending these boundaries will be challenging yet necessary to achieve transfer of knowledge from school to work and vice versa. In order to achieve this, they recommended setting up a team of teachers, students and practitioners to consider challenges faced by business. This team would benefit from the theoretic and practical expertise of the group and this would result in developmental transfer (Konkola et al., 2007).

Konkola et al. (2007) suggested that the generation of new ideas based on theory could potentially give businesses a competitive edge, as teachers are able to better integrate practice with theory for future classes, and students are actively practising what they learn, thus solidifying their learning. A key challenge, identified by Konkola et al. (2007), will be the willingness of businesses to open their doors to teachers, given issues around confidentiality of information, processes and ideas which form the basis of businesses' competitive advantages. However, the potential of this collaboration certainly offers more anticipated benefits to an organisation, and, for assurance, confidentiality agreements could mitigate business risks (Konkola et al., 2007).

Schilling and Klamma (2010) made a similar suggestion that projects should occur at participating businesses; they recommend that these projects integrate both students and company experts. As the main goal of these interventions is the establishment of best practice between academia and business, they recommend that only companies willing to offer up their facilities should be collaborated with. Furthermore, they explained that a long-term relationship seeing the implementation of many small projects would be more profitable and beneficial to all parties, cautioning against once-off projects or engagements as these would not result in long-lasting or long-term benefits to any of the stakeholders. Schilling and Klamma (2010) saw group coaching in these projects as a vital part of successful collaboration and suggested that lecturers should be more inclusive of this project work.

### 2.4.2 Action learning

According to Marquardt and Waddill (2004), action learning is centred on a problem, project or challenge and the resolution thereof is of high priority for an individual, team or organisation. They suggested that the problem should be substantial, within the control of the team and yet creating an exciting opportunity for learning. According to them, action learning is a powerful method of learning which results in relevant long-

term learning condensed into a short span of time applicable across various entities including individuals, teams and organisations. Action learning combines elements of the various schools of learning, allowing for the solving of complex problems and adding speed to learning (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004). Marquardt and Waddill (2004) further suggested that action learning provides a basis for reflection and that the constructivist theory of learning supports an action approach.

Lysø, Mjøen, and Levin (2011) suggested that management learning is more likely to have an organisational impact if learning and action are balanced and if action learning projects are collaborative. They argued that for action learning projects to be effective in practice, organisations must have clear reasons for sending managers on management development courses, ensuring that such managers have the support of their direct superior and facilitating the participation of other members of the organisation in the action learning projects.

Gosling and Mintzberg (2006) challenged the design of traditional executive development programmes, in particular the MBA programme, suggesting that learning needed to be more interactive and reflective. They proposed seven key principles in structuring learning, including limiting education to practising managers and selecting such managers based on their demonstrated results. They further suggested that managers should remain in their jobs and apply what they have learned back to their jobs. Continuing on, they suggested that management education should leverage life and work as fully as possible. They have noted, however, that the key to learning is reflection. Affording managers time and space to sit back and reflect on their studies and work experiences was key to ensuring that managers actually applied what they learned (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006). This reflection should therefore result in beneficial impact to the organisation. Gosling and Mintzberg (2006) felt that management education should be a process of interactive learning by addressing managerial concerns from practice through facilitated discussions in class.

## 2.5 Collaboration

### 2.5.1   Definition of collaboration

Winer and Ray (1994, p. 10) define collaboration as "a process that gets people to work together in new ways. The process does not end but spawns new collaborative

ventures. Collaboration becomes a continuing phenomenon with a wide range of results that can empower people and systems to change". This definition suggests that collaboration is a continuously evolving process that empowers change.

Another definition of collaboration is "a process in which autonomous or semi-autonomous actors interact through formal and informal negotiation, jointly creating rules and structures governing their relationships and ways to act or decide on the issues that brought them together; it is a process" (Thomson, Perry, & Miller, 2009, p. 25). This definition suggests that collaboration is a multi-dimensional, variable construct and that it comprises five key dimensions (Thomson et al., 2009). The two structural dimensions of collaboration are governance and administration, while the two social capital dimensions are mutuality and norms (Thomson et al., 2009). The final agency dimension of collaboration is organisational autonomy (Thomson et al., 2009).

However, Bedwell et al. (2012) argued that none of these definitions or works takes a multidisciplinary approach to defining collaboration. They argued that these definitions merely referred to different forms of interactions and that as such they provided little clarity around the true meaning of collaboration. Bedwell et al. (2012, p. 130) went on to define collaboration as "an evolving process whereby two or more social entities actively and reciprocally engage in joint activities aimed at achieving at least one shared goal".

### 2.5.2   Emergent themes in understanding collaboration

From the literature review considering the definition of collaboration, the following themes emerge to clarify the characteristics of collaboration, as identified by Bedwell et al. (2012).

### 2.5.2.1 Collaboration is an evolving process

Collaboration is an outcome rather than a goal. It is, in essence, the process through which people engage to achieve a predetermined goal, a process involving interpersonal relationships and interactions which evolve and develop over time (Bedwell et al., 2012).

### 2.5.2.2 Collaboration requires two or more social entities

Collaboration exists between and across various entities including individuals, teams, units, departments, functional areas and organisations (Bedwell et al., 2012).

### 2.5.2.3 Collaboration is reciprocal

Collaboration requires active, mutual engagement so there cannot be a dominant party as this would constitute delegation of work or coercion (Bedwell, et al., 2012). Having said that, though, the engagement and involvement of all parties need not be equal (Bedwell, et al., 2012). It must be stressed that interdependence and sufficient contributions toward common goals are critical to achieving collaboration (Bedwell et al., 2012).

### 2.5.2.4 Collaboration requires participation in joint activities

Collaboration is applicable to a variety of activities, both within and outside the work environment: a key feature is that it requires interdependent efforts, by all parties concerned, which are focused on joint activities (Bedwell et al., 2012).

### 2.5.2.5 Collaboration is aimed at achieving a shared goal

Bedwell et al. (2012) suggests that a shared goal differentiates collaboration from other forms of shared work; it is necessary for these goals to be mutually defined or agreed upon. Without the shared goal there is little incentive for entities to work together (Bedwell, et al., 2012). A point of contention does exist in that while entities have shared goals, they may also have conflicting goals so entities will need to minimise their own conflicts in order to attain their shared goals (Bedwell et al., 2012).

Having defined collaboration and identifying its key characteristics, the next step is to understanding how the key stakeholders in an MBA view the programme and understand the challenges facing the MBA.

**2.6 The MBA under pressure**

**2.6.1   What is wrong with the MBA?**

Donovan and Steward-Smith (2010) summarised the findings of two independent surveys—one performed by UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) and the other by MBA.co.za—to establish the perception of South African employers toward the MBA. Donovan and Stewart-Smith (2010) reported that the results revealed significant gaps in the perceptions of business schools and MBA students and employers who fund and hire MBA students and graduates.

**2.6.2   Skills for the marketplace**

Gap #1: Business schools can aid students in better understanding what an MBA offers and help manage students' expectations with regard to the skills that are actually required in the marketplace and workplace (Donovan & Stewart-Smith, 2010). Temtime and Mmereki (2011) also found a gap between the skills and knowledge required by industry and the programmes provided by the MBA with the skills that students actually acquired in the programme. They found that most skills identified as 'critical' were not adequately covered by the MBA curriculum and classroom lessons.

Blass and Weight (2005, p. 232) raised several questions regarding the MBA including the following two: 1) "Are we doing students a disservice by even offering them an MBA?" and 2) "Does one size fit all?" They felt that the skills taught in the MBA programme did not travel well and that an MBA as a global qualification may not necessarily be appropriate if the programme did not consider the specific culture and work context of students in a particular location. Their view was that the MBA curriculum did not necessarily develop 'international' managers.

**2.6.3   Understanding the purpose of the MBA**

Gap #2: Donovan and Stewart-Smith (2010) suggested that MBA providers should help employers better understand the MBA programme. Some important items which they suggested, among others, as critical to creating this understanding, included the relevance of the curriculum, the importance of the accreditation and the marketing presentation and output of the respective business school. Rowland and Hall (2011)

suggested that the MBA is a post-experience programme and the incoming students must bear this in mind, as the experience of students ultimately affected the way in which subjects were taught and the overall culture of the programme.

## 2.6.4 Approach to learning

Gap #3: The MBA curriculum should provide opportunities for practical application, applied research and live cases so that students are better able to relate their MBA learning with real business practice (Donovan & Stewart-Smith, 2010). In light of this, they also recommended internships as valuable in this regard. Another suggestion is that MBA providers could better educate the business community on why an MBA is truly value for money (Donovan & Stewart-Smith, 2010).

Mintzberg and Gosling (2002) suggested that managers cannot be developed in a classroom, however, that practicing managers could profoundly improve their capabilities in class. They suggested that management education added little value for those people who did not practice management. Mintzberg and Gosling (2002) criticised the MBA for teaching students business functions rather than the practicalities of business administration. What this meant is that students become graduate specialists rather than collaborative managers (Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002).

Rowland and Hall (2011) suggested that there is a gulf between the expectation of students and business school employees with regard to the various approaches to learning. Given the diversity of the incumbents of the MBA, the requirement on educators was to vary their teaching methods; yet, this was not consistently achieved. Furthermore, those educators who had taught abroad were found to be better equipped at varying their teaching methods in line with the requirements of students (Rowland & Hall, 2011). What is clear from this research is that while employers, business schools and students alike see significant value in an MBA, the extent to which they perceive that value is materially different (Donovan & Stewart-Smith, 2010). The onus, it seems, is on the business schools to bridge the existing gap (Donovan & Stewart-Smith, 2010).

## 2.6.5 Admission standards into the MBA

Rowland and Hall (2011) suggested that the MBA is a post-experience programme and the incoming students should bear this in mind. They further suggested that the

experience of students ultimately affected the way in which subjects were taught and the overall culture of the programme.

This study will seek to understand if collaboration between business schools and organisations can bridge the gaps identified by Donovan and Stewart-Smith (2010) and if so, to what extent. Furthermore, it will seek to understand which forms of collaboration will maximise the success of bridging these gaps.

Abdullah and Yee (2009) found that MBA graduates' attributes and work values were extremely important criteria considered by the hiring organisations. The quality of graduates, in fact, depended largely on the effectiveness of the MBA programme and it was vital for business schools to develop MBA programmes which supported the needs of business, as this provides the foundation for business schools to review their admission criteria, reassess and realign their MBA programmes to meet the business needs of organisations and the employability of students (Abdullah & Yee, 2009).

## 2.7 Why choose the MBA?

Annesley, Hernandez, Morgan, Pescovitz, and Wright (2012) defined leadership as "…someone who leads, commands, or moves a group toward a goal." They further suggested that the more contemporary views of leadership included concepts such as influencing, guiding and inspiring people. They suggested that leaders need to be adaptable and resilient in the face of rapid and relentless change. They further described a leader's ability to listen and provide feedback, assimilate data and make informed decisions as being critical to succeeding in the evolving business environment. They felt that authenticity was critical to being a good leader and that leadership was a skill that could be learned.

In a report by Finweek and MBAconnect.net (2012), 1,575 graduates responded to a survey which sought to provide a holistic view of MBA students' and graduates' perceptions of the MBA qualification. Over 90% of the respondents indicated that the impact on their leadership abilities was positive as a result of the leadership skills taught in the MBA and the skills acquired during group work (Finweek & MBAconnect.net, 2012). According to Finweek and MBAconnect.net (2012) this was further enhanced by an increased level of self-awareness. Baruch (2009) suggested that MBA graduates performed better at their jobs as the MBA programme tended to enhance their self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy. However, Rubin and

Dierdorff (2011) suggested that the MBA as a training ground for leaders and not managers was only a half truth. They suggested that business schools often confused management with leadership and that they were in fact training competent managers rather than qualified leaders. In their view, certain management functions required competent leadership. They suggested that the leadership-versus-management rhetoric was merely a distraction from the real capabilities required by managers to do their jobs effectively.

Respondents also felt strongly that the MBA was worth what they had paid for it, with an average payback period on financial returns of 1.8 years. If non-financial returns were to be included, this payback time would be shorter (Finweek & MBAconnect.net, 2012).

While students viewed the MBA as having a positive impact on their leadership abilities, this study will seek to understand the collaborative ways in which students can take these skills back into the workplace to ensure that both the student and hiring organisations achieve the maximum benefits of the degree.

While the report suggested a strong positive impact on the lives of MBA graduates, it also highlighted a few concerns: there appears to be a 'disconnect' between work and studies (Finweek & MBAconnect.net, 2012). Approximately 68% of the students experienced a negative financial impact needing to cut back on lifestyle expenses, certainly, but more importantly, having to take vacation leave to study for the MBA (Finweek & MBAconnect.net, 2012). This invariably impacted on their personal lives and increased the stress levels of students (*Finweek* & MBAconnect.net, 2012). In this regard, this study will seek to understand the collaborative ways in which business schools and organisations can better support students during this stressful period with the view of reaping the benefits thereof during and post MBA.

Additionally, graduates felt that business schools were not efficient enough in keeping details and records of their alumni up-to-date (Finweek & MBAconnect.net, 2012). Furthermore, the report suggested that business schools were ineffective at helping graduates access MBA-level job opportunities. The general perception was that graduates would like business schools to have a stronger impact in their lives and that business schools were failing in this area of job-placement once students graduated (*Finweek* & MBAconnect.net, 2012).  This study will seek to understand if collaboration can provide business schools with the necessary guidance for improving their service

offering to students and graduates and in turn, help themselves for improved after-delivery service. The post MBA support could prove to be an additional revenue generator which would, in turn, be to the benefit of the business school (Finweek & MBAconnect.net, 2012).

### 2.7.1   Organisations

According to Conger and Xin (2000), learning needs to be less functional and more strategic to be of greater benefit to organisations. They suggested that companies such as General Electric, Phillips, and Ernst and Young viewed executive education as a means to aligning their organisations to strategic objectives. Companies like these have reshaped the focus of executive education with the aim of uniting and equipping senior management to work together to change and drive organisations rather than focus on an individual's education (Conger & Xin, 2000). Thus, education should be guided by three objectives: 1) to raise awareness and support for strategic change; 2) to facilitate organisational development; and 3) to ensure that organisations are able to achieve their changing strategic objectives by creating a pipeline of leadership talent (Conger & Xin, 2000). Carmichael and Sutherland (2005) reported that behavioural changes in students translated into improved business results.

Baruch (2009) suggested that companies which sponsor MBA students deliver a clear message to employees that it invests in its people. According to them, this premise holds true even if students leave the employ of the organisation on the completion of their studies. Baruch (2009) recommended that companies may need to investigate the real reasons for employees leaving on the completion of their studies as the lack of recognition and appreciation of their new skills may be a contributing factor.

Siebert, Kraimer, and Liden (2001) suggested that there was a positive correlation between sponsorship and career advancement. This was confirmed by Kraimer, Siebert, Wayne, Liden, and Bravo (2011) who suggested that individuals who were presented with opportunities to learn new skills and were sponsored by senior members in the organisation, as compared to their counterparts who were not sponsored, had a better opportunity to increase the return on investment for both the organisation and themselves.

## 2.7.2 MBA graduates

Carmichael and Sutherland (2005) suggested that, for MBA graduates and current students, perceived benefits of the MBA are both financial and non-financial. They suggested that financial benefits include salary increases, secure employment, business networks, promotion and new career opportunities. They also suggested that non-financial benefits include self-confidence, a worldview and global insight, increased skill and knowledge, greater productivity and greater job satisfaction. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of students to ensure that they maximise their return from the MBA through adequate preparation and class participation as these commitments lead to behavioural changes which translate into improved business results (Carmichael & Sutherland, 2005). Baruch (2009) also supported the view that the MBA provided students with a valuable range of knowledge necessary to ensure they became more efficient and effective managers.

Hay and Hodgkinson (2006) argued that success in an MBA was wider than just career advancement. The MBA, they said, added increased qualitative improvements to a student's career including confidence and career choice flexibility rather than quantitative improvements such as hierarchical advancement. Increased confidence was found to be the most common gauge by which students measure the effectiveness and success of an MBA. Furthermore, a larger array of career choices helped students build resilience in the current uncertain economic environment. Hay and Hodgkinson (2006, p. 120) simplified this by suggesting students, ironically, valued both the "stability and movement" that the qualification offered them.

Bensley, Crowea, Bernhardta, Buckner, and Allmana (2010, p. 91) defined critical thinking as "reflective thinking involved in the evaluation of evidence relevant to a claim so that a sound conclusion can be drawn from the evidence." Glynn and Wood (2008) analysed six years of data to determine which business skills were most successfully developed in MBA students. Surveying MBA alumni to elicit their views, they found that critical thinking and problem solving were the most improved and developed skills in MBA graduates.

Kelan and Jones (2009) argued that the MBA broadened horizons and widened perspectives by exposing students to new experiences in a wide variety of contexts. They suggested that this was critical to developing a graduate's career capital. Temtime and Mmereki (2011) supported this view by suggesting that students studied

an MBA to gain basic management skills, to develop their careers and to broaden their business insight.

Business schools, therefore, must consider MBA students as key stakeholders and should actively support them to achieve and maximise their educational benefits (Carmichael & Sutherland, 2005). Students and educators alike are encouraged to collaborate in order to determine which learning methods are most effective and if this learning can be maximised, it will lead to better returns for all parties (Carmichael & Sutherland, 2005).

Vazquez and Ruas (2012) suggested that students valued the integration of analytical-associative capability with a reflective capability as this enhances learning by allowing them to exploit mistakes and discoveries in the MBA educational context. For integration to happen they suggest that the learning process required students to make an effort in appreciating alternative interpretations (openness), to think outside their immediate daily routines (analysis and association), to find meanings in what they learn and how it relates to practice (reflection), to challenge and accept different views (tolerate differences) and to increase their social interactions (relational competences).

What the literature suggests is that there are several challenges and benefits to the MBA and as it relates to this study will be used as an entry point to opening a conversation with respondents and confirming the literature in this regard.

### 2.7.3   Business schools

Carruth and Carruth (2006) suggested that MBA programmes, while historically highly regarded by both the academic and business fields, are now being scrutinised and criticised for lack of relevance to the current business environment. They suggested that the perceived lack of relevance combined with increasing costs of the MBA have resulted in declining applications and enrolments as companies turn to in-house programmes and interventions. In-house programmes are not only more cost effective but also more relevant to the organisation's needs (Carruth & Carruth, 2006). Business schools will not be viable in future if they fail to provide students with specialised knowledge, the skills with which to effectively use this knowledge  and instil the key attributes of leadership including sound ethics, sound judgement, innovative thinking and insight (Carruth & Carruth, 2006). They intimated that it is thus critical that business schools, like businesses, reinvent themselves in accordance with the

changing global business environment a reinvention which must include understanding the perspective of students and creating an environment in which students are challenged to nurture their creativity so that they can be successful personally and at work. This creativity is more likely to result in business success than following prescribed steps to success (Carruth & Carruth, 2006).

In-house programmes, for a start provide a basis for presenting potential areas of improved for the MBA. Again challenges facing the MBA will for a basis for a conversation with respondents to determine whether collaboration between business schools and businesses can potentially address some of these challenges.

## 2.8 Conclusion

Much of the literature and research to date relating to the MBA has been from the perspective of students. This research seeks to support and build on existing theory by investigating the views of business schools and business. The first step will be to explore and confirm the existing literature, garnering an understanding of the current views of both business schools and businesses with respect to the MBA programme. The successes and failures of the MBA, as perceived by business schools and organisations, will provide insight into whether or not the MBA still has a justifiable place in the current business world, as well as insight into what is necessary to heighten its impact.

Literature has suggested several circumstances and conditions under which adult learning is optimised; however, there appears to be only isolated instances of success. In particular, even though current press calls for more collaboration between business schools and organisations, there has been little research on this subject as it applies to the MBA. Research suggests that collaboration is a process that can empower people and systems to change by getting people to work together (Winer & Ray, 1994). This research will seek to understand if collaboration between business schools and business can, in fact, act as the adhesive that holds the key stakeholders in the MBA—business schools, organisations, and students—together. It will also seek to understand if collaboration can piece together the isolated initiatives being carried out by various parties and ensure that they are all striving toward the same common goal. Finally, this research will attempt to understand how business schools and

organisations can enter into a collaborative relationship, and how this new relationship can be strengthened and maintained.

These missing links in literature have given rise to several research questions which are discussed in Chapter 3.

# CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

## 3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 suggests that very little research has been conducted concerning the notion of collaboration of organisations and business schools for maximising the impact of the MBA programme.

Consequently, this researcher will seek to better understand how collaboration can improve the impact of the MBA. The initial step is to unpack the MBA programme itself and confirm the theories in Chapter 2 regarding the successes and challenges faced by the stakeholders to the MBA programme. Once this has been established, the researcher will then explore the key elements required for an MBA programme to be impactful to both business and the students themselves.

Having established the base for an impactful MBA programme, the researcher will explore ways in which business schools and organisations can develop such collaborative relationships, investigating the requirement for such a relationship to exist.

Finally, the researcher will seek to understand what is required to ensure that this collaborative relationship will be maintained.

Essentially, the research will aim to understand what collaborative relationships currently exist between organisations and business schools, considering how the principles of these relationships can be paralleled with the MBA programme to achieve similar benefits in the MBA.

As such, business schools and organisations that employ and fund MBA students are considered stakeholders in the process.

## 3.2 The research questions

The research is explanatory in nature and seeks to answer the following research questions, answers for which will add value to the current body of literature:

*Research question 1*: What are the successes the MBA programme?

*Research question 2*: What are the challenges faced by the MBA programme?

*Research question 3:* What are the essential elements required for an MBA programme to be impactful?

*Research question 4:* How can business schools and organisations enter into a collaborative relationship to improve the impact of the MBA?

*Research question 5:* What elements are required for maintaining and strengthening a collaborative relationship between MBA stakeholders?

# CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1.1 Research method

The purpose of this study was to explore different ways in which collaboration between business schools and organisations could achieve maximum impact from an MBA programme for all invested in the MBA programme—business schools, students, and organisations. Collaboration to achieve the maximum output from an MBA programme was generally defined as 'organisations and business schools working together to ensure that all parties, including students, maximise their respective benefits from investing in an MBA programme'. The study obtained the views of businesses and business schools as to how they might enter into a collaborative relationship and how such a relationship could be maintained.

Rossman and Rallis (2012, p. 4) suggested that qualitative research best fits research which seeks "to learn about some aspects of the social world and to generate new understandings that can then be used". Based on this view, a qualitative research design suited this research as it sought to learn about the ways in which business schools, students and organisations collaborate, and then further understand which methods of collaboration could potentially be applied to the MBA programme. Qualitative research was also recommended for research "that elicits tacit knowledge and subjective understandings and interpretations" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 29) and this is precisely what this study aimed to accomplish. Scott Holste and Fields (2010) suggested that tacit knowledge is highly personal and difficult to capture. Tacit knowledge arises from an individual's abilities, their developed skills, experiences, undocumented processes and gut-feelings (Scott Holste & Fields, 2010). In some settings, tacit knowledge may be the most useful as it goes beyond the obvious and the documented (Scott Holste & Fields, 2010). The aim of this research was to uncover knowledge which the subjects possessed but did not openly or readily disclose, yet which would likely be beneficial to better understand the collaboration process and if indeed the MBA become more impactful. Tapping into this tacit knowledge provided interesting insights of collaboration which could be beneficial to stakeholders in an MBA programme.

Furthermore, qualitative data provides rich and detailed data for research (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). In this regard, this research required rich description in order to fully

understand the perspectives and needs of the various stakeholders and the manner in which they collaborated. Collaboration is a difficult concept to truly understand without a fuller view; this fuller view could only be achieved with data that had sufficient depth and detail. This sort of data could be extracted from qualitative data.

Ritchie and Lewis (2003, p. 54) suggested that "cross-sectional studies are used to explore macro-level change" and that the focus is on the context in which individuals exist rather than the individuals themselves. Saunders and Lewis (2012, p. 123) added to this understanding of cross-sectional research by defining it as "the study of a particular topic at a particular time, i.e. a 'snapshot'". Both these definitions supported the design of the current study as it firstly sought to understand the context in which stakeholders in the MBA viewed the successes and failures of the MBA. Furthermore, due to the time constraints and limitations with regard to the research, a point in time study was most appropriate; hence, this research was a qualitative, cross-sectional study.

Ritchie and Lewis (2003, p. 24) noted that applied research "…is concerned with using the knowledge acquired through research to contribute directly to the understanding or resolution of a contemporary issue". Rossman and Rallis (2012, p. 5) further elaborated on applied research by suggesting that "applied research aims to inform action and enhance decision making". This research lent itself to an applied research approach as it used the knowledge acquired from understanding the different forms of collaboration between the relevant stakeholders and how they could potentially enhance the benefits of the MBA programme with the view of providing stakeholders with information that could inform their actions and decisions in this regard.

## 4.2 Research philosophy

Saunders and Lewis (2012, p. 106) described 'interpretivism' as "a research philosophy which advocates the necessity to understand differences between humans in their role as social actors". Ritchie and Lewis (2003) mentioned Immanuel Kant's (1781) proposal that people view the world through more than just direct observation. Their interpretation of Kant's proposal was that perceptions relate to our human interpretations of what we sense and not our senses alone and that our understanding of the world results from us thinking about our experiences and not our experiences alone (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

The research sought to understand the ways in which business schools and organisations collaborate and how this could be applied to gain greater value from the MBA. It also sought to uncover the perceptions of the above-mentioned social actors and their thoughts and feelings pertaining to the MBA programme. Given that these social actors each perceived the MBA programme and the value derived from it quite differently, the research sought to understand these differences. As such, this research lent itself to an interpretive philosophy.

## 4.3 Research approach

Saunders and Lewis (2012, p. 109) defined 'induction' as "a research approach which involves the development of theory as a result of analysing data already collected". With inductive reasoning, research seeks to observe patterns or occurrences of particular phenomena which can then be investigated with the ultimate aim of developing conclusions or theories (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Saunders and Lewis (2012, p. 109) further suggested that with an inductive approach the emphasis of the research "is on a close understanding of the research content" and that as the research progresses a more flexible structure will allow for changes in the research emphasis.

Since the research aimed to unearth an understanding of collaboration in the MBA between business schools and organisations, this phenomenon constitutes the more specific observations with which the researcher began, and the aim was to observe or unearth common patterns and occurrences around collaborations between these parties. The research further sought to gain deep insights and thus develop a deeper understanding of collaboration. As such, an inductive approach suited the research.

## 4.4 Type of research

Ritchie and Lewis (2003, p. 27) described contextual research as "describing the form or nature of what exists" and explanatory research as "examining the reasons for, or associations between, what exists". Contextual research suited this study as the research first described the successes and failures of the MBA and then explored ways in which stakeholders might collaborate in the MBA. In addition to this, the research was explanatory as it examined how key stakeholders collaborated and how this could be applied to the MBA.

## 4.5 Research strategy

A flexible research strategy was followed and a naturalistic inquiry in the 'real world' was conducted (i.e. business schools which offer an MBA programme and organisations which fund MBA students) (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

## 4.6 Research process

According to Rossman and Rallis (2012), triangulation enhances the credibility of the research and ensures the validity of the data by applying a variety of methods in data collection. Furthermore, triangulation prevents a researcher from studying only a portion of the complexity that the research aims to unearth (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

In this regard, two distinct data sets were collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews. The results and major themes that arose from the interviews with organisations were validated in the interviews with business schools.

### 4.6.1    Semi-structured, in-depth interviews

Rossman and Rallis (2012) recommend that before deciding whether in-depth interviews are appropriate to the data collection process, certain rationale should be considered for interviewing. This rationale would include obtaining an understanding of individual perspectives to deepen understanding, to generate data which is rich and descriptive, and to obtain an understanding of the context (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). It is precisely this sort of data around collaboration and the MBA that this study sought to gather. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted the academic heads of each of the four major South Africa business schools offering an MBA programme, and the Human Resource directors from several multinational and international organisations which either employ or fund MBA students, as these people will offer the most valuable insights.

## 4.7 Scope

The scope of this research pertains to Learning and Development. The reason for this is that the research sought to explore collaboration in an attempt to optimise the transfer of learning in an MBA specifically in the context of academia to the individual and the business.

## 4.8 Population

Saunders and Lewis (2012, p. 132) defined a population as "the complete set of group members". Given that this study will focus on the views of business schools and organisations, the population for this study included business schools which offer an MBA programme, as well as businesses which employ full-time employees who are or have been students in an MBA programme.

## 4.9 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis was a stakeholder in the MBA programme. These stakeholders included, but are not limited to, business schools who offer an MBA programme and organisations that fund full-time employees in obtaining their MBA. An 'organisation' referred to a company which funded an employee, either fully or partially, in undertaking an MBA or employed an MBA graduate.

Students are not considered stakeholders in this research as previous studies have engaged MBA students, but not thoroughly considered the perspectives of the business schools or the businesses that are funding this higher education of employees. This research focused on the views of business schools and businesses that are involved in the MBA.

## 4.10    Sampling

### 4.10.1  Sampling technique

Since a complete list of business schools and organisations that employ MBA alumni and MBA students was not readily available, a non-probability sampling technique was employed. Purposive sampling is a technique where a researcher "is using their judgement to actively choose those who will be best able to help answer the research question and meet the objectives" (Saunders & Lewis, 2012, p. 138). Purposive sampling allows the researcher the freedom to select individuals who are or have been involved in collaborative initiatives between business schools and organisations. This sample of individuals will be in a position to provide valuable input in terms of their experiences and thus the information solicited would be critically relevant in terms of answering the research questions. The four leading business schools in South African

were considered essential for the purposes of this research given their well establish history in offering an MBA and their excellent reputation in the business world. From a business perspective, a range of multinational and international companies were considered for their employment of and experience with MBAs as well as their relationships with business schools.

## 4.10.2  Sample size

There were two distinct groups who provided input into the research: academic directors at business schools running an MBA programme, and organisations who employ MBA alumni and students.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Human Resource directors of these companies, conducted either face to face or telephonically. Further to this, four in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the academic heads of each of the leading four business schools in South Africa.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggested that a sample size should provide sufficient variability of the phenomenon and sufficient depth for the study to be useful and, given the time and funding constraints, will afford the researcher sufficient time to conclude the research within a fair budget.

Ten interviews within organisations achieved both variability and depth, while ensuring that the time and funding constraints were adequately addressed. The four academic heads of the business schools provided sufficient depth and experienced views to be valuable to this research. This was considered to be illustrative and representative of the population, albeit not statistical, given that there are more organisations employing MBA graduates than business schools who offer the programme. Furthermore, ten organisations and four business schools ensured a diverse sample which provided variation in the data collected. Ultimately, this sample led to the surfacing of key themes and areas of interest and concern (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

## 4.11    Data analysis

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), qualitative data analysis involves refining data collected into a more manageable amount, preparing summaries and then identifying patterns and themes. The content analysis technique involves the manual or

automated coding of data including transcripts, documents or audio with the intention of identifying words which occur more frequently in the data. A <u>narrative analysis technique</u> allows respondents to re-live their experiences through the process of telling a story with the view to identifying the hidden meaning behind the story (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

This research used Altas.ti which is data analysis software. Data was initially sorted into mini themes. These mini themes were then later grouped into major themes or constructs. The data collection and analysis was an evolving process; a constant comparative analysis method was adopted as early as the second interview where new data was compared with existing data. In this regard, data collected from each new interview was compared with data already collected (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Themes were changed and rearranged several times for appropriateness of classification. These themes or constructs formed the basis for Chapter 5 and the interpretation of the results.

## 4.12    Potential research limitations

The following aspects are potential limitations to the study:

Interviews were only conducted with the leading business schools in South Africa offering an MBA. To gain a wider and more in-depth view of the study, other business schools should be included. This limits the research generalisation, as there are numerous other schools, both accredited and non-accredited, which offer MBA programmes.

The intervention model that is presented may not be applicable or practicable across different industries. Another limitation, then, is that this study considers 'business' as a general field and doesn't consider various and differing industries, for which the intervention model may not apply as readily.

Only business schools and organisations were interviewed. The other key stakeholders are current students and graduates of an MBA. As their perspectives may be different from those of the other two stakeholders, and yet were not sought for this particular study, the study is restricted.

## 4.13 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research methodology that was used in this study. The most appropriate methodolgy for this research was considered to be qualitative as it tapped into the tacit knowledge of respondents to unearth interesting insights with regard to collaboration. Furthermore, qualitative data provided this research with rich description in order to fully understand the perspectives of the various stakeholders around collaboration. Given the time and cost constraints this research was a qualitative, cross sectional study. The research adopted an applied research approach. The research adopted an interpretive philosophy to understand and unpack the perceptions of the various respondents.

The research approach was inductive in nature as it sought to gain deep insights from business schools and businesses and thus develop a deeper understanding of collaboration. Contextual research suited this study as it first described the successes and challenges faced by the MBA and then explored ways in which they might collaborate to improve the programme's impact. A flexible research strategy was followed and a naturalistic enquiry into the 'real world' was conducted.

The research compared the results of the two distinct data sets, namely business schools and organisations, to validate the results and major themes. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducts with the academic heads of the four major business schools in South African and the Human Resource directors of ten multinational and international organisations who either employ or fund MBA students. The scope of this study pertained to Learning and Development. The population of this study was business schools who offered an MBA programme and organisations that employed or funded MBA students. In this regard a purposive sampling technique was adopted. The ten businesses and four business schools provided sufficient depth and variation in the data and surface several key themes. Data was analysed using Atlas.ti, a data analysis software. The identification of themes was an evolving and iterative process.

Limitations of the study include interviews only with the leading business schools in South Africa, the intervention model that is presented may not be applicable across industries, and the study only considered the views of business schools and organisations and did not considering the views of students who are another key stakeholder in the MBA.

# CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the qualitative , cross-sectional study, beginning by outlining the sample demographics, the characteristics of the sample and then proceeding to detail the data analysis techniques.  Finally, the results of the semi-structured, in-depth interviews are presented. The results are discussed and interpreted in Chapter 6.

The research adopted an interpretive philosophy to understand and unpack the perceptions of the various respondents. The research approach was inductive in nature and the type of research was contextual. A flexible research strategy was followed and a naturalistic enquiry into the 'real world' was conducted.

## 5.2 Sample demographics and characteristics of sample

This qualitative study explored how collaboration between business schools, students and organisations could maximise the impact of the MBA programme for all invested parties. Key stakeholders who were interviewed for this research were the four major business schools in South Africa who offer an MBA programme and ten international businesses across various sectors. The sampling method, as detailed in Chapter 4, was convenient and purposive. Details of all respondents have been kept confidential.

The academic directors of the four highest ranked and highly regarded South African business schools were interviewed. Table 1 represents the sample demographics while Table 2 provides the characteristics of the sample.

**Table 1:** Sample demographics

| INTERVIEWEE | NO. OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED | NO. OF RESPONDENTS |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Business schools** | 4 | 4 |
| **Organisations** | 10 | 12 |
| **TOTAL** | 14 | 16 |

**Table 2:** Characteristics of the sample

| SECTOR | NO. OF INTERVIEWS | DESCRIPTION OF COMPANIES | COMPANY/BUSINESS SCHOOL REFERENCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Aviation** | 1 | Company 1 is a leading South African (SA) aviation company. | C1 - Company 1 (Large SA aviation company). |
| **Equipment, Automotive & Logistics** | 2 | Company 3 is a multinational corporation, headquartered in South Africa and is a distributor of leading international brands, providing integrated rental, fleet management, product support and logistics solutions.<br><br>Company 4 is a global logistics and supply chain leader. | C3 - Company 3 (Multinational equipment, automotive & logistics corporation),<br><br>C4 - Company 4 (International equipment, automotive & logistics corporation). |
| **Financial Services** | 4 | Company 2 is one of the largest professional services companies in the world and a "Big Four" audit company.<br><br>Company 5 is one of South Africa's largest banks.<br><br>Company 6 is a leading asset financier in South Africa.<br><br>Company 10 is one of South Africa's largest banks. | C2 - Company 2 (Big Four assurance & professional services firm),<br><br>C5 - Company 5 (International profit oriented bank),<br><br>C6 - Company 6 (Large asset financing profit orientated bank),<br><br>C10 - Company 10 (International profit orientated bank). |
| **FMCG & Retail** | 1 | Company 9 is a large clothing retail company in South Africa. | C9 - Company 9 (Large clothing retail company). |

| SECTOR | NO. OF INTERVIEWS | DESCRIPTION OF COMPANIES | COMPANY/BUSINESS SCHOOL REFERENCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Information Technology** | 2 | Company 7 is a South African company specialising in information technology services and operating internationally.<br><br>Company 8 is an American multinational hardware and software corporation. | C7 - Company 7 (International technology services company),<br><br>C8 - Company 8 (Multinational hardware and software corporation). |
| **Higher Education** | 4 | The four leading business schools are based in South Africa. Their specific locations the business schools have not been disclosed to maintain confidentiality. | BS1 - Business school 1 (Leading SA business school),<br><br>BS2 - Business school 2 (Leading SA business school),<br><br>BS3 - Business school 3 (Leading SA business school),<br><br>BS4 - Business school 4 (Leading SA business school). |

For ease of reference, Table 3 provides details of, the transcripts which have been attached in the appendices and where respondents have been quoted in Chapter 5 each quote has been referenced accordingly. Where appropriate, transcripts have been edited to maintain the confidentiality of respondents.

**Table 3:** Respondent and transcript references

| Respondent | Reference | Appendix |
|---|---|---|
| Company 1 | C1 | B |
| Company 2 | C2 | C |
| Company 3 | C3 | D |
| Company 4 | C4 | E |
| Company 5 | C5 | F |
| Company 6 | C6 | G |
| Company 7 | C7 | H |
| Company 8 | C8 | I |
| Company 9 | C9 | J |
| Company 10 | C10 | K |
| Business school 1 | BS1 | L |
| Business school 2 | BS2 | M |
| Business school 3 | BS3 | N |
| Business school 4 | BS4 | O |

## 5.3 Individual data analysis

Data from each interview was analysed to identify the major themes and concepts. Since semi-structured interviews allow for both open and closed-ended questions, the various themes were grouped underneath the relevant research questions, where appropriate. The content of the interviews was analysed to identify the richness and depth in the data.

The interview questionnaire is attached in Appendix A. It was designed based on the interview guide of Clark (2006b). Pre-testing of the instrument involved mock interviews with colleagues and fellow MBA classmates to determine relevance of questions. The mock interview transcripts were discarded once the researcher felt that the questionnaire was adequately designed.

The views as expressed by the respondents and their actual words and points are presented in this chapter. Many views and themes were expressed only once; others emerged from more than one respondent. Certain themes appeared directly while others implied by respondents. Some respondents spoke readily and others required a bit of probing and prompting to explore their views and thoughts with greater depth.

Certain themes expressed by businesses featured strongly amongst the various respondents and provided support for the concepts and views expressed. This was then cross-checked against the views of the business schools. Some themes emerged consistently, while others highlighted a divergent gulf in the views of these two groups.

The semi-structured questions asked initially led to a general discussion surrounding the successes and shortcomings of the MBA, thereby confirming current literature and current views on the MBA. Then the discussions proceeded to explore greater understanding of the ways in which business schools and businesses collaborate, including a discussion around the business school support. Finally, respondents were asked their views on how the impact of the MBA could be improved for greater benefit of all three parties. The views have been classified into main themes, with sub-themes contributing to these main themes and these follow the research questions.

**5.4 Research question 1: What are the successes of the MBA programme?**

The interviews began broadly by seeking understanding of the opinions of respondents toward the successes of the MBA. Probing and prompting allowed the unpacking of reasons why an MBA programme was worth the investment and encouraged a dialogue with respondents. When questioned about the successes of MBA programmes, most respondents viewed success in relation to the student and how the MBA contributed to a student's development. Company 9, in fact, commended MBAs quite highly: "I don't think there are many weaknesses, far more strengths in the MBA than there are weaknesses" (line 3748).

There were a number of specific areas of success as agreed on by a range of respondents, successes which included broad exposure, the ability to manage complexity, critical thinking skills, leadership skills, preparation for general management, business knowledge, and finally, confidence and teamwork skills.

### 5.4.1 Broad exposure

Broad exposure was identified as the most common success of the MBA. Many respondents supported the view that an MBA gifted students with a broad view of business, as exposure that is crucially important to contemporary business. Broad exposure informed decision-making and ensured that decision-makers considered a variety of aspects of a business and our global society rather than just focusing on a single area of expertise. The broad exposure ranged from interacting and engaging with people from diverse backgrounds and experiences, to being exposed to subjects and courses which were outside a student's current field of expertise, to being exposed to global markets and countries beyond their local border.

Broad exposure, according to the business schools, is indeed a significant advantage to an MBA: "One is exposure to 80 different, very, very different diverse individuals in terms of their thinking, their work experience, their background, engaging, learning from them" (BS2, line 4979). Similarly, business school 3 underscored the fact that the MBAs have "been designed in such a way to teach you how to operate and make management decisions under pressure, how to view it through a multiple lens, not just a siloed kind of marketing or a finance lens, so you see it in a broader scope" (line 5365). As such, this school says, an MBA's "impact is profound" (line 5364).

The businesses themselves offered many accolades to the MBA programmes in this regard. Company 10, for example, commented appreciatively: "I think the idea that candidates...get to do that overseas leg, which broadens their experience to beyond their own borders and their own boundaries, I think is also a very powerful experience because it exposes them to other economies, other industries and the markets or the countries that are typically chosen for travel are unlike ours, you know" (line 4145). Company 4 also appreciated the global aspect of the MBA: "They also give you a wider view of the business world, in other words, it's the opposite of isolation. It is openness, understanding what goes on in different parts of the world. It gives you a strategic understanding of the global economic issues and powers" (line 1502).

Other companies appreciated the broad exposure to business concepts and management practices. Companies 1, 2 and 3, for example, all commented along this vein: "I just think that… an MBA gives an individual a broad knowledge of business, all right, it gives knowledge of factors, external or internal, that will and can affect how the business operates or the business world specifically" (C2, line 619). And "In terms of

the successes of the MBA, some of the things that we believe an MBA does very well for the students are obviously understanding business concepts, it gives its students excellent ability to do that" (C3, line 1024). And "So I think that firstly the value was that people acquired knowledge and had the opportunity to think more broadly outside of everything that they know, and I think that that was hugely helpful" (C1, line 177).

### 5.4.2 Ability to manage pressure

Many respondents felt that the MBA instilled in students the ability to manage pressure. Business schools specifically attempt to make MBA programmes challenging, ensuring that students learn to be resilient and learn how to navigate through complexity within the business environment. Pressure ranges from dealing with time pressures from balancing work, school and private lives, as well as dealing with copious volumes of information, researching, reading, and assimilating into intelligent and informed decision-making. Both parties suggested that students built up resilience during the MBA process and that this skill was appreciated in business.

The business believed that the pressure element was an essential component of the MBA curriculum by suggesting that "we're bringing complexity into the two year programme because you have to juggle multiple things…like why we make your life so difficult, why do we make your deliverables so...It's about teaching you those skills so that you can operate like that in the real world" (BS3, line 5367).

The business schools agreed on the value of an MBA enhancing students' ability to manage under pressure, appreciating the time management skills. Company 3 applauded the MBA for delivering these skills: "we think it assists the students for the ability to cope under pressure and work under a heavy workload, particularly if they are currently working full time and studying part time" (line 1027). And Company 10 found value in the developed resilience, saying of their sponsored MBA student: "She's not married but the demands that the MBA placed on her time, she still managed to not give up anything at work, not give up anything at church because she knew she had to just fit more into her day.  And also what it teaches in terms of managing pressure and managing competing demands…I suppose the thing that comes out of that is the resilience" (line 4159).

### 5.4.3   Critical thinking

Critical thinking is essentially thinking carefully and reflectively in evaluating evidence about claims which are made, and drawing sound conclusions from the evidence (Bensley et al., 2010). Critical thinking was considered an increasingly important ability as a person moves higher up within an organisation. Given that organisations these days are becoming increasingly complex, the ability to think critically is undeniably an important element of mature management. In the current economic climate, managers are often required to sift through copious amounts of information and discern high quality information from irrelevant information, an essential skill for decision-making.

It was believed by both the business schools and the companies that the MBA programme did teach students essential critical thinking skills. In fact, business school MBA programmes deliberately aimed to foster critical thinking so that students develop the ability to review and analyse information and exercise discernment. Business held a similar view and found MBA students' ability to think critically very useful in assisting in informed decisions.

According to the business schools, "An MBA is trying to teach a person to think critically and conceptually, because that's what's needed at the higher levels of management" (BS1, line 4577). Furthermore, the business schools recognise that "organisations are immensely complex these days, and everybody needs to be able to read quite sophisticated research, so if you're studying a Masters and you do some research, it gives you a much better learning curve, to realise what is good research and what is bad research" (BS1, line 4586). Likewise, business schools 2 and 4 are also very intentional in their focus on the development of critical thinking. Business school 2 said, "So for me, from a programme director's perspective, it is the changes…that have been made to our MBA programme, the greater infusion of critical thinking, the greater awareness of the impacts of decisions that individuals make to community, to shareholders, to the environment" (line 5003) and "a successful MBA programme develops a candidate that can formulate his argument, can take an argument apart, can critically argue the case that he's about or take somebody else's argument apart if he doesn't agree with it" (BS4, line 5865).

Again, the business perspective was the same, immensely valuing the MBA's ability to think critically, as "it will enable the participant to develop their critical analysis thinking skills, and I think that is very, that is very, very important, so that when you're looking at

a picture, you're not just looking at, you know, the number of strokes the painter used, but to delve in a little bit deeper, all right, and give a broader overview…critical thinking is very, very important" (C2, line 621). Company 9 agreed: "I think the research capability that they bring is always very good, because they've developed that judgmental capability, the ability to research something that differentiates between what's good, what's bad, what works, what doesn't work, and so we use them in those capacities" (line 3701). And again, "We believe it gives you the enhanced ability to write reports and assignments; it obviously improves your self-knowledge and it gives you structure to your thought processes" (C3, line 1035).

### 5.4.4   Leadership

Leadership is an essential component of any business and consequently, leadership development was regarded by both business schools and businesses as a key success of the MBA programme. Business schools sought to include leadership training as a key component of the MBA programme and had a broader view of fostering the leadership abilities in their students, attempting to go beyond just teaching about leadership by developing students' practical leadership skills.

Businesses also felt that MBA programmes give students the leadership exposure and development opportunities required to succeed in business. They also believed that the MBA programme was successful in helping students, who are technical experts, transition into business and build their leadership capabilities.

Business schools view leadership as an essential and critical component of the MBA programme.   Business school 3 went right to the core of an MBA programme: "Remember, the whole idea of the MBA programme or any good MBA programme in this country or around the world is to make sure that we create the management and leadership pipeline" (line 5347). Business school 4 is adamant about the desire to train leaders: "I mean a successful programme will develop the leadership of a particular person, not merely teaching leadership but actually develop his leadership skills" (line 5859) and "I think part and parcel of what we're doing is actually exposing students to leadership throughout the whole MBA. It's not just a module that you do for six months and you're done with it. The leadership programme is a continuous process that involves a fair amount of reflection from students" (line 5877).

Businesses agreed. Company 1 said, "I think that the value there obviously is that in what I was saying earlier, and that is that it is preparation for actually for leadership in a more general role in organisations" (line 81) and Company 5 said, "an MBA is able to bridge that gap between being a technical expert, and what is required of you as a leader or manager within an organisation" (line 1845).

### 5.4.5   Preparation for general management

The MBA is widely considered a general management degree and so another apparent success of the MBA is that it provides students with skills for becoming general managers within an organisation. Respondents believed that the MBA exposed students to the various aspects of business which are essential for a business's success and that these skills give students a "toolkit" to become general managers. One respondent did caution, however, that teaching these disciplines did not necessarily increase a student's management competency. Interestingly a weakness identified by this research relating to students not applying their skills contradicts this finding relating to students being prepared with the skills required for general management.

Business schools reported that many of their alumni eventually take up general management positions or similar positions from which they are capable of running entire business units. The MBA taught students the fundamentals of business necessary for becoming general managers.

The business schools felt that the MBA prepared students for general management in several ways: "it teaches integrative management and in the old days, it was called general management, but if you have any CEO has to be able to integrate all aspects of business, so it actually gives them the theoretical knowledge of probably all the aspects of business, from governance to finance, to operations, so I think that is an integrated way of thinking, the systems way of thinking" (BS1, line 4496). According to business school 3, "80% of our alumni grow into a general management role because that's what we're a school for, general management, running business units" (line 5377). Business school 4 felt the same: "Well, an MBA is an academic learning programme and successes of an MBA learning programme is developing generally a young to middle-aged managers and budding managers to hopefully manage the rest of their careers" (line 5845).

Businesses were also positive that a success of the MBA was that it prepared students for general management by suggesting that "the value of an MBA is very much related to individuals being exposed and prepared for the challenges that one finds particularly in a business and commerce environment at the level… at senior and executive level generally" (C1, line 73). And, "It gives you a toolkit to manage, to be a general manager, meaning it gives you a skill in analysing financial statements, if that's not your background, you can start doing that" (C4, line 1520). Company 10 offered a very clear statement of MBA success in regard to management training: "I think that one of the critical things in a country like South Africa, where we need a new set of leaders who are much more diverse, to get into management positions. And MBA is very successful in teaching people the fundamentals of how to run, manage and grow a business, and I think it teaches them the fundamentals" (line 4136).

However, Company 4 went on to clarify with a word of caution: "To my view, this does not necessarily increase management competency" (line 1514).

### 5.4.6 Knowledge

The basic reason students study is to acquire knowledge. The imparting of knowledge, then, was regarded as yet another success of the MBA programme. Knowledge from the MBA is gained by students through various curriculum strategies: through formal class work and lectures, through classroom and out-of-classroom experiences, and through relationships developed with peers and faculty. Respondents felt that the MBA does give students knowledge of the business world and that obtaining such broad knowledge in an arena other than the MBA would be difficult. As such, the MBA provides an ideal platform for students seeking to increase their knowledge of the business world.

Business schools sees the imparting of knowledge, skills and relationships as undergirding the achievements of the MBA programme: "our graduates are being recognised for their quality, for the way they think, for their ability to contribute to institutions and add value to those institutions so we are particularly happy with that" (BS2, line 5065). Business school 3 acknowledged the same: "It's about imparting knowledge, skills, relationship, exposing students to relationships and experiences that teach them how to deal with complexity because that's the lay of the land" (line 5349).

Nearly all the businesses also applaud the merits of the MBA in this regard:

Company 1: "So I think that firstly the value was that people acquired knowledge" (line 177).

Company 2: "I just think that…an MBA gives an individual a broad knowledge of business, all right, it gives knowledge of factors, external or internal, that will and can affect how the business operates or the business world specifically" (line 619).

Company 3: "In terms of the successes of the MBA, some of the things that we believe an MBA does very well for the students is obviously understanding business concepts" (line 1024).

Company 4: "MBA gives you a proper understanding of the business landscape, and challenges of the day, in other words, the present" (line 1501).

Company 7: "So it's the knowledge that they gain, practical experience that they gain, and then their self-awareness as well" (line 2757).

Company 8:"That's really valuable. I can't see how a person would gain that type of knowledge and exposure in any other way" (line 3222).

### 5.4.7   Confidence and teamwork

Other successes as viewed by both business schools and business included confidence and teamwork. Respondents believed that the MBA developed in students a sense of confidence through exposure to group interactions and classroom presentations, and by pushing them outside their comfort zone. Further, the MBA fosters teamwork by requiring students to engage with their colleagues to maximise their learning from the MBA. The business schools pointed out that by interacting in teams, students are exposed to new ways of thinking which encourages them to appreciate different perspectives. The level of teamwork and the individuals with whom they interact guide students into maturation during their MBA studies.

Business schools agree that to "construct a report, to make the pitch or in the context of the classroom to be able to convince others, to be able to hold my own in terms of the positions that I took, so again, very kind of critical skills that were developed" (BS2, line 4987).And as explained before, a student is "exposed to 80 different, very, very different diverse individuals in terms of their thinking, their work experience, their background, engaging, learning from them" (BS2, line 4980).

This confidence was visible to businesses: "Those who have come out of it have come out a lot more confident, with that broader knowledge, able to see exactly where they want to take their career next" (C8, line 3216). Company 3 agreed: "I think the networking and team dynamics of the MBA students helps in terms of future business relationships. It does mature students to a larger extent, because you're not just at a university, you're obviously at business school and you're interacting with business people, not fellow undergraduate students" (line 1030).

But company 9 issued a bit of a warning, as confidence and maturity are not necessarily a panacea: "You're actually more mature than somebody who hasn't gone through that experience, but that said, it's not necessarily more valuable. They are mentally a lot more mature; that's not necessarily that they're a lot more valuable" (line 3721).

## 5.5 Research question 2: What are the challenges faced by the MBA programme?

The second research question, turning a corner from the successes of the MBA, concerns the challenges faced by the MBA. The challenges that have been highlighted indicate areas where the MBA is lacking; addressing these challenges will likely improve the impact of the MBA.

### 5.5.1 Academic versus practical

Arguably the biggest criticism levied against the MBA is that it is often far too academic, and as such, students are unable to adequately apply that which they have learned back at the work place. At this point, there was agreement amongst business that, in many instances, the MBA was too academic. To the contrary, though, business schools felt that they are teaching students very practically and that the methods of teaching employed, while imparting a theoretic base, seek to also embed the material learned through practical initiatives like case studies and real-life assignments.

Business unanimously believes that there is insufficient evidence to prove that the MBA material has any true and distinct benefit to either the student or the organisation, resulting from a lack of application back at the workplace.

In defence, business schools had several points to make about the MBA being too academic and not practical enough. According to business school 1, while that "possibly is true, *and* maybe the MBA could be more practical, I think on the other hand, the MBA is meant for people who will be strategic, conceptual thinkers, so you know, if they're looking at direct, practical stuff, it depends what level you're talking about" (line 4571). Business schools 3 and 4 imply that the application is the responsibility of the student: "It's the way you take what you've learnt and apply it immediately so the learning becomes immediate, impactful and it becomes part of your mindset. It's about giving you local and global best practice" (BS3 (line 5404). And Business school 4 said, "One way in which we, is to analyse case studies but the other way is actually going and applying the work in the workplace and come with recommendations for particular businesses that are part of a syndicate or whatever. So actually candidates can do it in real life. So yes, if it's all just theoretical, there's very little value added" (line 5922).

Businesses expressed disappointment over the practical application of an MBA's theoretical learning. Company 2 said, point blank: "It was too theoretical, you know, versus, ja, the practicality side of things" (line 739). Company 3 agreed: "One of the other failings of the MBA is, sometimes it can be too academic and conceptual" (line 1103). As did company 5: "It's still around the fact that when MBAs become too theoretical, when they become too academic, it becomes hugely problematic" (line 1864). And company 6: "So it becomes more or less an academic exercise and the fact that you've got an MBA, more than that we don't very often see the application" (line 2178).

Company 4 explained that often those students who are highly qualified academically do not always turn into astute business people: "The other thing is you find people who are very inclined to deal with stuff in an academic way…they like to look at stuff from a scientific, academic perspective. They will be good MBA students, because they like the academic environment, and they can write nice reports and dissertations and whatever… but those people who like to deal with the business world, or the world in terms of that academic orientation, are not necessarily good business people" (line 1541). Company 10 summed up the disappointment succinctly: "And I think that the failure, I can imagine, comes with the perception that the distance between what is taught in class and the application back at work…is too large" (line 4187).

### 5.5.2 MBA not a pre-requisite for employment

Interestingly, while an MBA qualification is highly regarded in the business world, it is not actually considered essential to business needs. Many companies suggested that an MBA is not a necessity for business, but rather a value-add. This calls into question the actual need and bottom-line purpose of the MBA given that businesses don't actively recruit MBAs. With so few positions requiring an MBA, and businesses considering an MBA a somewhat advantageous but unnecessary degree, it is reasonable to question whether or not an MBA has a place in the current economical and global climate.

Companies quite openly revealed the following with regard to requiring an MBA when hiring an employee: "yes, there are people with MBAs in the management executive, but it is not a rule. And it's not necessarily a requirement, and we just don't have the vacancies or the opportunities" (C1, line 144). And, "There are a number of those people, and are busy or have been doing MBAs, but we don't put a requirement on, to say we want to employ MBA students" (C4, line 1483). Company 6 admitted, "We haven't had a single role profile where MBA is a required qualification. So MBAs seem to be positioned as icing on the top" (line 2708). And company 9 was quite blatant about the high cost to the company: "You get a very expensive personal experience and MBA together, and in a business like ours, we don't actually recruit a lot of MBAs at senior levels, because of that. They're just too out of the market" (line 3681).

### 5.5.3 Deterioration of the value of an MBA

With numerous educational institutions offering an MBA, the value of the MBA, it seems, has come into question. Business schools are making the distinction that accreditation is paramount to maintaining the standards of the qualification and that students who obtained the MBA qualification from a non-accredited school are less likely to have attained the skills necessary for true benefit to business. They also condemn the process of obtaining the MBA degree merely for the purposes of possessing a qualification rather than for personal growth and development.

Business concurred with this view that not all MBA programmes are alike and of equal standing. They were discerning about the more established and creditable institutions and felt that an MBA from educational institutions which were less reputable or with a shorter history of establishment lacked both quality and depth.

Business also believes that entry standards into the MBA programmes have been lowered and that the lesser experience of entering students affects their learning. Students who have had more experience understand and grasp concepts with more clarity and certainty, so from their view, the MBA adds little value to students who are inexperienced as those students are often too caught up in theory to excel in the real practicalities of real business.

Business schools acknowledge the qualitative difference of various schools, and one suggested the following: "I think that the accreditation of the MBA by country or by a system like the Amber or in America, the Association of Business School, yes, the American equivalent. Here, they credit the MBA, some are not accredited" (BS1, line 4512). Business school 3 stated quite matter-of- factly: "So the shortcomings would firstly be the choice of the wrong MBA programme because there are MBA programmes and there are MBA programmes" (line 5391). Recognising that some schools are undeniably better than others, business school 4 said, "They give a piece of paper that says MBA but it's not worth the paper it's printed on. So it depends on the quality of the programme that you engage in, whether you actually undergo that development that is possible in order to make an individual a better manager in his particular environment" (line 5851).

Businesses clearly accept what the business schools admit to: "I think you have MBAs and you have MBAs" (C3, line 1091). Company 9 said the same thing in different words: "you can probably do an MBA online these days, but since...unless you've got a good quality business school, like UCT or like Harvard, or NSEAD or Gibs and so on, you know, and as long as they're maintaining a certain standard, I think you're going to get a good quality MBA" (line 3904). The comment of company 4 strongly suggests that a student should select an MBA programme with great care: "business schools can make huge claims, because they might not be aligned to a reputable tertiary institution. Like, Gibs, Wits, University of Stellenbosch, those are reputable business schools, they are aligned to reputable institutions" (line 1606).

### 5.5.4   Inflated student expectations

Both business schools and companies alike believe that students' expectations are overly inflated. In their view, students expect and even demand, on completing the MBA, better positions, higher pay and more opportunities. Business schools brought

into question the real reasons for students undertaking an MBA and suggested that the MBA is meant to grow an individual's self-awareness and management abilities to benefit a business. Their belief was that students' unrealistic demands were unfounded given that they had not actually delivered anything beneficial, and even more so in the current challenging global economic climate.

Business agreed as they admitted they were unable to meet some of the unrealistic demands of students, demands that came even before delivering quality work. Having the MBA certificate alone did not necessarily in their eyes qualify an individual for a higher position or elevated pay but rather, the outputs of that individual was what was required first. Another important point was that businesses themselves had to be quite realistic about their expectations. MBA students needed time to deliver, and to be expecting them to deliver on unrealistic challenges or even prior to completion of their MBA degrees was unrealistic.

Business schools made several astute points in regards to their awareness of students' inflated expectations and demands: "The MBA is used as an entry point…into a management position. It no way endorses the capability of the individual. The individual has to show that he or she is capable once he or she gets into an organisation" (BS2, line 5215). Business school 3 cautioned, "You will be smarter, you will have more knowledge, experiences and relationships but the world doesn't suddenly owe you because you've got an MBA programme. You have to work just as hard as everyone" (line 5439). And something similar from business school 4: "I think MBAs should, or MBA graduates can certainly be more modest. There's no big achievement in doing an MBA. Yes, it is an achievement but it is not something that, you know the standard joke, how do you know somebody's got an MBA? He tells you" (line 6173). Business schools clearly recognise that businesses don't just want to hear that someone has an MBA, they want to see the difference this degree can and should make to their company.

Business school 3 however cautioned that business should consider that "People have been identified for career progression, people, especially in South Africa where 70 to 80% of the applicants are sponsored by their companies. So it's very well for business to say to you students have grandiose expectations" (line 5429). Business school 3 also provided insight into why students may have unrealistic expectations by suggesting that "You know, I could, in fact I've been here for almost 11 years so I can tell you historically there were 60 to 70% increase in salary. There is still a significant

increase in salary for most graduates but that's normal because, you know, if you come from a small company or you're a self employed individual, because you have different kinds of people in the room, so the management of expectations has to happen on all fronts " (line 5451).

Companies believe that MBA students must prove their degree, not merely speak of it and flaunt it.  As company 3 has said, the "negativity that comes out of that is that when they come out, like you've said before, they have higher expectations and demand things, but yet they haven't actually proven it, that they can do it" (line 1063). According to this company, an MBA student must deliver: "They haven't proven that they have the ability to deliver on certain elements, yet their demands and expectations because they now have this Master's, is, whether it's in remuneration, whether it's in positions, they expect to move quicker and they expect to be, well, they are probably more marketable, but, well, they haven't delivered something in the business for us" (line 1069).

Companies believe that the onus resides with the students: "If you as a person see an MBA as a way to change your personality, and make you an MD of a company instantly, then it's going to be a failure, but failure is not on the MBA side.  The failure is on the expectation of the individual side" (C4, line 1585). Company 8 concurs: "I think there's a lot of hype around an MBA and I think to a certain extent it does give a bit of false expectation of an employee. You know, it just gives a false sense of if you get an MBA the world is your oyster, so to speak" (line 3302). As does company 9: "There is this thing that MBAs are a bit pretentious and they come out with these high expectations, and so on, but I must be quick to say, you get very good MBAs, and you get very bad MBAs" (line 3902).

### 5.5.5   Integration of learnings from the MBA

Business schools often face the challenge of integrating the subjects learned on the MBA. Failing to link subjects perpetuates a 'silo' mentality, an undesirable mentality for both business schools and businesses. While business schools have attempted to integrate subjects and foster holistic thinking, they conceded that subject integration is not always easy. Businesses had a similar view in this regard.

Business schools understand the need for integration: "I think the traditional one has just been where we perpetuate the siloed way of thinking - here's finance, here's

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marketing, here's economics and we don't necessarily show the linkage, you know, between all three areas and more" (BS2, line 5015). According to business school 4, "If you just teach a student some functional disciplines and you don't get to a point where they actually start thinking about that in business these things are all integrated, where the level of what they learn is far too low, where you teach them and say you can solve a financial problem or this problem by applying certain models and not think about all the other issues involved, if you don't bring that as part of an MBA then you don't know about the risk side or the investor world" (line 5899).

Business, too, view integration as a significant challenge of MBA programmes: "there is often not integration between the different subjects in an MBA. And that remains a problem because business doesn't work like that" (C1, line 1872).

### 5.5.6 Students in a vacuum

Business suggested that students are isolated during their time of study and that they, the company, merely pay for students and off they go without any interaction. This lack of interaction and communication means that business does not see any benefit of their monetary investment during the study period, and students feel alone, unsupported. As the programme progresses, often this gap between employer and employee grows, invariably resulting in a loss to both parties. Business loses the student in whom they have invested, and students lose out on the opportunities to apply what they have learned for the organisations that funded them. Strained relationships, ill feelings and resentment often result from a process which was actually intended to add value to both the student and the business.

Companies see isolation as common and collaboration, its antithesis, as uncommon. According to company 1, "in a sense what happens is that the student is just left in a kind of a vacuum grappling with, you know, obviously very often quite a sort of a tough situation, because I mean a lot of them work as well" (line 465). Companies 10 and 6 were quite blatant that they just "pay" for the MBA: "We still find too often the distance between the employees on this fabulous intervention is so far from what the manager knows even... it typically ends with him or her signing off your leave, paying the bill and hoping to God that you are actually going to learn something" (line 4279). And even more straight forwardly, "Just from our perspective, we just pay" (C6, line 2496). Company 6 laments the lack of collaboration: "So when you say the collaboration

between business schools and business, I'm saying there isn't any, not formalised in the way that there is in a 'learnership' space. It's extremely poor between the learning provider, the organisation, and the learner" (line 2249).

Clearly there is work to be done.

## 5.6 Research question 3: What are the essential elements required for the MBA programme to be impactful?

The following section considered the key elements required for business and business schools to celebrate with certainty that an MBA has a beneficial impact in the business world. Application of skills was by far considered the most important aspect, primarily for students to cement their skills and acquire knowledge from the MBA. Business also felt that if students were to better apply their skills, the degree would show more benefit to the business.

Having discussed both the strengths and challenges faced by the MBA, and having highlighted the desire for MBA students to more practically apply their newly acquired skills and knowledge, business schools and businesses made several suggestions in regard to improving the impact of the MBA. These suggestions arose out their own experiences with regard to the MBA as well as existing management development programmes where business has already partnered with business schools on their own in-house programmes. Businesses believed that some of the thoughts put forward for in-house programmes could be easily replicated in the MBA environment. It is vital, for example, that business schools and businesses enter into more of a partnership arrangement. Engagement and commitment to these partnerships were also seen as key elements necessary for extracting that maximum benefits for all parties.

### 5.6.1   Application of skills

The application of skills garnered within an MBA programme is considered to be an absolute necessity in order to have an impact on business. Without the application of skills, respondents felt that the MBA becomes merely a 'paper' exercise. Business schools indicated that they do their best to ensure that students apply what they have learned at school through practical assignments. They conceded that if students cannot apply what they have learned to their own companies, then there truly is little value in the MBA. As such they feel that their programmes are in fact designed to ensure that

students apply material learned and consequently deliver value to the business during and after the MBA.

Business, too, craves delivery of results and action. In many in-house programmes, businesses get participants to deliver on projects and therefore feel that much more could be done in regard to the MBA. They would like to see students take more of an initiative in delivering projects and practical research at work as a benefit to the company. Businesses feel that by undertaking projects which are aligned with their studies, students can better understand the subject matter and more strongly grasp the concepts.

Business schools suggest bridging this gap by practical projects: "They will be changed...for instance, I was at UNISA before, and a lot of the companies used the MBAs to do an industry analysis, or do a company analysis of their own company" (BS1, line 4713). Business school 3 agreed: "It's the way you take what you've learnt and apply it immediately so the learning becomes immediate, impactful and it becomes part of your mindset. It's about giving your local and global best practice" (line 5404). All the business schools seemed to agree...it's not just about learning, it's about doing: "It's not about you having to say... It's what you demonstrate and what you do. And it's not just about strategy because everybody wants to only be involved in strategy. Without the doing, without the operationalising, what happens to strategy? Okay, so it's doing" (BS3, line 5781). And again, "So it's really about broadening or raising and understanding the limitations of what one can do in a learning programme, taking a person that thinks he knows a lot and just pat him on the back and tell him that he knows a lot, I mean, that's been the downfall of many programmes in the sense that they take high achievement as learning a couple of models and now you can do whatever you want to do" (BS4, line 5905).

Businesses question the MBA from a business perspective, not merely the student perspective: "Because typically what happens is...individuals find themselves being accepted onto an MBA programme, but in terms of their career path and their stepping stone, they've learnt all these skills, but they're not going to be able to implement them immediately, so, you know, was it the right decision from a business case perspective instead of the individual?" (C2, line 667). Another said this: "Personally I think the MBA is becoming very much like the BCom was five years ago, and I don't think we always see the academic learning applied in the business environment" (C6, line 2176). For company 7 as well, it's not about the money but about reality: "I think for the student to

be able to be exposed in a real life situation, to the real life issues, and having to deal with people, and having to see what it's like on the ground, I just think you can't put a price on that" (line 3034).

As one company said without hesitation: "the reality is back in the boardroom" (C5, line 1925).

### 5.6.1.1 How to facilitate the application of skills?

The previous section clearly highlights that both business schools and business are on the exact same page with regard to hoping students apply their MBA skills, not only to benefit business but also to enrich the learning and understanding of students themselves. Business schools have suggested that students could possibly take on projects at work and provide recommendations to their respective companies in this regard. Further, they suggested that students use their assignments from the MBA and apply these to relevant companies and industries, transferring their learning experiences into real experiences.

Business schools appear to understand the value of this viable 'action learning': "I view action learning as applying your knowledge in the real life and we already do that as a major part, a distinguishing part of our MBA programme. Students get many assignments that they actually have to go and do and apply the knowledge in the real business world. So action learning is an important facet of business education where you not only apply the knowledge that you got through your case study but actually go to a live business and see the real live thing" (BS4, line 6038). Business school 1, for example, shared, "I did a project on small business, I analysed small businesses for...you know, and I gave advice on that, so if they then want to apply to be a small business advisor...they actually have a real project as well" (line 4783).

Companies are in strong support of 'action learning'. Company 3 agreed that action learning is "where it becomes real for the business, and the student is getting the academic and the conceptual thinking...we do very much the action learning projects, and it is relevant to our business" (line 1120). Company 3 continued, "One of the elements is what we call an Action Learning Project where our strategy teams identify, depending on the number of people that we have, six to seven key strategic projects...And then those projects usually get implemented, or if further research is

required after the course, it gets tasked to the divisional strategy person to follow up"
(line 1141).

Company 10 as well supported action learning: "And what we do in these programmes
is we have action learning projects and USB-ED is particularly good because what they
do is they have a coach who works with each of the action learning sets and guides the
group from the conceptualisation of the concept, from testing if it's a good topic, from
making sure that it's a real business challenge, to making sure that the quality of the
research is good, that the findings are credible, to making sure that the executive will
support this project.  Those are the things that make for good action learning projects"
(line 4365).

### 5.6.2   Executive and line management involvement

Another key factor in ensuring that the MBA is impactful in business is executive and
line management involvement. Respondents believe that executive and line
management involvement is a major success factor in their in-house executive
programmes, that without executive involvement the programmes would make
significantly less of an impact.

Business schools acknowledge that companies invest large sums of money funding
MBA students and therefore the MBA programme deserves more executive and line
management attention. Executives need to have a plan for those 'high flyers' who are
being funded for an MBA. In view of that, business schools suggested that the
executive of an organisation needed to commit more than just monetary resources, but
also time to listen to MBAs who could keep them updated on latest trends in the
economy and industry.

Businesses cited several instances where the CEO and executive of the company were
actively involved in their in-house programmes, encouraging and motivating
participants to produce projects and presentations of a substantial quality. The
executive, in most instances, provided strategic direction for participants by presenting
them with the challenges faced by organisations. Participants then had to conduct
research and present proposals addressing each issue. Whether new ideas and
solutions were generated, or the executive found that students verified existing
strategies, students benefited from applying their newly acquired knowledge, while the
business benefited from implementable solutions or confirmation thereof.

Respondents felt that this sort of executive involvement in an MBA was paramount to ensuring that the programme was a success.

Business schools agreed that businesses have a responsibility beyond the monetary. "I do actually think that business could also accommodate MBAs better, because you find a lot of the MBAs leaving the place they worked at, and going somewhere else, because often a company hasn't...said, look, here's somebody who is ambitious, who actually has now done something" (BS1, line 4685). And a further suggestion, "They can come and do a presentation to the board. The board doesn't need to have to accept it, but they hear the latest trends" (BS1, line 4718).

Companies agree, citing numerous situations of beneficial executive involvement in their in-house programmes:

Company 1: "There is strong guidance right from the CEO in terms of the direction that the group is taking" (line 251).

Company 1: "Our executives were very, very, very involved. Our CEO was… he came to literally every session" (line 503).

Company 3: "Our board and our strategy guys decide...And our board is divisional CEOs, so they look in their own business, what is a key project that they need to be researched" (line 1150).

Company 4: "I specifically was involved in designing the programme with Gibs and with our executive directors of the business, so we obtained the needs from the businesses, executive directors" (line 1648).

Company 4: "We also have a panel, our own panel that evaluates the people. It's consisting of our directors and so on…" (line 1766).

Company 7: "We had other leaders and CEOs come in to expose them more to our own CEOs, and our own group executives, to challenge them with real life strategic project that they had to work on" (line 2850).

Company 7: "The whole executive can question, the whole panel can question the team, and then a decision is made there and then, what will happen with that proposal from that strategic challenge" (line 2936).

### 5.6.3   Coaching and mentorship

Coaching, or mentorship, was seen as a critical component in an MBA programme. But business schools felt that although there were resources available to students, students were frequently too caught up with their studies and work to give this aspect any attention. Yet businesses reported that for their in-house programmes, coaching and mentoring were an essential element of the journey. They suggested that having the right coach or mentor ensured that participants were engaged throughout the learning process. Likewise, business considers coaching and mentoring a key ingredient for extracting value from an MBA as coaches and mentors guide and grow students through their MBA experience and help them better integrate what has been learned back into the business environment. Both the mentor and mentee learn from each other. But commitment to the process is vital. A caution, however, is that the correct level of person as mentor or coach is essential to ensuring the success of the relationship. It was suggested, for example, that people who have completed an MBA could add significant value to the experiences of current MBA students.

Business schools realise that to some extent, students themselves need to take responsibility. As business school 3 said, "I'm not apportioning blame to the business but also the students because the students are, I've got to put my head down, I've got to pass this subject, I'm not interested in mentoring because that's just a side kind of show, it's a soft skill kind of thing, oh, it's... But yet it's such a critical part of this journey" (line 5685).

The response from companies shows just how critical they believe coaching to be. According to company 2, "business is driven by people, you need to coach them, this is how things are done. Coaching induction, taking them through a proper,  on-boarding process and engaging with them from start to finish is very, very important" (line 714). Company 3 agreed: "I think business should be able to mentor, somebody who has been down the railroad line, who knows and can assist the students" (line 1366). And company 5 stressed the need for the proper individual to do the mentoring: "So you need quite a high level of individual that is able to mentor successfully really within an MBA" (line 1898). Finally, company 10 said, "They have a concept which they call Manager Led Learning and that's also how you get your ROI.  If... and this also answers your original question; so, as much as we engage with the business schools, we need to engage with our line managers who are the sending managers, who are

proving for you to go and study. So in that interaction there has to be a contract between you and your line manager or you and your mentor" (line 4258).

## 5.7 Research question 4: How can business schools and organisations enter into a collaborative relationship to improve the impact of the MBA?

Unfortunately, the general view appears to be that while there are isolated pockets of excellence, business schools and businesses do not work very well together on the MBA programme. This is in stark contrast to in-house programmes where business schools and businesses partner exceptionally well to ensure the programme's success. The key factors that make the in-house programmes such a success are the establishment of a common understanding of the purpose of the programme, the contracting of the relationship, and then the assurance that a feedback mechanism exists. Business schools and business alike felt that these three areas were essential to finding common ground on the MBA as a start to extracting maximum benefit from the programme.

### 5.7.1 The purpose of the MBA

The general feel is that purpose of the MBA must be clarified and agreed upon upfront. While all parties have a conceptual view of the purpose of the MBA, given the evolution of the programme and the significant changes in the world's economic climate, respondents presented a case for revisiting the purpose of the MBA and solidifying agreement on this. There was not a unified common agreement of the purpose of the MBA.

Business schools were of the view that the MBA was for relatively senior individuals who would be required to think strategically. They further suggested that business expectations upon MBA students needed to follow this as opposed to expecting the impossible from MBA students. Further to this, they suggested that if a company was to fund a student for an MBA programme, this should be part of their talent management strategy. The view was that by agreeing upon the purpose of the MBA upfront, businesses could in turn help manage the expectations of students.

Businesses cited examples of their in-house programmes where establishing a common purpose and goal upfront gave participants direction, yielding superior results. Once the purpose of the MBA is agreed upon, a business case would be used to

determine the appropriateness of a candidate's enrolment. Business agreed that the MBA was aimed at more senior people in the organisation and that it provided a toolkit for becoming a better manager. One suggestion was that business schools would need to find a common factor amongst their many participating organisations in the MBA as the starting point in reaching some sort of common understanding on the purpose of the MBA.

Business felt that, just as with their in-house programmes, by being clear about the purpose of an MBA one could manage the expectations of all parties involved in an MBA. This agreement was paramount to the perceived success of an MBA programme.

According to business school 3, "the managing of expectations is not just the business school's responsibility. In fact, to a large extent its management between the business and the individuals they nominate because it's part of the talent pipeline" (line 5434). Business school 1 acknowledged the importance of a common understanding: "you have to actually ask the companies what they are wanting, because they might be asking the wrong person, if they're asking the MBA for certain things" (line 4904). And "the MBA is meant for people who will be strategic, conceptual thinkers, so you know, if they're looking at direct, practical stuff, it depends what level you're talking about" (BS2, line 4572).

Companies see great value in being united with a common goal: "It was to do with the way that people came from various different parts of the organisation, had a common goal, and through the study process as well as all the action-learning projects etc that they were involved in, achieved superior relationships where possibly the relationships had not been that great before" (C1, line 186). Company 10 agreed: "So we need to be very clear what our strategic objectives are; we need to be explicit with the business schools to say, this is the problem that we want to solve" (line 4206).

Companies feel that a common goal and clear understanding of its purpose will add value to the MBA: "you've got to understand what the purpose of an MBA is. If you see that as the purpose, personality growth, giving you a toolbox to manage, then it's not a failure" (C4, line 1583). Company 8 concurs: "So they would need to find the common factor across the various organisations that they can deliver on and then... for those organisations that have unique differences in what they want for their students or their employees, to get out of it how they would then incorporate it in such a way that each

individual still gets individual expectations that are met as well" (line 3423). Even company 2 sees value in mutual understanding: "The discussion around well, what are the expectations? Are we 100% clear that what you see the expectations to be is what it is that we're actually expecting"? (line 920).

### 5.7.2 Contracting

Contracting is a key component to formalising the common goals, understanding the purpose of the MBA, and establishing the roles and responsibilities of each of the stakeholders—business schools, business and students.

Business schools felt that organisations should enter into a contract with students to formalise, upfront, the expectations of each party pertaining to the MBA. They believed that the contract should clarify each party's roles and responsibilities in the MBA. A word of caution was noted, however, that this had been attempted before but that a lack of commitment was the downfall. Urgency and commitment are vital for adherence to and enforcement of the contract.

Business went a bit further by suggesting that the business school should be an integral part of this agreement, a belief stemming from their experiences with in-house programmes where such agreement was successful in guiding each party to deliver on the expectations and commitments. Business suggested a 'memorandum of agreement' or a 'tripartite agreement' to govern the relationship, expectations and deliverables. An interesting suggestion was made that a business school should contract with an organisation as a whole rather than with individual students. This sort of arrangement would be even more welcome where business has funded students for an MBA. Business felt that students would benefit in that a company's commitment to the agreement would signal their intent and commitment to the future of the student. Business schools would also benefit from the active involvement and participation of business.

Business schools see the need for businesses to be committed and realistic: "I think it's about... business themselves, they've got to have that tough discussion with individuals who come onto the programme and say we're saying this to you because we believe in you, because we think you can... but we want you to be realistic" (BS3, line 5445). And again, "it's not a case of not having done it because that was always the case but it's

about, again, where's the urgency and the commitment and once you start it, you must see it through, all parties" (BS3, line 5715).

Companies supported this idea of a business school/business contract. "I think first and foremost when you're working with corporate clients, and you're actually contracting them as an organisation rather than just as an individual, it does make a difference, because, you know, if you've got, for example, 25 students from Nedbank, it is a sensible approach to actually understand the organisation in a much better way" (C5, line 1915). Company 6 agreed: "maybe not a contract, but maybe it's something like a memorandum of understanding, or you know, something along those lines where we can take it to the next level so that we're all on the same page, and we collaborate...But the taking the step further to the kinds of memos of understanding, or tripartite agreement, or meetings, would be more so if the organisation were actually funding" (line 2602).

Mutual understanding secured with a committed contract is fully supported by business: "So the business schools benefit from our active involvement, and that raises the bar for them. So we challenge them and we say we've come to you because we recognise your expertise; we recognise the network of faculty that you've got, and that's why we've come to you. And so we expect nothing less than your best effort" (C10, line 4326). Why? "It really sends a strong message and a very clear message that they are key talent within the organisation and the organisation takes great pride in helping them leverage their learning and taking their career to the next level so to speak" (C8, line 3248).

## 5.8 Research question 5: What elements are required to maintain a collaborative relationship in relation to the MBA?

Underpinning all the ideas thus far was the concept of partnering. Partnering was considered by both business and business schools as key to unlocking the potential of the MBA degree, the one element that appeared to be missing from all the unsuccessful initiatives employed by and for the MBA, and interestingly, the one element that appeared to be presented on the successful in-house programmes— interactive partnership. Two distinct partnerships were presented: 1) a partnership between business schools and organisations, and 2) a partnership between business schools themselves.

### 5.8.1   Business school-to-business partnerships

Both business schools and organisations expressed eager willingness to partner on the MBA. Business schools were open to a partnering relationship with business and began a transparent conversation on how the two institutions could collaborate on the MBA. Business schools believed that by creating a platform where various businesses and business schools could come together and discuss current issues could be the start of a partnership arrangement.

Businesses suggested that communication between business schools, students and organisations is critical to entering into a partnership. In their in-house programmes, this communication was frequent and transparent as business expressed their needs to business schools, which led to recommendations and programme preparation specifically to meet expressed business needs. The process is described as 'iterative'. Business felt that business schools could be more active in fostering a partnership by involving the managers of students in the process. Business suggested that business school involve them in the conversation of the classroom as an open exchange of resources, expertise and knowledge would be desirable. By working together, ensuring that students' learning is supported, identifying and addressing gaps in students' learning and understanding in the MBA is enhanced. Business would also like more input into the curriculum of the MBA programme with the notion of making it a more relevant and impactful programme.

Business schools admitted the need for collaboration, for hearing from business as a starting point: "I'm just saying, it depends, we don't have this clear-cut process here, but I'm sure if people came and said, we'd like somebody to do a project on this, we would certainly look at that" (BS1, line 4740). And "So I think it needs to start off with collaborations where we can have open, honest conversations" (BS2, line 5226). Business school 2 iterated, "So one is to create a common kind of conference where we can all kind of come together because we are all facing similar kinds of issues, so create a platform where we come and talk about those issues but not only talk for the sake of talking but then look at ways in which we can then work together with one voice and articulate that particular position to government in terms of helping shape and inform government strategy around education" (line 5265).

Business school 4 spoke of already being well on its way with partnerships: "We do assignments within companies and we do, and so we have a facilitator at the school

who works with that particular company, they arrange for a particular learning experience in that company....So there's an active interaction between business and the school" (line 5971). And "I mean investing in such cases that the business school and the business sits around the table and decides what is fundamental, what is in their mutual benefit and then come up with a proposal and do a proper costing for the proposal and then you can get to a point where you say okay this can work or this cannot work" (BS4, line 6142).

Business school 3 astutely referred to collaboration as 'partnering for progress': "if our reputation as the graduates who leave this place, if you're not making an impact, do you think your company's going to say okay, we'll send five more people to Gibs? So there's a whole, it's a, there's a connectedness and that's... It's almost if you want, I like to think of it as <u>partnering for progress</u>" (line 5523).

Companies see great value in partnering with business schools, with communication as the key: "I honestly think if you can get that structure that we've just spoken about, because there you've got communication going between all three parties…we sit down with the advisors at Gibs, at the business school, and we decide on the modules that we want covered" (C2, line 904). "I think the closer the business school is to its business partners and clients, the closer, the better information the business can share with what they fitting into their strategy, or what they would be looking to take on" (C7, line 2812).

Company 8 also agreed, seeing the messages and expectations being more realistically conveyed through partnerships "The business school then needs to partner with the organisation in understanding that message also upfront and just reiterating part of that message at appropriate times throughout the period of study as well, and of course trying to assist the employee as much as possible in terms of taking what their expectations are and making them a bit more realistic throughout the study as well" (line 3386). And "the business school also needs to partner with the organisation and understand what it is that the organisation can offer to the student and the limitations of what we can offer to the student so that that also gets incorporated into the reality of what they deliver in the learning for the student as well" (C8, line 3404).

Company 6 values interaction: "So having your senior executives come and talk at an MBA programme I think it should be something that organisations could commit to, in the same way that having a Steve Bluen, the rock star of HR, come and share

knowledge with us would be great, other than paying…" (line 2554) . Company 4 has already begun such discussion: "I discussed that with Gibs, and we came with a draft curriculum, that draft I've tested with the executives again, and then we have finalised the two curricula and one of the executive programme, and we revamp that every year...we keep them focused on our needs because we design the curriculum with them, in regard to our needs" (line 1650). And company 9 as well is already succeeding through partnerships: "We've only had serious successes, it's great, it's been really good both ways, so Arkansas, both Arkansas and Harvard are very happy to send us people, and we're very happy to host them, so it's a great relationship, and we of course, at the same time, are getting straight from the MBA classes, we're getting the latest in research and the latest research tools and methodologies and things that they're learning, we're getting access to, so you know, it's a great win-win all around" (line 3813). And, "We in turn, are now sending some of our senior executives across to Arkansas to be trained there, in supply chain, so there's a very good interaction" (C9, line 3853).

Company 10 summed it up quite succinctly: "The business school, for me, how I measure how good a relationship is, is when the business school knows my business inside out!" (line 4347).

### 5.8.2   Business school-to-business school partnership

The second type of partnership that emerged as valuable is partnerships between the business schools themselves. One business school in particular was quite keen that the only manner of tackling the issues facing businesses today is for business schools to unite in a common forum. They believe that by collaborating with other business schools, the impact of educational institutions would be much more dynamic. They called for openness and an alignment of thinking. Another business school, however, viewed themselves as a 'silo' and sought to maintain a competitive advantage over the others. This view presents a challenge facing the potential collaboration of business schools.

Business schools recognise this challenge: "I think one of the things that I struggle with which keeps coming back home is that we don't do enough collaboration. You know, we're very separate education institutions" (BS2, line 5223). But they are beginning to speak of the advantages of collaboration: "South Africa is a large country and the

continent is incredibly large so we shouldn't necessarily see it as we're in competition with each other for students. I think we all have offerings and these offerings are sometimes similar but different because of the nature of the institution and we will, you know, attract students that kind of align their thinking with the offerings that we have, so collaboration, definitely so, much more openness...I think we have like the South African Business Schools Association meetings, SABSA forum, but just to kind of use that in a much more dynamic way to allow us to kind of share some of the issues that we are facing and to jointly host things where we can be seen from, you know, by the public as coming together as educational institutions to address" (BS2, line 5228).

The talk is tentative at best, but at least it presents a beginning: "Also, you know, at this particular level over here, programme directors need to be able to kind of share more information about their programmes and see how we can learn, what kind of innovations we're talking about on our programmes, does it make sense? Perhaps have, you know, students come up to your institution, any other incitation and spend some time. I mean, we're talking about the economic hub of the continent in Johannesburg. How can we leverage that?" (BS2, line 5246).

### 5.8.3    Continuing the conversation

If a collaborative relationship is to be maintained, the conversation around the MBA would need to continue far beyond the current two or three years of study. Alumni and feedback were seen as important pillars in continuing the conversation.

#### 5.8.3.1 Alumni

Alumni are critically important for the continuing success of any MBA programme. However, business schools and businesses both suggest that alumni are not being used effectively, truly a missed opportunity. Alumni could be the solution to many of the challenges faced by the MBA. Business schools ideally want more alumni involvement and suggest that contracting alumni should be from the beginning of the MBA and extend out beyond graduation. Business schools also felt that alumni would likely be good mentors to existing students as they themselves have been through the process of obtaining an MBA. Alumni input and feedback is also important for the business school to keep the MBA programme up-to-date and relevant to business. But business schools conceded that a deliberate plan was required for more alumni involvement.

Business also believes that MBA alumni were not adequately leveraged in the programme. They believed, based on their experiences with alumni in their own in-house programmes, that alumni could mentor existing students, not only to expedite their learning but also to manage expectations.

Any programme involving alumni, though, would require commitment and engagement so business schools must ensure that the enthusiasm levels of alumni were maintained. Unfortunately, alumni response rates are currently poor and commitment typically wanes during the process. This, then, presents a challenge. Business schools 1 and 2 admitted that this is "very hard, that's what I'm trying to say, because they're all...we've got an alumni office, but I'm saying, I've seen a couple.  It's usually a few very dedicated people that come in and help.  You don't get huge attendance, because business people are very busy, and obviously they're also busy doing their own careers, their own lives" (BS1, line 4811). "I think one of the challenges for South African based institutions is kind of creating a greater alumni involvement and presence, you know, with the institutions...unlike in the US where alumni, they've certainly had a longer period of time where they've been able to kind of get this to where it is, alumni absolutely contribute in terms of their own time, contribute financially and they're really passionate about their institutions" (BS2, line 5093).

Growing alumni loyalty will take some time and require a plan: "So on the front end, you know, students need to be told the engagement or the relationship with the institution doesn't stop in ten months, 11 months of 24 months. It's a longer kind of term engagement" (BS2, line 5153). And, "So I think there has to be a very deliberate kind of plan when it comes to that kind of engagement where alumni are told firstly, you know, it's going to take ten, 20 hours spread out over, say, two or three months or six months, this is what it's going to look like, so there are no surprises, you know, when it comes to that mentorship" (BS2, line 5124).

But according to business school 3, the value of alumni and alumni partnerships is undeniable: "You know, we can spend millions, as some other business schools do, on advertising their brand but who's our best brand? You guys. You, a student in the work, as alumni back in the work, what you do and how you do it?" (line 5776). And, "A lot of our, like through the learning and development and HRDs in those companies, a lot of that has been referrals by our alumni so there's a huge, it's partnership" (line 5598).

Companies agreed: "We don't leverage our alumni in South Africa the way in which it is done in the States... in some ways it's about, you know, handing over the banner of the next level and generation of leadership, and students from one alumni to another" (C5, line 2033). But they were enthused with the idea of an 'alumni buddy' for mentoring: "I would say every MBA student should have an alumni buddy, because that person has been through the process, and they can save them so much time and pain" (C7, line 3049). "And so we have started to use the alumni of previous courses, bringing them back, and use those alumni as buddies into the teams, helping the teams prepare for the presentations that they give to the group executives, or just being involved" (C7, line 2957).

Company 8 agreed on the value of partnerships between alumni and current students: "I would make sure that the mentors are, for example, people who have completed, people who have taken huge learnings out of that process and people who have seen the benefits, even after it's completed, the benefits of having gone through that process and completing" (line 3587).

### 5.8.3.2 Feedback

Once the purpose of the MBA is agreed upon and a contract or memorandum of understanding established, a feedback mechanism was considered essential for sustaining the process. Companies in particular wanted more feedback on the progress of their students. Business cited the need for feedback based on experiences from their in-house programmes and how feedback contributed to the programme's success. Lack of feedback is regarded as a contributing factor of students feeling as though they are in a vacuum, of the increasing chasm between student and organisation. The expectation from business is that they would receive regular feedback from both business schools and students to ensure they are adequately aiding in the development of MBA students. Businesses, however, feel that business schools are not active enough in providing businesses with feedback on the MBA programme.

Business schools had little to say: "I think as a general thing, as you were saying, maybe there should be more contact with business" (BS1, line 4682).

Businesses made it clear they would appreciate more feedback: "I think where it sometimes falls down is, you don't get status updates, because, you know, you may agree that in a particular instance you want to assist this person to develop certain

skills, you agree on the MBA process, off you go, and when do you hear, so what is happening, how is this adding to your performance, your development and that type of thing...I would like to get status updates from the business school, via the student, obviously, and, in my mind, if I can see okay, they're now doing a module on XYZ, these are the two main outcomes they're focussing on…" (C2, line 754).

Company 3 agreed: "If we've sponsored someone to do an MBA I would expect feedback, I would expect to know the attending lecturers, their progress; I would expect to know how they're doing on the relevant... I would also need to have sessions with the individual to understand from their line manager, are they meeting business expectations, as well?" (line 1314). And "I would presume from the lecturers, or in a written format, like a report, you know, a report would be good to say okay, this person's done these modules, they've achieved these results; attendance, diligence, attitude" (C3, line 1346). Company 8 desired feedback as well: "I think it's not so much the organisation giving feedback to the business schools as to what it is that they can offer but possibly the business school giving the organisation some guidance, some ideas as to what it is that they can do to improve and better cater for the students' expectations as well" (line 3555).

## 5.9 Conclusion

By encoding data and summarising the major themes and constructs, the researcher has arrived at certain realisations. In Chapter 6, the information will be analysed in more depth by comparing the detailed and substantive results of Chapter 5 against the literature review of Chapter 2. This comparison will support literature, highlight further gaps in literature as well as identify future areas for research.

# CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and evaluates the various themes and constructs that arose from Chapter 5 in context of the literature in Chapter 2, as well as the research questions posed in Chapter 3.

## 6.2 Research question 1: What are the successes the MBA programme?

Research question 1 sought to establish the key factors for success of the MBA programme as viewed by business schools and organisations. It was imperative to establish this at the outset and confirm the theory in Chapter 2, as this formed the basis for opening up a conversation with respondents.

Chapter 5 indicated several benefits of an MBA programme including broad exposure, ability to manage complexity, critical thinking skills, leadership skills, preparation for general management, acquired knowledge, increased confidence and teamwork. These results confirm and add to the literature surrounding the benefits of an MBA programme.

### 6.2.1    Broad exposure

*Finweek* and MBAconnect.net (2012, p. 84) suggested that broad exposure involves "exposure to many disciplines, and includes diverse course content." The data discussed in Chapter 5 suggests that students who undertake an MBA are exposed to different people, cultures and experiences, giving students a broader perspective of business and society which ultimately leads to more informed decision-making. Further to this, the data suggests that this broader view and wider understanding of business outside their current narrower contexts meant that students adopted an expanded vision which afforded them more insight into both local and global business.

Business school respondents reiterated that the MBA was specifically designed to challenge students to make holistic decisions and to consider multiple disciplines and decision points in doing so. They also suggested that MBA students learned from the diversity of their programme's colleagues who offered different perspectives, various backgrounds and unique experiences.

Business respondents agreed and further elaborated by suggesting that the MBA gave students a wider view of the business world, including a valuable global perspective. They agreed with business schools in suggesting that the MBA exposed students to various aspects of business, aspects which were wider than their current roles or contexts. Business respondents, too, valued MBA students' broad exposure, suggesting that what this ultimately meant for business was improved results through a more holistic decision-making process.

This finding supports the views of Carmichael and Sutherland (2005), Kelan and Jones (2009) and Temtime and Mmereki (2011) who also suggested that the MBA gives students broad exposure, thereby adding to their career capital. Broad exposure is arguably the most celebrated success of the MBA.

### 6.2.2   Ability to manage pressure

*Finweek* and MBAconnect.net (2012) suggested that pressure and intensity on the MBA resulted from a steep work-load and that this high pressure and intense pace forced students to quickly learn coping skills.

Business school respondents suggested that the MBA programme is deliberately designed to stretch and extend students beyond their existing frame of reference. The results suggest that students are required to manage work and life in addition to delivering on assignments, classwork, papers and exams. Business schools view this as a very necessary component of the process which builds resilience in students, preparing them to face head-on the challenges of moving up the ranks in an organisation.

Business respondents whole-heartedly appreciated that the MBA programme taught students how to manage the pressures associated with balancing work and studies. They suggested that learning to deal with this pressure instilled a sense of resilience in students.

Carmichael and Sutherland (2005), in describing the non-financial benefits of the MBA, suggested that MBA students benefitted from an appreciable increase in productivity and job satisfaction. Hay and Hodgkinson (2006) further elaborated that the benefits of the MBA were wider than just career advancement and that the MBA helped build resilience in students. The results recorded in Chapter 5, relating to the MBA building

resilience in students and teaching them how to manage pressure, confirmed what was suggested by Carmichael and Sutherland (2005) and Hay and Hodgkinson (2006).

Students who have been on the MBA are clearly better able to manage pressure and quickly develop resilience—undeniable benefits of the MBA.

### 6.2.3   Critical thinking

As defined by Bensley et al. (2010) critical thinking is "reflective thinking involved in the evaluation of evidence relevant to a claim so that a sound conclusion can be drawn from the evidence."

Business school respondents viewed information in a globalised business world as both voluminous and inconsistent. They made mention of managers having to sift through copious amounts of data requiring discerning skills to ascertain what is relevant and important and what is not. They explained that information must be assessed critically and that this is especially important when resultant decisions have a direct and vital impact on the future of a business. The data suggested that overlooking key trends and missing potentially profitable opportunities could certainly be detrimental to a business's future. The views of business school respondents, as discussed in Chapter 5, was that the MBA is designed to teach students applicable skills, firstly the ability to discern whether the source of information is reliable and verifiable, and secondly, how to assess the validity, accuracy and completeness of the information. Once students are able to verify this, the MBA then instructs students in analysing data by asking pertinent questions.

Business respondents agreed by suggesting that part of this process entails being able to decipher information and discern whether or not a source is reliable. They mentioned that being able to think critically and resolve daily business issues are essential to the success of a business. The data reveals that business respondents added to the notion of critical thinking by suggesting that the MBA helped students structure their thinking.

Given the critical nature of decision making, we can understand why this is vitally necessary and why this is then regarded as such a laudable success of the MBA.

This finding adds to the findings of Glynn and Wood (2008) who suggested that critical thinking and problem solving skills were the most notably improved and developed skills from the MBA. Glynn and Wood (2008), however, surveyed students, while this

study interviewed business schools and businesses, and the results were congruent. Indeed, critical thinking skills and problems solving skills are regarded as an important benefit of the MBA.

### 6.2.4   Leadership

Annesley et al. (2012, p. 667) described a leader as "…someone who leads, commands, or moves a group toward a goal." They further suggested that the more contemporary views of leadership included concepts such as influencing, guiding and inspiring people. They explained that business leadership has long been a topic of discussion and contention. According to Annesley et al. (2012), in every aspect of business, the style, quality and implementation of leadership frequently defines the success and failure of a business. Understanding the basics styles and theories of leadership is important; however, actually developing an individual's leadership competencies and skills is the ultimate end goal (Annesley et al., 2012).

The data as discussed in Chapter 5 suggests that business schools viewed leadership development as an essential and critical part of the MBA curriculum and educational journey. Business school respondents felt strongly that the MBA programme is meant to create leaders *and* managers and in order to do so successfully, MBA programmes must actually develop students' leadership competencies. The data suggests two things pertaining to leadership: 1) that the leadership theme runs throughout the programme, and 2) that a key component for developing leadership competencies is reflection.

Leadership is what business respondents confirmed as being a true success of the MBA. In fact, business school respondents also suggested that the MBA exposes people who have specialised somewhat narrowly to the broader scope of leadership in business, transitioning them from specialists into worthy leaders.

The views of business schools and organisations in this study corroborate the results of the research conducted by *Finweek* and MBAconnect.net (2012) which investigated the perceptions of MBA students and graduates. According to their research, over 90% of the students perceived the MBA to positively influence their leadership abilities. The results of this research also confirmed the views of Annesley et al. (2012), in that while understanding theories surrounding leadership is important, actually developing and reflecting on those competencies is critical to becoming a competent leader.

The evidence of the *Finweek* and MBAconnect.net (2012) study, supported by the results of this study, suggests that the views of Rubin and Dierdorff (2011) may not necessarily hold true. This evidence suggests that the 'half truths' of Rubin and Dierdorff (2011), arguing the MBA teaches 'management skills' rather than 'leadership skills', may be misplaced and that the MBA does in fact teach both skills.

### 6.2.5  Preparation for general management

Nag, Hambrick, and Chen (2007, p. 944) suggested that the field of strategic management "deals with the major intended and emergent initiatives taken by general managers on behalf of owners, involving utilization of resources, to enhance the performance of firms in their external environments."

Business schools respondents, as evidenced in Chapter 5, believed that the MBA is a general management degree to equip students with the tools and skills required to manage an entire business or a business unit. The research suggests that the MBA exposes students to all aspects of business, including sales and marketing, human resource management and finance. Teaching students best practice in general management allows students to progress through their careers until they are equipped to deal with the various challenges of general management, and according to business school respondents, many MBA alumni eventually assume general management roles.

Business respondents agreed with business schools suggesting that the MBA exposed students to the challenges of business at very senior levels and that it provided students with a toolkit for becoming a general manager. They suggested that without the MBA it is unlikely that students could obtain this kind of exposure in their current jobs. Building these essential business skills is undoubtedly a key success of the MBA. The data suggests that the MBA is successful in teaching students how to run, manage and grow a business. The data ties in nicely with the definition of strategic management as described by Nag et al. (2007) as what it suggests is that students are taught to utilise the resources of their firms to enhance the performance of their organisations.

By acquiring these general management skills, graduates are overall more strategic and less pointedly functional within their organisations. They are able to drive change and align and implement the organisation's strategic objectives as they grasp how all the different components of business fit together to impact business. This study

supported the views of Conger and Xin (2000) who suggested that learning that is more strategic and less functional is of greater benefit to an organisation. It also supported the research of Temtime and Mmereki (2011) where the perception of students was that the MBA taught them valuable management skills.

## 6.2.6   Knowledge

Faucher, Everett, and Lawson (2008) defined knowledge as "a meaningful and procedural abstraction of existence. It has a purpose and is a procedural understanding of existence."

The data as discussed in Chapter 5 suggests that as an academic programme, increasing the knowledge base of students is an important component of the MBA. Business school respondents suggested that one clear success of the MBA is that it depends upon multiple mediums to impart knowledge to students, ranging from formal classroom lectures, to experiential learning exercises and even through the interaction and engagement with fellow students and lecturers within the programme. They believed that the recognition from business was evidence enough of the MBA successfully imparting knowledge to students.

Intriguingly, as discussed in Chapter 5, business resoundingly agreed with the MBA that the MBA helped student understand the context of business and in doing so imparted sound knowledge to them. They almost unanimously agreed that the MBA is a versatile programme, an excellent source of knowledge for *any* student desiring to expand his view of business.

This study confirmed the literature by Baruch (2009) and Carmichael and Sutherland (2005) who suggested that the MBA was successful in imparting various types of knowledge and that students, equipped with this knowledge, could potentially become more efficient and effective managers.

## 6.2.7   Confidence and teamwork

Chuanga, Chengb, Changa, and Chianga (2012) suggested that self-confidence played an important role in decision making and that people with higher self-confidence were more comfortable with their decisions.

Business school and business respondents both agreed that another key component of a prestigious MBA programme is that it instils a sense of confidence and self-belief. Both parties felt that MBA students under-go several self-awareness initiatives in the MBA that force them out of their comfort zones through the process. Business schools in particular suggested that the MBA challenges students to interact, to debate, and to articulate their views and opinions to their peers. The data suggests that this social interaction, combined with newly acquired intellectualism, fosters in many students a heightened sense of self-confidence.

Erhardt (2011) views teams as 'knowledge integrating mechanisms', explaining that teamwork requires knowledge sharing, knowledge creation and on-going learning.

Business school respondents viewed a valuable MBA programme as one which requires extensive group and syndicate work as students are required to engage and interact with their peers in the sharing of knowledge and the creation of knowledge. This, they believed, aided their on-going learning through the MBA process.

Interestingly, business respondents also suggested that learning to work in a team has many guises, from learning to curb one's extroverted and domineering tendencies, to becoming more assertive and outspoken in the case of introverted personalities. They believed that delegation skills and involvement in 'actioning' projects are also key learning components for delivering teamwork timeously and of an acceptable quality. The data suggests that all of these skills learned in the MBA are transferable to work, immediately applicable into an organisation.

Both Carmichael and Sutherland (2005) and *Finweek* and MBAconnect.net (2012) saw confidence and teamwork as important successes of the MBA, and this study reaffirms their findings through the perspective of the business schools and business.

### 6.2.8   Conclusion

This study confirms that the MBA has many significant successes while playing a prominent role in both management and leadership development. In fact, this research adds to current literature by enlisting the perspective of business schools in terms of what they intended to incorporate into an MBA programme and then receiving confirmation from businesses that these successes were indeed valid and recognisable in students coming through an MBA programme. Given the significant successes of the

MBA, the research validates the urgency for tackling the challenges of the programme to ensure that business and students alike enjoy more of these successes. It also highlights the need for business schools, businesses and students to celebrate the successes of the MBA collectively and openly.

## 6.3 Research question 2: What are the challenges faced by the MBA?

Research question 2, like research question 1, seeks to support and confirm literature concerning the MBA, but very importantly, from the perspective of business schools and organisations. Following on from the successes of the MBA, the second research question examines the perceptions of business schools and organisations with regard the challenges facing the MBA. Understanding what the issues are gives the researcher a view as to the enormity of such challenges and perhaps potential avenues for resolutions.

Some of the challenges facing the MBA include the notion of the programme being too academic, the MBA degree not really being a pre-requisite for employment, the diminishing of the original value of the MBA, inflated student expectations, weak integration of the subjects within the MBA and students learning in a theoretical vacuum.

### 6.3.1   Academic versus practical

Mintzberg and Gosling (2002) suggested that the MBA teaches students about business functions rather than the practicalities of business administration. They suggested that management education is useless to students who could not practice what they learned, while for those students who could actually practice what they learned, the classroom could significantly improve their skills.

The data suggests that the strongest criticism of the MBA is that it appears to be far too academic and business is not seeing students apply practically that which they have learned from the programme back to the workplace.

Business school respondents, on the other hand, felt justified in their teaching methods and have quoted several instances of giving their students practical first-hand experience relating to the subject being taught. The examples as provided by business school respondents included unpacking real-life case studies, inviting industry experts

and practitioners to present to classes, and field trips which expose students to the topic being presented.

Business respondents vehemently disagreed with business schools, as evidenced in the discussion in Chapter 5, suggesting that the MBA was far too academic and that students were not applying their newly learned skills back to the workplace. The data suggests that for as long as students are unable or do not apply what they have learned at school, business will continue to feel that the MBA is far too academic, rendering little value to the organisation.

What is clear from the data and discussions with business schools and business is that there is an unfortunate disconnect between the two parties. In their own way, each party, business schools and businesses, are trying to get students to apply their learnings, but with varied success. The question then is: what is lacking, that could potentially bring the parties together, given that they have a common goal?

This research confirms the views of Donovan and Stewart-Smith (2010) and Mintzberg and Gosling (2002) who argued that the MBA curriculum should encompass more opportunities for students to apply their knowledge, real opportunities to more practically demonstrate what they have learned. This study adds to the research by Rowland and Hall (2011) who suggested that there was a gulf between students' expectations of learning and educators' views of learning. This research adds to literature by also indicating that there also appears to be a gulf between organisations' views of learning and the business schools' views of learning—and potentially the outcomes thereof.

The results of section 6.4.1, which discussed the actual application of acquired skills into the workplace, address some of these challenges.

### 6.3.2 MBA not a pre-requisite for employment

A very intriguing point raised by the data is that while the MBA qualification is deemed important from a personal perspective and highly esteemed in the business world, it is seldom, in fact, a pre-requisite for employment.

The data suggests that business schools did not even consider the fact that an MBA is not necessarily a pre-requisite for employment.

Business respondents were very candid about this, suggesting that very few jobs actually require a current or prospective employee to hold an MBA qualification and even then, it is regarded as more of a 'value-added' qualification than an essential qualification.

One would then question, given that business has such a watered down view of the degree, whether it has a place in the current business world. The results of the data analysis seems to raise a paradox of contradictions: 1) that business widely accepts the numerous benefits as discussed in the previous section, yet ascribes such little value to the degree; and 2) that students' expectations, as discussed in section 6.3.4, are so inflated while yet the MBA is seen merely as a value-add by employers and not an essential job qualification.

While unpacking the deeper reasons for this minimalist view of the value of the MBA is beyond the scope of this research, it provides the researcher with vital clues as to why stand-alone initiatives have failed to impact business or business schools. The long and short of it is whether MBA students and the MBA programme are getting enough attention from business and whether business schools need to look at repositioning and repackaging the MBA programme to be more appealing to business.

This finding sheds new light on what level of support may be required for the MBA to be truly impactful to business, as discussed in section 6.4. Further, it suggests that the purpose and values of the MBA need to be revisited, discussed in sections 6.5.1 and 6.5.2 respectively.

### 6.3.3 Deterioration of the value of the MBA

Both Mintzberg and Gosling (2002) and Rowland and Hall (2011) suggested that the value students acquired from the MBA was either greatly enhanced or stifled dependent on their level of experience coming into the programme. The more experience that students had, the more they could relate to their studies and the more value they acquired from studies. This is what the data from this research confirms.

The results of this research highlighted that the value of the MBA, in the eyes of business, is being discredited for two primary reasons: 1) a growing number of institutions offering MBAs who lack the necessary accreditation to ensure the

standards of the programme are upheld; and 2) an increase in the number of less-experienced students admitted into the programme.

Business school respondents condemned the growing number of institutions offering an MBA without the necessary accreditation. They acknowledged that the quality of the MBA qualification varied from school to school and that students needed to be discerning in their choice of school. The data suggests that institutional and programme accreditation is key to maintaining the exclusive standards of the MBA and is therefore crucial in preventing perceptions of further deterioration of the MBA.

Business respondents also agreed that there is a distinction between business schools and the quality of their respective MBA programmes. They, too, believed that MBA programmes offered by institutions which were less reputable and had a shorter history lacked the depth and high educational standards necessary to have a meaningful impact on students and thus on business.

The data also revealed that as a consequence of the larger number of MBA programmes lacking accreditation, the lower entry requirements of these programmes were considered a second reason for the deteriorating value of an MBA in the eyes of business.

Business school respondents suggested that selection and admission criteria into their MBA programmes was of the highest standards. The data reveals that business schools take due care and pride in screening applicants and generally have a fairly rigorous admission process which filters out weaker candidates. The data only confirms that the leading business schools do indeed conform to the expectations, rules and regulations concerning accreditation.

However, business respondents felt that the entrance standards in the MBA are continuously, even subtly, being lowered. They believed that students with lesser experience were being admitted into the MBA and that this was negatively impacting on the learnings of students and the educational level and quality of class discussions.

This study corroborates the views of Rowland and Hall (2011) who suggested that the quality of an MBA programme was affected by the experience of students which it admitted. The experience of students affected the quality of discussions in classes as well as the way in which the lesson was delivered. For example, students who are more experienced are able to draw on their experiences to readily link theory to

practice. What they learn in the MBA is of more relevance to them given their previous experiences. Experienced students appear to find more content relevance with their work and what they are learning on the MBA. This concurs with the research of Lindel and Stenstrom (2005) who suggested that content relevance occurs when what is being learned at school is directly linked to work.

### 6.3.4   Inflated student expectations

Evans, Honkapohja, and Mitra (2012) suggested that expectations are formed based on what people learn from their experiences.

The results of the research revealed that business schools and business alike unanimously agree that students and graduates on the MBA have over-inflated expectations on completion of the MBA, expectations which range from unrealistic salary requests to unreasonable demands for more senior roles within the organisation.

Business school respondents suggested that the MBA qualification should be viewed as one which provides the skills and exposure necessary for that person to become a more effective manager and leader. They viewed students' expectations as unrealistic and called for students to acknowledge that delivery of results is what is desired for them to achieve greater salaries or enjoy promotion in an organisation.

They also provided valuable clues as to where inflated expectation arise by suggesting that historically graduates enjoyed a 60% to 70% increase in their salary, in line with how expectations are formed according to Evans et al. (2012). This point is congruent with the findings of *Finweek* and MBAconnect.net (2012) where respondents believed that the MBA was worth what they had paid for it and that the payback period was fairly short, suggesting relatively quick financial gain for students.

Business respondents too clearly articulated that promotions and monetary gain and senior positions follow *only* after there has been a delivery of work by graduates. The data suggests that just holding an MBA certificate, in itself, does not qualify graduates for higher salaries or more senior roles. Interestingly, business respondents suggest that there is a need for such inflated student expectations to be addressed at the *beginning* of the qualification and that business schools must play a greater role in curbing these unrealistic student expectations.

The data suggests that both business schools and business have a shared responsibility in guiding students by unpacking the *real* advantages of obtaining an MBA and realistic expectations of each party.

Business schools make a further and more interesting point in that business should also reassess and realign its own expectations of MBA students. Their views are if a business is funding a student on an MBA, they should have a clear and structured plan for that individual's career growth within the organisation. They feel that business should only fund a student if it is expected that the person will be aligned with the organisational roles that will ensure growth and profitable application of MBA knowledge into the business.

The data revealed that business should acknowledge that many graduates mature through the MBA process and as such often outgrow their current roles. Further to this, business schools caution business in suggesting that they should be aware that it is unrealistic to expect a student to deliver on work or projects which are beyond their current expertise or control. The data reveals that the MBA qualification is a process rather than a destination and the learning continues even after the formal studies are over.

What all parties do agree on is that someone who has the qualification and who can practically apply what has been learned is immensely valuable to an organisation. This, then–practical application—is the message that should ideally be communicated to prospective and current students on an MBA; this ties in with section 6.3.1 relating the need for practical application of the MBA. Both business schools and business have a common goal in that they crave practical application of skills. But the data reveals that students expect monetary and career gains on qualification of the MBA which, according to business schools and business, will only materialise over time as students apply practically that which they have learned. What the research has uncovered is a common goal for all three parties, and if a focussed and deliberate plan can be implemented to ensure students apply what they learn, there is an argument that their expectations may materialise after all.

This study has revealed only one part of student expectations as viewed by organisations and business schools, namely monetary gains and career advancement. It has not confirmed the views of Hay and Hodgkinson (2006) who suggested that students also valued both stability and movement.

### 6.3.5 Integration of learnings from the MBA

Vazquez and Ruas (2012) viewed integration wider than just the various courses on the MBA. They suggested that valued integration required business schools to create an environment where students could reflect on their learnings from the MBA, an environment especially for deliberating on mistakes and new discoveries. They suggested that integration of the MBA learnings would be enhanced if students were more open to new ways of thinking, set time aside from their daily routines to think about how school related to work, assigned new meanings to learnings and accepted different viewpoints appreciatively (Vazquez & Ruas, 2012).

Business school respondents conceded that integration of subjects in the MBA and integration of the course back into the business world was extremely challenging, yet critical to a respectable MBA programme. They believed that traditional MBA programmes perpetuated a 'silo' mentality and that it was vital for students actually think about business much more holistically. The data again suggests that students need to reflect on what they have learned and how all of the key dimensions and learnings fit together.

Business respondents, too, agreed that integration on the MBA was a problem given that business requires several disciplines and thought-processes to function.

This study confirmed the views of Vazquez and Ruas (2012) in that reflection is vital to integrating learnings on the MBA. Further, the data suggests that integration is a problem that needs to be addressed by both business and business schools if students and organisations are to truly benefit from the programme.

### 6.3.6 Students in a vacuum

Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, and Rhoades (2002) alluded to students being in a vacuum because of a lack of visible support from their organisations. They suggested that students who are also employees recognised that supervisor support had a direct link to their perceived support from the organisation. They suggested that where supervisor support was poor, the perception was of poor overall organisational support which invariably resulted in poor employee retention.

The data from this study revealed exactly what Eisenberger et al. (2002) suggested. Business schools had little to say about this issue, but it was business respondents who actually viewed this as a serious challenge facing the MBA.

Business respondents suggested that there is a serious issue with regard to companies paying for students on an MBA only to find an alarming gap between student and organisation through the course of their studies. The data suggests that invariably expectations of both parties were divergent and the gaps grew, leaving both parties with the faltering sense that the MBA process had not delivered on their expectations. What results, according to the data, is that the graduate leaves the employ of the organisation, and both parties lose out in a process that was meant to add value, not detract.

Business respondents believed that all three parties—business schools, businesses and students—have a role to play in preventing students from feeling isolated during their studies, and consequently moving on to other businesses.

What the data alludes to is the need for the various stakeholders—business schools, students and organisations—to knit together more closely in prevention of this situation. Business schools should play a more active role in involving business representative, especially line managers, throughout the MBA process. The data suggests that organisations should themselves have a more vested interest in the development of students they have funded, engaging students and business schools more actively. It further requires students themselves to assume more assertive roles by communicating and feeding back to their organisations where they are in their studies and what they have learned, what is exciting and motivating them as a result of the studies.

The results, as discussed in Chapter 5, suggest that the key in this regard is opening and sustaining a conversation between all three parties. Only through such a conversation can parties bridge the gaps that emerge throughout the MBA process. This finding confirms the literature by Eisenberger et al. (2002) and also suggests that conversation and feedback between the employer and employee is the starting point for employee retention.

The question that this raises is as follows: could executive and line management involvement be the key to resolving this considerable challenge? This is discussed further in section 6.4.2 which addresses precisely this point.

### 6.3.7   Conclusion

The second research question has highlighted apparent reasons for the MBA's diminishing reputation in the business community. It has, in many instances, confirmed current literature around the challenges facing the MBA. Further to this, it has revealed a few interesting challenges such as the MBA degree not being a priority requirement for  employment, and students feeling isolated during their studies, both of which shed new light as to why many students leave their organisation during or shortly after the completion of their studies.

Highlighting these challenges suggests why the MBA's reputation and its standing in the business world is somewhat marginalised despite the obvious benefits as admitted to and appreciated by business. Indeed, the MBA faces several critical challenges which, if left unaddressed, could potentially further erode what remaining positive reputation that the programme does have.

## 6.4 Research question 3: What are the essential elements required for the MBA programme to be impactful?

Having confirmed through the first question the successes of the MBA and the important role it still has to play in management and leadership development, this research then proceeded to understand what elements are required for respondents to appreciate an MBA programme as impactful. The challenges that were uncovered reveal the issues which continue to plague the MBA and the reasons for its deteriorating reputation. These challenges prohibit the MBA from being fully impactful.

By reflecting on successful in-house programmes, the next question looks to discover the core components which contribute to the success of those programmes. It further sought to understand whether these elements could potentially be transferred into MBA programmes to alleviate the challenges previously identified. A number of key components were identified, which, if applied to the MBA, could potentially strengthen its impact on business and students.

### 6.4.1   Application of skills

As previously suggested by Donovan and Stewart-Smith (2010) and Mintzberg and Gosling (2002), if students are unable to apply what they have learned from the MBA,

then this raises several questions in terms of the value of the qualification. They suggested that it is vitally important that students are able to apply what they have learned and that they have an environment at work which encourages them to apply newly acquired skills. The further agreed that if students aren't taking back what they have learned, or if the work environment is not conducive for students to practically apply what they have learned, this will invariably result in a minimised impact from the programme (Donovan & Stewart-Smith, 2010; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002)

Useful application of skills acquired on the MBA is regarded by respondents as by far the most important element for the MBA to be impactful to students and business.

Business respondents would like to see students take the initiative here by bringing their studies back to work. This then raises the question: how does one facilitate the application of skills and knowledge learned on the MBA back to the workplace?

Business school respondents regard action learning as vital in applying skills acquired on the MBA back to work. They suggest that only through 'doing' could students consolidate what they had been 'learning' and actually add true value to the organisation with which they are employed. Business school respondents further suggest that students should ideally use their assignments and school projects as they apply to their current organisations and the industries in which they operate, not only to make their learning real but also to add value back to the businesses by presenting them with their findings.

Business respondents agreed with business schools in this regard. The data reveals a call from business respondents for students to actively tackle the challenges facing the organisation, and by applying their MBA studies as a starting point, make recommendations for the business.

The findings of this study concur with those of Lysø et al. (2011) who also suggested that if learning and action are balanced they are more likely to have an impact to the organisation. The data also further supports the views of Marquardt and Waddill (2004) who suggested that action learning combines the elements of the various schools of learning and allows for the solving of complex problems which then results in adding speed to learning.

This data also revealed that such 'action projects' require a partnership between business schools and businesses in order to be successful. This further supported the views of Lysø et al. (2011) who called for collaborative action projects.

Interestingly, business school respondents revealed that business schools attempt to give students assignments which require them to consider real-life problems and issues and ponder how these issues affect their companies; however, organisations did not have sight of these submissions.

This critical finding suggests a missing link between business schools and organisations. It stresses that 'action learning', even with the best of intentions, cannot be fully impactful or successful if there is a lack of cohesion between business schools and organisations. If any application back to work through whatever form, whether 'action learning' or practical assignments, is to be effective and impactful, the gap between business and business schools must be bridged. The data suggests that both entities have to work cohesively to implement initiatives which will successfully result in school learning being applied in work environments. This very much supports the views of Schilling and Klamma (2010) who suggested that collaboration between business and school, in implementing projects, was very necessary to ensure long lasting benefits for stakeholders.

### 6.4.2   Executive and line management involvement

Siebert et al. (2001) and Kraimer et al. (2011) suggested that executive sponsorship improves the likelihood of students returning on their investment for both the company and themselves.

The data reveals that another key element that made in-house programmes so successful was the extent to which executives and line managers were involved in these programmes.

Business school respondents' views regarding executive and line management involvement was that given the substantial monetary investment and time costs required, the MBA was no exception, and the commitment and involvement of executives and managers was even more necessary to ensure that the MBA had the desired impact on both business and student. By setting out the strategic challenges of the business to MBA students, executives and managers give students real direction in

terms of what is required to take the business forward. They further added that executives need to commit time to listening and unpacking the results even further. They are of the opinion that even if students are not able to develop new solutions, executives still have the opportunity to confirm existing thinking, which could also be useful.

Business schools cautioned that students are learning, and cannot be expected to deliver on projects or challenges which are unreasonably beyond their control or mandate. They felt that business should curb their own expectations in this regard, as discussed in further depth in section 6.3.4 around expectations.

Business respondents felt that without this element, this personal involvement, the impact of any programme would be significantly reduced. The data suggests that the most successful programmes were ones in which executives and managers committed to setting the strategic direction and purpose of the programme, and spent sufficient time themselves in talking with, listening to and guiding attendees. They viewed executive involvement as vital to employee engagement. These findings are very much in keeping with the views of Siebert et al. (2001) and Kraimer et al. (2011).

The findings of this research also confirmed the views of Leiter and Maslach (2008) who recommended that companies need to be sensitive to the engagement of their employees and interventions need to be implemented to ensure that such engagement was maintained.

Business respondents added that the onus is then on students to utilise the skills they learned, to research and investigate organisational challenges and construct programmes or offer recommendations for the business to implement.

The data suggests that this involvement also has the effect of communicating, whether directly or indirectly, that the student and their development is a priority for the organisation. It confirmed the thinking of Baruch (2009) who suggested that this is a powerful motivational tool, even if individuals leave an organisation, as the message that is being transmitted is that the development of people is a priority and that executives are willing to listen to their employees. The data suggests that executive and line management involvement creates a connectedness with the company and thus confirms the views of Bakker et al. (2009) who suggested that engaged employees make greater efforts with more intensity because they identify with and appreciate their jobs.

This sort of interaction addresses the challenges raised with regard to students being in a vacuum. If executives and managers are more involved throughout the MBA process, this will certainly go a long way in bridging the gap between students and the business.

### 6.4.3 Coaching and mentorship

Edwards (2003, p. 298) suggested that coaching "enables people to develop new individualised ways of working to increase their performance and the performance of their teams." Cottrell (2009) suggested that mentoring was a "process by which an older and wiser colleague passes on wisdom, experience and advice, and helps to guide a more junior person." He further added there was much confusion around terms and concepts such as coaching and mentoring.

The data reveals that coaching and mentorship were regarded as critical components of in-house programmes. Business school respondents felt that students need to acknowledge that this element of the journey, being coached and mentored, is important and cannot be taken lightly or overlooked if students are to receive maximum benefits from the MBA journey. They felt that if students are left on their own to propel their own personal growth and development, there is always the risk that their growth and development may not be as channelled and focused as if they were under the tutelage of a coach or a mentor.

Business respondents agreed that coaching and mentoring were critical to students' development. They indicated that coaches and mentors have been successful in helping students on in-house programmes by guiding their development, helping them better integrate what they have learned at school back into work. They felt that coaching and mentorship were regarded as pivotal elements to ensure that students are adequately supported throughout the MBA process and beyond.

The data alone suggests that coaches and mentors are key to managing the unrealistic expectations of students as well as ensuring that students were engaged and felt supported. The data suggests that coaches and mentors experience of the real business world will help ground students and through the relationship, they can constantly pull students back to reality. Data further revealed that the benefits from the relationship can be reciprocal in that coaches and mentors themselves can learn from students. It is a two-way iterative relationship that will evolve and grow.

However, both business and business schools cautioned that it is critical that coaches, mentors and students commit, and remain committed, throughout the entire process.

### 6.4.4   Conclusion

In unpacking what elements are required for an MBA to be impactful, the most important factor was a call for students to apply what they have learned back to the organisation. If students could apply knowledge and practices acquired, they would benefit greatly from being better able to relate with and thus absorb what they have learned; similarly, businesses would see direct benefits from the practical implementations. A very important point to note is that there is a call for business schools and business to work closer together to achieve more sustainable results.

Two further important points were noted with regard to organisational support. The greater the involvement of senior executives, the greater the impact of the intervention. Further to this, mentoring and coaching of MBA students while in the MBA programme is an important developmental initiative to address a student's growth and development during the programme.

### 6.5 Research question 4: How can business schools and organisations enter into a collaborative relationship to improve the impact of the MBA?

The data suggests that collaborative processes works admirably with in-house programmes, where the organisation understands what its needs are in terms of training and development and business school and business work together to ensure that these needs are addressed through the programme. Many respondents expressed how well the relationship worked and how it was an iterative relationship constantly striving to refine and optimise the programmes. The measure of the success of such a programme was based on how well it met the needs of business. This supports the findings of Carruth and Carruth (2006) who suggested that in-house programmes are more cost-effective and relevant to an organisation's needs than the MBA.

How then can this information be transferred into the context of the MBA?

### 6.5.1 The purpose of the MBA

According to Bedwell et al. (2012), collaboration is an evolving process beginning with two or more entities working together toward a shared pre-determined goal. Bedwell et al. (2012) further go on to add that without a shared goal, there is little incentive for these entities to work together.

The research reveals that since its inception, the MBA programme has been continuously evolving and somewhere along the line its original purpose has been lost. The data reveals that business schools and business cannot express a unified understanding of the purpose of the MBA.

Business school respondents acknowledged the importance of a arriving at a common understanding with business. They believed that this common understanding will help them better serve the needs of business. For business schools, as discussed in Chapter 5, clarity of purpose will help manage the expectations of business in that the programme itself is not meant to deliver on unrealistic expectations. The data reveals that business schools displayed a willingness to agree a common purpose and partner with business on the MBA.

Business respondents suggest that clarifying the purpose of a programme upfront establishes the expectations of all parties. They revealed that this common purpose on in-house programmes created a platform for them to achieve superior results as all parties knew exactly why they were undertaking such a programme.

Business and business school respondents suggest that it is important, before a collaborative relationship can be entered into, that all parties agree on the purpose of the MBA.

The findings of this research suggests that in establishing the purpose of the MBA, business schools and businesses would ideally identify a shared goal; this confirms the views of Bedwell et al. (2012). While this research suggests a solution to a gulf between the expectations of business schools and organisations, it also suggests a potential solution to the gulf identified by Rowland and Hall (2011) between the expectations of students and business schools.

### 6.5.2 Contracting

Peel and Boxall (2005) suggest that contracting requires a relationship which is mutually beneficial and where the needs of both parties are considered. A very interesting point which the data itself unearths is a call for the relationship between the business school, organisations and even the student to be formalised.

Business school respondents suggest that by contracting the expectations of each party, business schools, organisations and students are each brought to the table. They believe that the involved parties are able to prioritise which of their actions contribute to the shared goal, and which do not, resulting in a more productive relationship.

However, business school respondents have submitted several instances where contracting has not been effective due to a lack of commitment of involved parties. The question raised is this: how do business schools and businesses get it right in their in-house programmes?

Business respondents also viewed contracting as an essential element of their in-house programmes. They suggest that it comes back to a sense of urgency and investing in those programmes the time and resources necessary to ensure success. They also firmly believed that even more so, given the substantial time and monetary commitments of the MBA, urgency and a sufficient level of commitment are critical for ensuring success.

The findings of this research point to a collaborative effort and support the views of Thomson et al. (2009, p. 25) who neatly defined collaboration as "a process in which autonomous or semi-autonomous actors interact through formal and informal negotiation, jointly creating rules and structures governing their relationships and ways to act or decide on the issues that brought them together; it is a process."

There is a clear desire by business schools and business to establish a shared goal and to formalise such an agreement contractually. The data itself reveals a few key elements in contracting, the success of which has been demonstrated in in-house programmes: urgency, commitment and a willingness to enter into a mutually beneficial contract. These key psychological findings contribute to the building of the Collaborative Impact Model.

### 6.5.3   Conclusion

The first step to entering into a collaborative relationship as it relates to the MBA is re-establishing, with clarity, the purpose of the MBA. The inconsistent understanding of the purpose of the MBA results in differing expectations. As long as expectations are different, the relative views of the appreciable benefits of the MBA will continue to exist. Embracing a unified purpose will allow businesses and business schools to establish a shared goal. According to Bedwell et al. (2012), this is critical.

Furthermore, contracting is important in formalising the relationship, the responsibilities and the roles of each party. This process will minimise any unreasonable expectations.

### 6.6 Research question 5: What elements are required to maintain a collaborative relationship in relation to the MBA?

As defined by Winer and Ray (1994, p. 10), collaboration is "a process that gets people to work together in new ways." They suggested that collaboration is a continuously evolving process that empowers people and systems to change.

The data reveals that once a collaborative relationship has been established, a lot of effort and time is required to maintain such a relationship. It further suggests that if the relationship cannot be maintained, then any interventions which might be attempted will be futile. In this regard, the data reveals two very distinct relationships: the first is a collaborative relationship between the business school and business; the second is a collaborative relationship between business schools themselves. The research suggests a strong emphasis on a partnership in which vested parties acknowledged their role in achieving the shared pre-determined goal.

### 6.6.1   Business school-to-business partnerships

The data suggests that a business school-to-business partnership is a mutually beneficial, collaborative relationship between business schools and organisations.

Business schools and business respondents alike demonstrated a desire for and a willingness to partner with each other on the MBA. The shared ability to do so successfully was made apparent by both parties relating the success of partnerships for their in-house programmes. The data suggests that this 'iterative' and evolving

relationship could be easily extended to the MBA programme. This confirms the views of Winer and Ray (1994) and Bedwell et al. (2012) who also suggested that collaborating was an evolving process.

Business school respondents felt that such a conversation has begun in some quarters; however, the urgency and transparency of this conversation leaves much to be desired. They called for both parties to partner for progress and establish a mutually beneficial relationship. This is true even if the benefits of such a 'partnership' would include the exchange of resources, expertise and knowledge.

Business respondents agreed with business schools that partnering was necessary for bridging the gaps in the MBA. They believed that business schools could be more engaged by involving managers of students in the MBA. They felt that the intention of this engagement would be to open a conversation pertaining to the MBA, including how to better support students on the MBA and how to take learning from the MBA back into the organisation. The data revealed that this conversation would also centre on the challenges of the MBA and how the strengths of each party could be leveraged to address these challenges.

The data reveals that this current absence of a collaborative partnering relationship surrounding the MBA explains why initiatives which have been implemented by either party have not yielded exemplary results. It does, however, demonstrate an acknowledgement and a willingness by both business schools and organisations to enter into a partnership to progress the impact and value of the MBA.

The results of this study confirm the views of O'Connor and Cordova (2010) who suggested that overlaps between work and school impact learning and if this gap could be breached it would make the content instruction of the classes much more relevant to work. The data of this study reveals that by partnering together, business schools and organisations can understand the needs of each other and work together to fulfil these needs.

### 6.6.2   Business school-to-business school partnership

The second relationship that the data suggests is a business school-to-business school partnership where business schools themselves partner with each other to strengthen

the impact of the MBA. This was a point raised by business schools themselves in accepting their own role in improving the impact of the MBA.

The data suggests that business schools have more demand for their MBA programme than they could meet, having to turn away hundreds of students each year. In light of this, some business schools suggest that they partner with each other to ensure that the quality standards and educational consistency of an MBA qualification be maintained. They were of the view that their vision or shared goal should be more along the lines of tackling the challenges of education inherent to this country and moving educational standards forward rather than being inwardly focussed. Collectively, business schools can achieve a whole lot more by leveraging off each other's respective strengths. There was a call for a common forum or platform to allow for openness and transparency. Respondents also suggest that by sharing best practice with regard to teaching methods, they could further improve the impact of the MBA.

The views from respondents in this study confirms the views of Hidi and Renninger (2006) who suggested that educators had a role to play in maintaining students' interest and that they should create an environment which fosters the curiosity of students. Further to this, the study also confirms the views of Rotgans and Schmidt (2011) who suggested that improving an educator's cognitive congruence would indirectly impact their ability to maintain situational interest in class. The way in which this research confirms both Hidi and Renninger (2006) and Rotgans and Schmidt is that it suggests that by sharing resources, ideas and expertise in the MBA, business schools could improve the situational interest of students by improving the initiatives, the teaching methods and the level of expertise on the programme.

While this appears to be a noble and idealistic view, another business school cast significant doubt as to its propensity for entertaining such a conversation. Its 'silo' view was that it had a competitive advantage over other business schools and that it would want to maintain such an advantage. This reveals a clear a lack of desire for a shared goal and hence a lack of incentive to partner with another school. The data suggests that this could potentially be a result of the demand for the MBA far exceeding its supply; there is little incentive to tamper with the status quo. Therefore, yet again, common themes of willingness and shared goals emerge from the research which informs the development of the Collaborative Impact Model.

### 6.6.3 Alumni

Mael and Ashforth (1992) suggested that the alumni of an educational organisation were its financial backbone and that alumni are one of their most important stakeholders. *Finweek* and MBAconnect.net (2012) suggested that the relationship between alumni and business schools left something to be desired and that business schools had not properly leveraged their alumni. The results of this study, as discussed below, confirm exactly that.

Business school respondents confirmed this by suggesting that the extent to which alumni were involved in the MBA, post qualification, was nowhere near the desired levels. Business schools admitted that maintaining the interest and energy levels of alumni was a challenge and that while people often started with the best of intentions, this quickly faded as time progressed. The research highlighted that while some business schools considered their initiatives with alumni sufficient, there was no clear plan in terms of the extent to which this pivotal resource could or should be leveraged. Business schools believe that they are doing as much as they possibly can and that there is unfortunately a limited commitment from alumni for maintaining a relationship post MBA.

Business respondents, too, have viewed alumni as potential resources but yet which have been under-utilised. They suggested that alumni are familiar with the MBA programme and are key resources for maintaining a collaborative relationship as this was evidenced on their in-house programmes. Business recommends that alumni could ideally be the catalyst for closing the gap between the business school and businesses.

The data suggests the alumni relationship should begin long before students qualify and that at the inception of the MBA, students should be contracted and coached throughout the MBA to create a sense of belonging and long-lasting association. Again, key themes that emerge are commitment and energy and these inform the development of the Collaborative Impact Model.

### 6.6.4 Feedback

Price, Handley, Millar, and O'Donovan (2010) suggested a lack of clarity in the meaning of feedback, that essentially feedback was about putting things right through

taking corrective actions. Business schools had very little to say about feedback to business, virtually conceding that there was little feedback between the two parties.

Business respondents felt aggrieved that they had not received enough feedback during the MBA process. They made calls for more frequent and transparent feedback, very much driven from the perspective that this feedback would be essential in aiding the development of their students on the MBA.

The data suggests that business and business schools are rarely in communication with each other, yet ironically, with in-house programmes for which they partner, feedback is continuous and frequent. It further suggests that feedback must be reciprocal and neither party should be blamed for poor feedback. Again, these results would suggest that if businesses and business schools can apply the same principles to the MBA, they can improve the feedback richness between each other and thus better aid the development of MBA students.

This research confirms the views of Price et al. (2010) in suggesting that feedback would aid in informing corrective actions where the MBA was lacking. The data suggests that more frequent and transparent feedback between business and business schools would assist both business and business schools better support students through the MBA process.

## 6.7 The Collaborative Impact Model

During the course of the interviews and the analysis of the data, what emerged were two very distinct constructs which were necessary for any learning intervention to be impactful. Figure 4 below presents the Collaborative Impact Model, a model born out of this research. The model was constructed through a careful understanding of the elements which made in-house initiatives so successful and applying a number of the recommendations made by business schools and businesses regarding the MBA. This model suggests the psychological states and relationship processes that are required for a relationship to be collaborative and impactful.

In the Collaborative Impact Model, the inner core communicates the relationship process while the outer shell communicates the psychological states that are required for an initiative to be successfully impactful. In order for collaboration to occur, it is essential for the elements of both layers to be functioning fully. Both layers are mutually

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dependent on each other entering into collaboration and for the sustaining of such collaboration. The relationship process level will simply not be sustainable if the elements of the psychological layer—like willingness to engage, urgency, commitment, energy and shared accountability—are lacking. Likewise, despite parties attempting to collaborate, if key elements in the relationship process—like feedback and resources—are absent, despite having the best intentions and the energy and commitment to collaborate, collaborative initiatives will invariably fail. This model, while developed for the MBA, can be applied to any collaborative learning initiative to have the desired impact on the relevant parties.

**Figure 2:** The Collaborative Impact Model
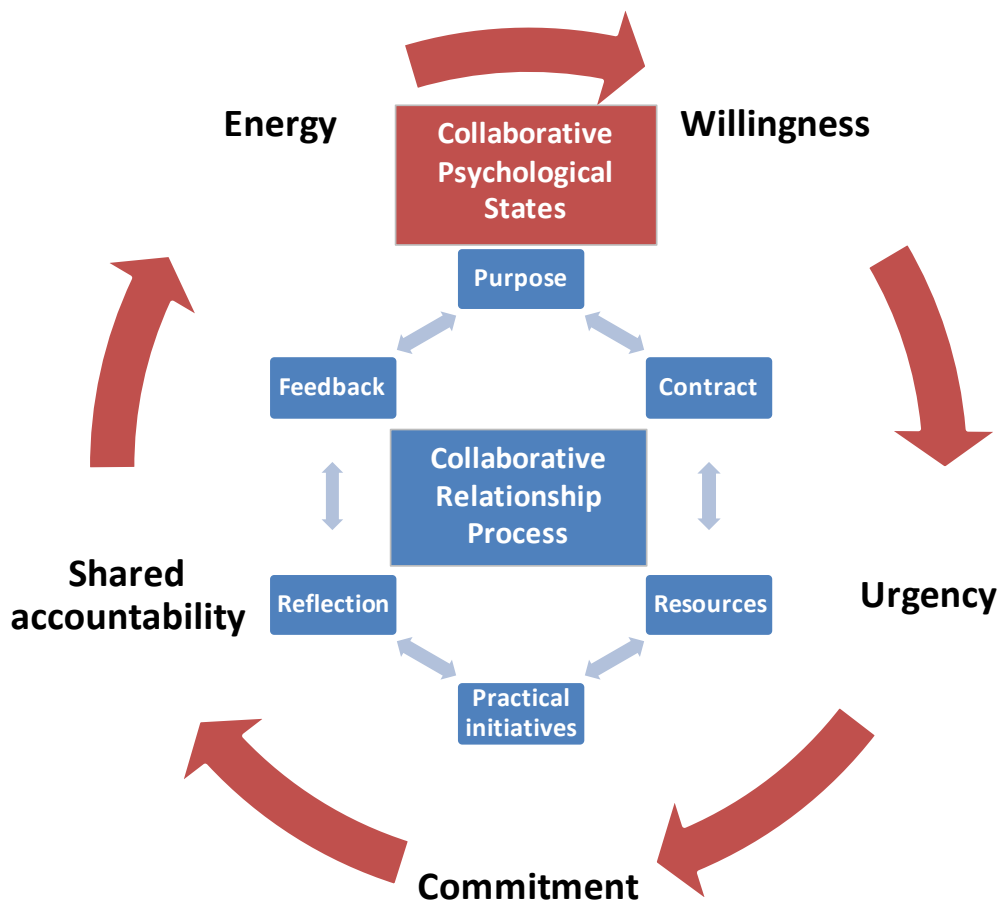
### 6.7.1 The collaborative relationship process

The inner core is the process component of the Collaborative Impact Model. This inner core suggests how a collaborative relationship should be conducted in a learning environment like the MBA to extract the maximum benefits therewith. At each key level there is two-way interaction, suggesting that the entire process is interactive, iterative and evolving.

For a relationship to be collaborative, six important identified steps govern the physical actions of collaborating entities. Each of these steps relies on the others in order for the collaborative relationship to succeed. These steps reflect the logical flow of process; however, it should be noted that feedback can and should occur at any stage of the relationship. In fact, the likelihood of the relationship succeeding will depend on the frequency and the transparency of the feedback given to collaborating parties. This is very much in line with the views of Price et al. (2010) who suggested that feedback would aid in informing corrective actions where the MBA was lacking.

### 6.7.1.1 Purpose

The beginning of any collaborative relationship is to understand the purpose of the initiative and from that, derive the shared goal. This is critical to establish upfront, because, as suggested by Bedwell et al. (2012), if parties don't have at least one shared goal, there is little incentive for these parties to collaborate.

### 6.7.1.2 Contract

Having established the purpose of the learning initiative, parties should then formalise their relationship through a contract which is mutually beneficial, as suggested by Peel and Boxall (2005) . This contract should enumerate roles and responsibilities of each party involved in the collaborative relationship. The intention at this stage is to clarify the expectations of each party, both in terms of what they want to derive from the learning initiative but also what they expect of the other party. This step is vital as it is meant to communicate how collaborating entities manage themselves and each other. Contracting will highlight the importance of each party's role in attaining the shared goals. Additionally, contracting will govern the relationship and if parties find that the contracting of their relationship is too onerous, they should revisit the purpose of the

learning initiative. Having formalised a contract, parties will need to be clear as to what is required of them and what steps they must prioritise to ensure that their part of the relationship is upheld.

This step in the process also supports the views of Thomson et al. (2009) who suggested that collaborating parties should interact through formal and informal negotiation and jointly create rules and structures to govern their relationships.

### 6.7.1.3 Resources

Having contracted, all parties must commit sufficient resources to the relationship process to ensure the achievement of the shared goal. Resources, all must understand, extend beyond financial resources and include the time and personal involvement of the CEO and executives, line managers, alumni, coaches and mentors.

From a business perspective, it is critical that CEO and executive time and involvement is afforded to the MBA, or any learning initiative for that matter. This view is supported by this research which revealed that the greater the CEO and executive involvement in a programme, the greater the impact on students and ultimately, on the organisations themselves. This recommendation follows the views of Siebert et al. (2001) and Kraimer et al. (2011) who suggested that executive sponsorship improves the likelihood of students returning on their investment for both the company and themselves.

This research suggested that alumni were an under-utilised resource and organisations and business schools alike should appeal to alumni to guide current students through the MBA programme. This must result from a deliberate plan to harvest the knowledge and experience of alumni, as this kind of guidance would have a beneficial impact on the learning and experience of current MBA students. This recommendation supports the views of Finweek and MBAconnect.net (2012) who also suggested and recommended that alumni be better leveraged.

Coaches and mentors are seen as critical components of an employee's developmental journey. They help guide, challenge and grow students and for that reason, both organisations and business schools should strive to pair students with suitable coaches and mentors during the MBA experience. Again, while this has been done in small pockets, a lot more can be done in this regard and again, there needs to

be a more deliberate plan. This follows the views of Cottrell (2009) who suggested that mentoring was a process where an older and wiser individual guides a more junior person by imparting wisdom, experience and advice. It also supports the views of Edwards (2003) who suggested that coaching helps people grow.

These are just some of the more important resources as identified by this research which are necessary for a learning intervention like the MBA to have the utmost impact. While exploring all the resources required and their relative importance is beyond the scope of this research, those that have been highlighted by this research were identified as the most critical.

### 6.7.1.4 Practical initiatives

Every learning programme, including the MBA, should have associated practical initiatives. The over-riding principle in this regard is that all that is learned in a graduate programme should be applied back at work and the work environment should facilitate this. This step supports the views of Donovan and Stewart-Smith (2010) and Mintzberg and Gosling (2002) who suggested that for a programme to be impactful, students need to be applying what learned in class back to work and the work environment needed to be conducive for students.

This requires all parties involved in the relationship to collaborate in implementing practical initiatives. There should be sufficient consensus as to the actual manner in which the application of skills is taken back to the workplace, be it via 'action learning' projects or business-related assignments or any other task or method deemed useful. The important requirement is that students apply what they have learned back at class to make their learning relevant and real. Businesses will have the opportunity to facilitate the growth of students and the development of practical solutions to key strategic issues facing the company.  Business schools will be encouraged to remain relevant as they continually adapt their curriculum in view of the strategic issues and potential solutions to contemporary issues. This recommendation follows the views of Lysø et al. (2011) and Schilling and Klamma (2010) who both called for long term collaborative relationships.

These practical interventions also serve to bring business schools, students and organisations closer together by tackling real-life problems and creating win-win situations in this regard. This finding resonates with the research of Konkola et al.

(2007) who suggested that companies had a lot more to gain from these sorts of relationships, because while all parties would benefit from the union of theoretical and practical knowledge, the company would especially benefit from the generation of new ideas as this could potentially result in competitive advantages to the company.

### 6.7.1.5 Reflection

As suggested by Gosling & Mintzberg (2006), reflection is seen as a critical component for students to link school and work. They suggested that managers needed to take sufficient time to think about what they have learned and how it can be applied to their work. This research too suggests that all three parties, business schools, organisations and students, are too busy with their day-to-day activities to give the MBA sufficient time, attention and reflection for it to be useful to anyone.

This key component of the relationship process—reflection—will allow all three parties to sit back, absorb and more fully understand the implications of the preceding steps. By creating space and time to think about the purpose of the MBA, the contract, the availability and access to resources, and the practical interventions, the parties can deliberate about steps to improve the process and strengthen the relationship. Given that the collaborative relationship is evolving and iterative, reflection is *key* to moving the relationship forward and upward.

Reflection resonates as constant underlying theme throughout the literature review. This recommendation follows the views of various protagonists including Marquardt and Waddill (2004), Bensley et al. (2010) and Vazquez and Ruas (2012) who all view reflection as vitally important to the learning and collaboration processes. They suggest that reflection is an essential element to making learnings real and applicable.

### 6.7.1.6 Feedback

To close the loop, feedback is arguably one of the most important steps in ensuring that the collaborative relationship is sustained. Reflection, if given sufficient time and attention, will result in the collaborating entities realising what is working well with the relationship and the learning process as well and that which could potentially be improved. Feedback will ensure that all parties are aware of what the issues are and what correction actions need to be implemented to resolve the issues.

Feedback should be open and transparent and should be encouraged at any and all stages of the model. Furthermore, the frequency of feedback should be increased to ensure that all parties understand if their actions are conducive to achieving the shared goal or not. Ideally, feedback should either reinforce current behaviour or result in a change of behaviour or processes. Feedback contributes to an evolving relationship and over time is critical to sustaining such a relationship. This very aligns with the views of Price et al. who suggested that feedback was essential for informing corrective actions where a process or relationship was lacking.

## 6.7.2  The collaborative psychological states

This research identified five critical elements which related to the psyche of collaborating parties. These psychological states are effectively the glue that holds the collaborative relationship intact.  Without this glue, the relationship or any attempted intervention, will invariably fail. These elements reside within the hearts and minds of individual and groups of individuals, and are intangible by nature. The absence of any of these elements will limit the process and result in a total process breakdown. This explains why, with regard to the MBA, many initiatives which attempt to bridge the gap between school and work, like contracting and enticing alumni to get involved in the MBA, have failed to yield the substantial results despite there being a process established to direct such interventions and relationships.

### 6.7.2.1 Willingness

All parties entering into a collaborative relationship should be willing participants. Choosing to be part of a relationship is critical in ensuring its sustainability. Over the short term, people can be coerced into a collaborative relationship; however, for there to be a true collaborative relationship, one that extends beyond immediate satisfaction, there must be a willingness to enter and remain in such a relationship. This is why it is critical for each party to extract from the relationship the value or benefit they are seeking, as this will incentivise them to enter into and maintain such a relationship. A relationship with win-win scenarios leads to increased willingness to work together to see shared goals accomplished. This resonates with self determination theory and two of the four dimensions of extrinsic motivation as identified by Roca and Gagne (2008) who suggested that there will be harmony with oneself if a conscious decision is made

to undertake an activity and that reasons for carrying out an activity may be external, as seeking to achieve an external reward.

### 6.7.2.2 Urgency

A sense of urgency is vital to ensure that benefits are realised within reasonable time fames as pre-determined by the collaborating parties. Often, a lack of urgency, or apathy, results in initiatives being prolonged yielding few or no results in the short or even medium term. Without results, people generally lose interest in the programme and again, this invariably leads to a breakdown of even the best intentioned processes. Urgency will ensure that sufficient importance is given to the collaborative initiatives and will yield results within a reasonable and encouraging time frame. This is a common theme throughout many of the successful in-house programmes and is *critical* for action.

### 6.7.2.3 Commitment

Commitment is essential for ensuring that the collaborative relationship is maintained and sustained. As parties enter into a collaborative initiative, they *must* commit to seeing it through to its implementation or completion. Commitment binds the entire process together and should ideally be established when parties are contracting.

Likewise, enlisting the commitment of alumni at the inception of the MBA, convincing them that their journey continues long after their qualification, convincing them of their responsibility to MBA students coming after them is important in ensuring that the MBA is a sustainable programme. Committed parties ensure that what needs to get done is done. Collaborating entities should acknowledge their commitment to the programme as well as their commitment to each other. This element concurs with the views of Macey and Schneider (2008) who included commitment in their definition of engagement.

### 6.7.2.4 Shared accountability

All parties—MBA students, organisations and business schools—should accept joint accountability with regard to the MBA as a learning intervention. Only by accepting that the limited impact of the MBA is a direct result of each of them, can parties move

forward firstly to direct themselves and also to direct their collaborating partners. They must accept that their fates are tied together and that if they succeed, they all succeed; however, if they fail, they all fail. This very much supports the views of Bedwell et al. (2012) who suggested that collaboration is reciprocal and that interdependence and sufficient contributions toward common goals are critical to achieving collaboration.

During interviews, respondents were quick to blame other parties and point out others' shortcomings, while only a few respondents accepted their own role in combating the challenges facing the MBA. For true collaboration to occur, each party should look inwardly and accept their responsibility for making the MBA an increasing success. Each party should take steps to direct and correct its own actions to ensure that the programme has the desired impact. Furthermore, collaborating parties should respectfully and constructively hold the other parties accountable for their actions, generating innovative ideas and solutions rather than capitalising on weaknesses and errors as a disciplinary tool. Acknowledging shared accountability should bring collaborating parties closer together.

### 6.7.2.5 Energy

Finally, for a collaborative relationship to exist, the energy of all parties should be maintained at a level which ignites passion and progress. Numerous references are made in engagement theory which suggests that high energy levels are associated with greater engagement (Bakker et al., 2008; Leiter & Maslach, 2008; Macey & Schneider, 2008).

As demonstrated by this research, initially energy levels are high but far too often such levels quickly dwindle into nothingness. It is critical that collaborating parties assess their own energy levels as well as their partners' energy levels and support each other in maintaining a suitable energy level. While it is beyond the scope of this study to determine exactly *how* energy levels should be maintained, quickly identifying dips and drops in energy levels should result in joint interventions which seek to uplift the group. Energy is the electricity which fuels the entire collaborative process.

### 6.7.3   Conclusion

In responding to the question regarding the elements required to maintain a collaborative relationship in relation to the MBA, several interesting points were raised.

The first was a call for a business school-to-business relationship. This is essentially a mutually beneficial partnership between business schools and organisations. Such a relationship would be evolving, and the promising point was that both entities displayed a willingness to enter into a partnership.

The second relationship was for a business school-to-business school relationship. There was a call for business schools to share ideas and resources in the MBA to make the programme more impactful to business. It also highlighted that there was no need for competition given that at present, demand for an MBA qualification exceeds supply.

The utilisation of alumni was seen by both business schools and business as a relatively untapped area of opportunity. Getting alumni on board, though, requires engagement right from the inception of the MBA and onward.

Finally, feedback was seen as an important and critical component to improving the impact of the MBA. Business, in particular, called for more frequent and transparent feedback.

During the course of the interviews and the analysis of the data, what emerged was the Collaborative Impact Model. The model was constructed through a careful understanding of the elements which made in-house initiatives so successful and applying a number of the recommendations made by business schools and businesses regarding the MBA. This model suggests the psychological states and relationship processes that are required for a relationship to be collaborative and impactful.

# CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

### 7.1.1 Summary of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore different ways in which collaboration between business schools and organisations could achieve maximum impact from an MBA programme for all invested in the MBA programme—business schools, students, and organisations. Collaboration to achieve the maximum output from an MBA programme was generally defined as organisations and business schools working together to ensure that all parties, including students, maximise their respective benefits from investing in an MBA. The study followed a two-pronged approach: 1) first by enlisting the views of businesses toward the MBA, towards collaboration concerning the MBA and how they might enter into a collaborative relationship with business schools, and then 2) secondly, how such a relationship could be maintained. These views were then confirmed by interviewing business schools for that same information. For the most part, both parties agreed on many of the questions that were presented, revealing a common view in terms of the MBA and how collaboration with each other *can* improve its impact.

The study initially confirmed the importance of an MBA to the business environment. It was important to establish if the MBA programme was still relevant to business and if so, what advantages it delivered.

Respondents unanimously agreed that the MBA provided students with broad exposure, the likes of which would be very difficult to obtain by any other avenues. Exposure to different ways of thinking, to different cultures and contexts and to different markets means that MBA students are in a position to make highly intelligent and informed business decisions. This kind of broad global exposure further helps people who are specialists transition into more broadly managerial and leadership roles.

Another success of the MBA was that it equipped students with the skills to manage complexities. The course is deliberately designed to challenge students, to displace them out of their comfort zones by imposing tight deadlines and voluminous work. This component instilled resilience in students and taught them successful coping mechanisms so that they might deal realistically and effectively with the challenges and demands of education and business and family.

Mature management requires critical thinking skills, the ability to assimilate copious amounts of information and discern quality information for making intelligent informed decisions based thereon. The MBA, according to respondents, undoubtedly instils in students essential critical thinking skills so that business reaps the benefits. Business schools felt that the MBA was important in creating a leadership pipeline for the country. Schools attempted to go beyond just teaching *about* leadership by developing students' practical leadership skills as well. Business, likewise, regarded this as a key success of the MBA.

The MBA is widely considered a general management degree and this was regarded as yet another success of the MBA programme: the MBA provided students with a 'toolkit' with which to become general managers within an organisation by exposing students to various essential aspects of business. These fundamentals helped students transition into more senior management roles in business.

Knowledge transfer is an essential component of any learning intervention. This is precisely what an MBA gives a student: an increase in business knowledge resulting in more confidence, more self-awareness, more astute business sense, more informed decision-making.

And finally, the MBA teaches students how to work in teams, as assignments require that students engage with colleagues, teaching them how to manage themselves, their time, and to navigate among the personalities of others. Indeed, the MBA has several benefits for both the student and the organisation as improved decision-making leads to expansion and profitability for business.

The next step in this research was to explore the challenges faced by the MBA and what this meant for the reputation and existence of MBA programmes. While the results were not unexpected, they did reveal that many of the issues facing the MBA resulted from a lack of collaboration between business schools and organisations. It was not inconceivable that many of the challenges could be resolved if business schools and organisations worked together to resolve them. What was clear is that many of the interventions implemented by one or the other party were unsuccessful when initially implemented without support and collaboration.

The most critical challenges facing the MBA included business feeling that the MBA was too academic and therefore not practical enough. Business schools, on the other hand, suggested that the MBA was very practical as it gave students real-life case

studies and assignments, many of which could be related back to their own organisation. Clearly what was being done at school was not being taken back to work. Again, a lack of collaboration seemed to be the crux of the matter. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that there was a serious gap between business schools and organisations, both in terms of communication and application.

Another challenge facing the MBA is that the degree is rarely a hard and fast pre-requisite for employment. This leads to the question: how can a degree which offers a student and an organisation, both directly and indirectly, so many benefits be seen merely as a value-add qualification rather than an essential qualification? This suggests a lack of understanding around the programme and what it is truly capable of delivering to business. Again, organisations and business schools were not on the same page as business did not see the benefits of the MBA accruing to them. This issue was further compounded by the numerous business schools offering an MBA programme. The number graduates on the market, coupled with the increasingly deteriorating quality of some programmes, resulted in businesses questioning the creditability of the degree, another generalisation which could be breached if accredited and reputable business schools partnered with business in delivering the right standard of education to students.

Given the past success of MBA graduates, both financially and personally, students often inherit inflated expectations pertaining to an MBA qualification. Both business schools and businesses agree that students' demands are often unreasonable as they are often demands prior to actual delivery of results for a business. These expectations of MBA students should be addressed upfront upon signing up for an MBA and should be reinforced throughout the MBA process. Both business and business schools have a role to play in communicating this message; however, currently, that message is not delivered consistently enough.

The research revealed that students are often left feeling a bit isolated during their MBA studies. This resulted in a growing gap between student and organisation which could eventually lead to the premature termination of the relationship. To bridge this gap, business schools and organisations should work together adequately to ensure that the transition from school to work is seamless and that the invisible walls erected between the two are demolished. By collaborating, the two parties can ensure that students practically apply what they learned at school to work as well as contribute to the educational environment at school by discussing what they experienced at work.

Ultimately, both organisations and business schools would like to see great deal more application of what was learned from school to work and vice versa. Business sees this practical element of the programme as critically important, not only for the direct benefits to them of having successfully solved their strategic issues, but also in terms of growing the student. Both business schools and organisations called for a 'partnership' entailing the sharing of knowledge and resources.

Commitment and engagement were critical to the implementation of any successful practical intervention. It is these practical interventions on in-house programmes where businesses collaborated with business schools, which gave business the perception that these programmes were so successful. Even more so, if the MBA programme can also result in practical implementation of skills learned, then it too will be more highly regarded as valuable and impactful to business. The key to this is, however, the partnering of business and business schools in these interventions. Done in isolation, the likelihood of success and sustainability diminishes, as the various unsuccessful interventions mentioned by the respondents illustrate.

In-house programmes revealed that the more the CEO and other top executives were involved in the programme, the greater the impact of such programme on the organisation. The CEO and executives discussed the direction of the company and the strategic challenges which the company faced. Students were then required to generate possible ideas for resolving these issues. The business school then facilitates and undergirds students in the generation of these ideas. Organisations benefit from new ideas, even when students merely confirm their own current thinking. Contrarily, though, executive and line management involvement was non-existent in the MBA. In order for the MBA to be truly impactful, the executives of a company must engage with MBA students and alumni and convey their own commitment to the students and the programme, as this sends a message to the rest of the organisations that the company cares about the growth and development of its talented employees.

Often ignored, coaching and mentorship was also regarded as a key element of successful in-house programmes. Coaches and mentors guide students, opening doors for students and encouraging their growth. It should be perhaps compulsory for students who attend an MBA to retain a coach or a mentor, not only to facilitate their personal and educational growth, but to help them integrate their studies with their work.

The results of the research prompted the researcher to enquire, despite all of its successes, why is the MBA still facing so many challenges? What is it that would be required, and what existed in in-house programmes, for businesses and business schools to collaborate for increased impact of the MBA? What were the underlying elements, perhaps not spoken of openly but only alluded to, that were necessary for organisations and business schools to willingly and excitedly enter into a mutually beneficial relationship and then sustain such a relationship?

All of these questions and the results of this study lead to the development of the Collaborative Impact Model. The model was constructed through a careful understanding of the elements which made in-house initiatives so successful and applying a number of the recommendations made by business schools and businesses regarding the MBA. This model suggests the psychological states and relationship processes that are required for a relationship to be collaborative and impactful.

In the Collaborative Impact Model, the inner core communicates the relationship process while the outer shell communicates the psychological states that are required for an initiative to be successfully impactful. In order for collaboration to occur, it is essential for the elements of both layers to be functioning fully. Both layers are mutually dependent on each other entering into collaboration and for the sustaining of such collaboration. The relationship process level will simply not be sustainable if the elements of the psychological layer—like willingness to engage, urgency, commitment, energy and shared accountability—are lacking. Likewise, despite parties attempting to collaborate, if key elements in the relationship process—like feedback and resources—are absent, despite having the best intentions and the energy and commitment to collaborate, collaborative initiatives will invariably fail. This model, while developed for the MBA, can be applied to any collaborative learning initiative to have the desired impact on the relevant parties.

### 7.1.2 Recommendations for stakeholders

Businesses should play a more active role in the lives of students during the course of their MBA studies. Their role is vital to ensuring that students are adequately supported through the process, committing support and time and attention, much more than just financial resources. Executive and line management involvement in providing direction and facilitating the growth of students would likely have a positive impact on the

learning of students as well as the growth of the business. Businesses should ideally be more in alignment with business schools in regard to the purpose and the values and the advantages stemming from the MBA, and foster relational closeness, similar to that which has been demonstrated for in-house programmes.

Business schools should play a more active role in engaging business in the MBA. By partnering with business they can educate business in terms of the purpose of the MBA and facilitate the application of skills back into the workplace. Additionally, business schools can play a critical role in managing the expectations of students by reviewing communications with students pertaining to the benefits of its programme.

There is also a large predominantly untapped resource in the form of alumni. Business schools should investigate different avenues for extracting value from alumni, maintaining the relationship well beyond graduation. Furthermore, business schools should partner with other business schools to maintain high educational standards and a positive reputation of the MBA. Their vision for the MBA should be a great deal more unified in terms of skills development of the country rather than an isolated 'silo' view as to how schools can be better or more competitive than other schools.

### 7.1.3  Implications for future studies

The results of this study raise several questions which could be considered for future research. The first is to understand the real reasons behind business ascribing such little value to an MBA, with many respondents remarking that an MBA was a value-add rather than a pre-requisite for employment, despite agreeing on the many successes and undeniable benefits of the MBA.

Secondly, additional research could potentially investigate resources, beyond financial, that are essential for businesses to strengthen the impact of the learning programme, in this case the MBA.

A third potential topic for study concerns ways to maintain energy levels of those engaged in a collaborative relationship.

Yet another research topic could investigate how to maintain enthusiasm and energy levels of MBA alumni in the years beyond their qualification. All of these topics would build on the current findings of this research.

### 7.1.4   Concluding views

This research has led to the development of the Collaborative Impact Model, which if applied, will facilitate the sustenance of a collaborative relationship between business schools and organisations. If the model is applied correctly and all its elements are in sync, the impact of any learning programme, particularly the MBA, will be significantly improved.

Only through collaboration can the challenges facing the MBA be diminished and the gaps between business schools and businesses be bridged, to the benefit of all MBA stakeholders.

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# APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

I am Ravindran Naicker. Gibs MBA research.

Purpose of study – The purpose of this study will be to explore the different ways in which collaborative learning can achieve the maximum output from an MBA programme for business schools, students, and organisations involved with an MBA programme.

Explain that the interview will be anonymous if necessary and explain how the data from the interview will be utilised in the research and obtain consent to proceed with the interview and data usage.

Explain data collection and analysis process.

Explain the number and type of respondents interviewed.

Demographic Information

Name.

Race.

Career history.

Academic qualification.

Open ended questions

What is your experience of an MBA?

How are students supported through an MBA?

What are your expectations in terms of deliverables from students, business schools and business?

What are the current short comings of the MBA?

What are views in terms of the benefits of an MBA?

How can the MBA be improved to have a positive impact of the MBA?

What are the ways in which business schools, students and business collaborate in an MBA?

Which ways do you feel are most effective and why?

How do business schools interact and support business in achieving their objectives?

What feedback loop is there once students have graduated?

How can key stakeholders better collaborate to improve the impact of an MBA?

Conclusion

Thank respondent participating in the research.

E-mail follow-up to thank respondent.

Afford respondent the opportunity to share relevant information post.

Scribe post interview notes

Note respondents body language i.e. folded arms, eye contact, posture etc.

Respondents emotional state (calm, positive, nervous etc.)

General impression.

Interview guide and questionnaire adapted from Clark (2006b)

1   **APPENDIX B: TRANSCRIPTS OF COMPANY 1 (C1)**

2   **Speaker Key**

3

4   RN      Ravindran Naicker

5   C1      Company 1

6

7   RN      So I'm Ravi Naicker, right, and I'm a second year student at Gibs, and my
8   thesis is on how collaborative learning between business schools, students, and
9   organisations can improve the impact of the MBA. And I think where that comes from is
10  that very often MBAs are painted as this bad picture because a lot of people in
11  business felt that it doesn't really add value and you have students who they funded
12  leave often within the first or second year of having done their studies. And then there's
13  often… my research tells me there are instances where the business school is out of
14  touch with what business really wants. And so I'm here to try and get a feel for how can
15  we make this relationship better between the three parties so that we get benefits for all
16  the three parties. So before we kick off, the conversation will be kept confidential. It's
17  voluntary, so you can withdraw at any time, and this is a consent form that I need you
18  to complete to say that you're comfortable with that.

19

20  C1      Okay, so you want me to… 23$^{rd}$? 24$^{th}$?

21

22  RN      I think it's the 23$^{rd}$.

23

24  C1      Twenty-third of the eighth.

25

26  RN      Okay, great. So in your career history, how long have you been in business?

| 27 | C1 | Gosh, I've just… I've been with… I've been since 1980, so that would be… |
| 28 | | that's working at a senior level, at - thanks, Ravi - at executive level for ten years. |

29

| 30 | RN | Okay, so ten years at exec level, right. And your qualifications? |

31

| 32 | C1 | MBA; HDip Ad Ed… Higher Diploma for Educators of Adults. |

33

| 34 | RN | How do you spell that? |

35

| 36 | C1 | HDip Ad Ed. |

37

| 38 | RN | A D… |

39

| 40 | C1 | E D. |

41

| 42 | RN | E D. Okay, great. |

43

| 44 | C1 | That's adult educators. |

45

| 46 | RN | Okay, great. |

47

| 48 | C1 | And… and BA… Bachelor of Arts. |

49

50    RN    BA. Excellent. Okay, great. So I just want to unpack how we can make this
51    relationship better, right, and from your perspective what do you think the success is of
52    the MBA?

53

54    C1    Of any MBA programme?

55

56    RN    Yes, any MBA programme.

57

58    C1    Okay. I think that the… you know the subject matter does… while there is
59    some… while there is some subject matter which is almost a traditional MBA, not all
60    MBAs are alike. So in other words if you… there used to be a point in time that if you
61    did an MBA at Wits or at UCT, the kind of topics that you would cover would be pretty
62    standard, and you would typically, you know, not have electives, or possibly the
63    opportunity to choose an elective was very limited. In the… in about 2000 UCT
64    introduced what they call the Executive MBA which focused on a completely different
65    approach, and so that's why I'm saying that MBAs… you know one MBA is not
66    necessarily the same as another, and if you look externally outside of the country, and
67    particularly in America, I mean you can do an MBA with your major focus in marketing
68    for argument's sake, or something else. So perhaps your question is a little broad
69    because it would really depend on what kind of MBA you 're talking about. I don't think
70    it's necessarily… it's not the same thing in every instance. But let me just, sort of, like,
71    talk generally.

72

73    I think that the value of an MBA is very much related to individuals being exposed and
74    prepared for the challenges that one finds particularly in a business and commerce
75    environment at the level… at senior and executive level generally. And I think that it
76    probably provides individuals who have specialist backgrounds, so let's assume that
77    you have an undergraduate degree in engineering, or any other field for that matter, it
78    actually provides individuals with the broader business scope across areas. So in other
79    words there would be a focus on IT; there would be a focus on strategic HR. Normally
80    all of those components fall somewhere in the MBA and are focused on to a greater or

81    lesser degree. And I think that the value there obviously is that in what I was saying
82    earlier, and that is that it is preparation for actually for leadership in a more general role
83    in organisations. So in other words if you're going to head up a business, or be the
84    COO, CEO, whatever, you have to have an understanding of all the elements that are
85    important in actually making the business successful or running it, or whatever the case
86    might be.

87

88    RN     What else would you say in a typical MBA? So let's look at… let's try and
89    narrow it down, right. So if you add… if you're looking at, say, Wits, UCT, so the Gibs
90    Executive MBA, right, what would you see the benefits of that? Did you have an
91    Executive MBA?

92

93    C1     Yes.

94

95    RN     So what would you see as success having done the MBA yourself?

96

97    C1     Okay, so I can only speak for myself.

98

99    RN     Yes.

100

101   C1     I can't comment on any of the other programmes or, you know, sort of what I
102   think the success or lack thereof of it is. I think that in my particular instance the
103   Executive MBA at UCT was a major contributor in assisting me to… to be able to
104   manage complexity and volumes of apparently unrelated information in a… more
105   effectively. And I think that that was primarily because the underlying thread which
106   was… or the foundation for that particular MBA, was systems thinking and complexity.
107   So you know every topic that a traditional MBA would normally sort of include, or
108   subject that would be included in a normal MBA, that the foundation was… it was
109   underlain by systems theory and thinking methods etc. So I think there are two

110    components. There was obviously the knowledge component, particularly in the areas
111    that I was not… you know, had not had exposure in previously - let's say IT - I've not
112    had direct exposure or work experience. It's not my background. So there was the
113    knowledge component which was very useful, although clearly I mean it looks at it at
114    quite a high level, and you certainly don't come out as an IT expert or a specialist at all,
115    but it gives you adequate knowledge to be able to think and make decisions in the
116    organisation, taking into consideration the other areas of the business.

117

118    RN     Great.

119

120    C1     And I think that the other thing that, you know as I said I mentioned, so there's
121    the knowledge component, and then there is the actual… the discipline: the discipline
122    of how do you… how do you… how do you take unrelated volumes of information,
123    facts, whatever it is, and kind of synthesize that in a meaningful and structured way for
124    the purposes of making decisions.

125

126    RN     Okay. Is there anything else that you see as being a success for an MBA?

127

128    C1     Not that I can think of off-hand.

129

130    RN     Okay. And then surely such a programme does have shortcomings, right. So in
131    your experience what would you say is among the shortcomings or the failings of an
132    MBA?

133

134    C1     Well, again it's quite tricky, because your question is quite broad. You know if I
135    had done an MBA at Gibs, don't know whether the shortcomings would have been the
136    same as if they had been at Wits. And I'm really not… you know I haven't spent a lot of
137    time recently updating myself on the content and value of different MBAs that are
138    available at this point in time, so really difficult for me to comment on that.

139    RN      Okay. Do you employ MBAs at C1?

140

141    C1      Not specifically; no. The majority of people that we employ at C1 are people
142    who are… 80% of our staff are operational, and we have a very small number of
143    managers relative to that. So… and generally speaking opportunities turnover is very
144    limited. So yes, there are people with MBAs in the management executive, but it is not
145    a rule. And it's not necessarily a requirement, and we just don't have the vacancies or
146    the opportunities.

147

148    RN      Okay. So then let's talk about in general, right, and perhaps we don't need to
149    keep it specific to an MBA. So if you understand any context, even on your leadership
150    programmes, you've got the business school that provides you with a service, i.e. the
151    studies and the qualifications and whatnot. You've got business that has certain needs,
152    i.e. we've got a shortage of skills; or we've got a shortage of leadership ability, and that
153    sort of stuff. And then you've got the student themselves who actually needs to grow
154    and whatnot. How would you say that you as C1 have achieved benefits for all three
155    organisations?

156

157    C1      We've done leadership programmes with Gibs with our existing management,
158    and I think that one of the largest… and in a sense I mean look, there were no exams
159    and there wasn't the kind of structure that you would normally find in an academic
160    environment, or as much as rigor, but simply the concept, the exposure, the kind of
161    topics that were covered, etc, I think the huge value from the organisation's point of
162    view was probably twofold: one being the degree to which the people acquired new
163    knowledge, bearing in mind that most of these people that work, including managers,
164    that work in this organisation are very operational, so in other words they come out of
165    the operation. Aviation is not… you know it's not really like a bank or… it is an industry
166    or a… where you… literally people would have come out of an engineering function
167    where they were aircraft mechanics or engineers, or alternatively they were graduates
168    and become management of the engineering function. Or alternatively they are pilots –
169    a large component of pilots – who don't go through any MBA programmes, but they
170    spend a lot of time studying and achieving the kind of, like, licensing that they need in

171   order to operate in the commercial environment. And of course they have their - what
172   can we say - their recurrency check, so they literally are going through recurrency
173   checks every six months. So it's very rigorous from that perspective, but it's not a high
174   volume academic environment. So in other words we don't have huge numbers of
175   graduates here. The FD, for argument sake, obviously he has a CA. The CEO was an
176   ex CA, etc. But it's not necessarily a high number of graduates in this particular
177   industry. But coming back to your question about what the value is. So I think that firstly
178   the value was that people acquired knowledge and had the opportunity to think more
179   broadly outside of everything that they know, and I think that that was hugely helpful.
180   And then the third thing I think was the degree of learning and collaboration which in
181   itself was a huge benefit for the organisation.

182

183   RN    Talk to me about that. So when you say learning and collaboration, what was
184   that about?

185

186   C1    It was to do with the way that people came from various different parts of the
187   organisation, had a common goal, and through the study process as well as all the
188   action-learning projects etc that they were involved in, achieved superior relationships
189   where possibly the relationships had not been that great before. So it facilitated better
190   functioning between functional areas based on the fact that people had a common
191   understanding of what was required now in terms of their output. And I think secondly
192   that through the relationships that were formed, there is far better functionality in terms
193   of cooperation in the organisation.

194

195   RN    So in terms of… so let's go back to the first point, right, in terms of the common
196   understanding: where did that come from, or how was that…?

197

198   C1    Well, this is the course approach.

199

200   RN    So the course programme gave them the common…

201    C1    The content, yes.

202

203    RN    The content gave them a common interest to what was needed by business,
204    right?

205

206    C1    Correct, yes. And we were very instrumental in guiding Gibs on the content;
207    what we wanted in it: strong leadership focus; leadership competencies.

208

209    RN    Okay. So in this process you understood what business wanted, and then you
210    basically met with Gibs and guided them in terms of this is what we'd like to achieve.
211    Then…

212

213    C1    It was obviously collaboration. I mean they also proposed…

214

215    RN    So it was the other way round as well. So they proposed… What did they
216    propose?

217

218    C1    Well, clearly I mean they've got a course… you know, a standard course
219    programme that they use in leadership development initiatives typically, so when they
220    work with organisations, C1's not the only organisation that they've worked with. So I
221    mean they have a corporate section, so they would then tailor the management
222    development programme, or whichever of the programmes the corporate has decided
223    that they would like to implement, and then there is a tailoring of the content based on
224    input from Gibs – what is standard; what is recommended – and also what the
225    organisation wants to achieve.

226

227    RN    Great. So you've got that situation there, right? And the guys go on the course;
228    they develop the… obviously they understand it based on the content. And then the

229    relationships; tell me about the relationships. And I'm interested in knowing the

230    relationships or what types of relationships were they also. So was it student and

231    student or colleagues? Was there a relationship with the business school? How did that

232    relationship work? Or which relationships are you referring to here?

233

234    C1     I'm looking very much from our perspective as an organisation. I can't comment

235    on the individual relationships that the students may or may not have formed or forged

236    with Gibs. What I do know is that there were strong relationships that were formed

237    between the people on the programme. So in other words our managers who attended

238    this programme, there were strong relationships that were formed between people in

239    syndicate groups, between people in the same programme, which have assisted us in

240    terms of getting things done in the organisation. Where previously possibly people

241    possibly didn't know each other, I mean for argument's sake you've got a manager in

242    Harare you've got a manager in Cape Town; you've got people that come from all over

243    the organisation - you've got people in sales – now suddenly these people were in a

244    common learning situation, or a common situation where they had a common set of

245    objectives, personal objectives as well, and where they collaborated to achieve that. So

246    in other words what I'm saying is that let's assume that you and I don't know each

247    other, but we work for the same organisation; you might have worked here for a long

248    time and I might have worked here for even longer. Until the point in time where we

249    actually are brought together by some sort of intervention – in this case a learning

250    intervention – where we are… there is a common purpose and we need to achieve it

251    together, as well as individually, and there is strong guidance right from the CEO in

252    terms of the direction that the group is taking; what is the end outcome? There is,

253    inevitably, after the programme a much better relationship between individuals. So,

254    Ravi… okay I've got a problem with this; let me call Ravi up; whereas before I might not

255    have done that.

256

257    RN    Yes, that's great.

258

259    C1    So call it networking; call it whatever you want, I don't know what the right word

260    really would be in this particular instance, but I mean effectively people's resources are

261  expanded because they can make use of other people for information, assistance,
262  direction, guidance, help, whatever, and that ultimately is… you know, creates better
263  business efficiency because people are actually working together a whole lot better.

264

265  RN    That's great. And through this process how did… Actually before I go there, the
266  action learning programmes that you had; what did that look like? How did that work?
267  So you said something about the guys worked in syndicates?

268

269  C1    Yes.

270

271  RN    And obviously they had a common purpose. Would you tell them what the
272  project was, or…?

273

274  C1    We had two approaches. The first group, the Exco got together and put
275  together some burning topics or burning issues for the company. We found after the
276  first group that the… that we didn't believe that that worked so well, because I think that
277  there was… or perhaps the question or the topic wasn't adequately fleshed out. So in
278  some instances despite the fact that there was a supervisor, possibly even the
279  supervisor didn't really understand what the original intent of the burning was, so that
280  didn't work so well. So we turned it on its head and said… invited them to come
281  forward with topics which reflected the burning issues for the organisation. And that
282  worked a little bit more effectively.

283

284  RN    So you invited the students to come forward?

285

286  C1    The students; correct.

287

288  RN    And just before we move on, the supervisor, was that an internal person?

289     C1      Yes. It would have been an Exco member.

290

291     RN      Exco member. Yes, so there was quite strong senior leadership involvement?

292

293     C1      Yes.

294

295     RN      Okay. So in the second one they came forward and they presented topics to
296     you?

297

298     C1      Yes, and we would then… we would then… we vetted those topics. We said
299     look, we don't think that that's… this one is not important; that one is important: try and
300     focus on this or try and focus on that. And look, I think it was a combination of we just
301     learnt how to do it better the second time round as well.

302

303     RN      Okay, that's great. So that... I assume that the second time was a lot more
304     successful, then?

305

306     C1      Yes. It was more successful.

307

308     RN      And some of your key learnings there from the first time to the second?

309

310     C1      Mine, or the organisation's?

311

312     RN      The organisation's, I mean, in general. Just some of the key learning. So what
313     this transition from… i.e., this is a list of things that you intend to investigate a person,

314 and the second time round where it seemed like more an iterative process where the
315 students came forward and I'd like to do these things, that these are strategic things.

316

317 C1    It was iterative from our perspective. So in other words let's take human
318 resources executive and my team that were working on this programme. Obviously you
319 put a programme together and this is how it's going to work. You've got a plan: this is
320 the methodology; this is how we make certain decisions; those are the things that we're
321 going to do. And obviously you have debriefs, or things don't go well, and in the
322 process of the debriefing or the analysis of what did and didn't go well, you make
323 decisions on that how to do it differently. So the next time you have the opportunity to
324 do it, you change it, and say okay, fine, let's try this; maybe this will work better. So for
325 us we had the benefit of actually running two consecutive groups of people. You know
326 it was roughly the… gosh, all told it was probably about 70 or 80 people through two
327 programmes which lasted 12 months each. They overlapped. So yes, hopefully one
328 does learn to do things better.

329

330 RN    And then how did the business school support you through this process?

331

332 C1    When you ask how the business school supported us, well, I mean they
333 provided the lecturers.

334

335 RN    So obviously they provided the course.

336

337 C1    The content.

338

339 RN    The course content, right.

340

341 C1    Yes.

342    RN    Now what sort of feedback did you get during the process, because I mean it
343    seemed like it was quite a long process.

344

345    C1    We had regular meetings with the business school, and regular interactions
346    with… We had an account manager that was EEEE, and her senior who was at one
347    stage IIII. But you know we had regular meetings with them at intervals actually to
348    assess, you know, where we were and what was working. Every time there was
349    module: what worked; what didn't work. It was just constant interaction.

350

351    RN    And so that was on the programme as a whole. Did you get any student specific
352    information like…?

353

354    C1    Yes, of course.

355

356    RN    Okay. So what did that entail?

357

358    C1    Well, it would be anything from informal feedback- you know, people sitting
359    round a table talking - complaints, and then of course on course evaluations. So every
360    time there is a programme, there is an evaluation that the students are asked to
361    complete.

362

363    RN    So it's the students' feedback as well?

364

365    C1    Yes.

366

367    RN    And so then in terms of the students, how did the university support the
368    students themselves, apart from providing them just a lecture and the course?

369   C1     Okay. Well, there was a coach that was assigned to assist the… particularly
370   with action learning with the projects, with the presentations, with the development of
371   the research, the… you know, so there was guidance from that perspective. The actual
372   presentation: how to deliver the presentation finally; and the actual… the document. I
373   would hope the kind of normal kind of support that you would expect from a university,
374   you know, where people are actually attending lectures full-time is slightly different in a
375   correspondence situation, but I mean I would expect nothing less than this.

376

377   RN     Sure.

378

379   C1     I don't think… I don't think it's anything unusual. I think that that's what has to
380   happen.

381

382   RN     Yes. I mean this works… I mean this clearly works for you, right, having the
383   coach and having the current set-up for leadership development. Now if you can take…
384   what do you think in terms of if we take some of the principles here, and apply them to
385   an MBA, do you think it can work? I mean in particular, what's absent in the MBA is
386   there is no coach. So there is no coach; there is no feedback.

387

388   C1     In the Gibs MBA?

389

390   RN     Yes. So it depends. In some of the courses there is, but I mean in general there
391   isn't this person helping you do that, and then there isn't this regular feedback loop to
392   the organisation who's funded an MBA, or where there's a student attending an MBA.
393   Do you think some of this feedback can help?

394

395   C1     Look, I think it would be incredibly helpful. When I was at UCT, there was
396   very… you were actually assigned a coach, a business coach, and that person
397   generally speaking was a person who was active in business. Not necessarily in your

398      company. You were assigned a coach that you actually had to... I think you had to see

399      them four times a year.

400

401      RN      Did that work for you?

402

403      C1      It was… it was… I would say it was helpful. It wasn't… it would not have been

404      adequate as a stand-alone, but then you also had to pick a coach in your organisation.

405      And when I say a coach it would be really somebody that you felt was a mentor

406      actually, effectively, more than a coach. So you had to have a mentor. There was an

407      external mentor, and an internal mentor. Okay? So that was the facility that we had in

408      UCT. And then, of course, your syndicate groups which provide support, which for me I

409      think was probably the most critical was the support and the… yes, the support, the

410      knowledge of the members of the syndicate group, who, remember, all come from very

411      nice diverse backgrounds. So I came from an airline. One guy was from a firm of

412      auditors. Another chap was from the real estate business. Another woman was with…

413      she was from an IT audit side with Deloitte, etc. So you know you got such a broad

414      group of people and that collaboration and kind of the access to assistance from that

415      particular group – and I'm talking about support, not solely in terms of kind of emotion

416      support, but it becomes that on occasion as well – but really in terms of okay, well, let's

417      talk about the problem, you know, or I've got… I'm really having this problem, you

418      know; what do you think? Well, have you tried this, etc, so that opportunity to exchange

419      ideas in the syndicate group, I think, was one of the most powerful support

420      mechanisms. And then I think having the coach, the two coaches kind of created a bit

421      of formality to it as well, because you know you're obliged to go and see these people

422      at certain points in time and gets a little bit of a sign-off from them, and so on, so that

423      also created some structure. And then I'm just thinking that there were also

424      programme… there were specific programme managers that were always consistently

425      there. So while, for argument sake, there were… you know you would be exposed to

426      various different visiting lecturers, there was somebody that was in charge of the

427      programme, and those two programme managers effectively were your contact… point

428      of contact with the university, or for that particular programme. So there was really a

429      circle of support actually, if I think about it.

430

431    RN    Sure. That's good.

432

433    C1    Yes.

434

435    RN    Can I ask you something about the coach, right, and the mentor? What would

436    you think of alumni being mentors for new students?

437

438    C1    Oh, yes. That was a concept that they used.

439

440    RN    Was it?

441

442    C1    Yes. So in other words the external business coach or mentor was an alumni

443    [sic] of the MBA programme at UCT.

444

445    RN    Great. So then finally is there anything that you can suggest that business

446    schools, organisations, students can do to improve the impact of the MBA, and of

447    learning in general? I mean I'm talking about the MBA specifically. But if there's

448    something that you're aware of that they can do better; what do you think?

449

450    C1    Again it's a very general question. I mean the thing is that each, you know,

451    institution will have different issues and some of those might be logistical, they might be

452    course content, it might be lecturers. You know I can't comment on that. But I do think

453    that involvement - involvement from both the business school with the students, and

454    that extends beyond, you know, arriving at lectures and doing the lectures, the lecturer

455    goes off in one direction and the students off in another - but the involvement of the

456    business school with the students in the form of these kinds of structures that I was

457    speaking about, that the people that are dedicated to the course programme, those are

458    the people that you go and talk to if you have issues with a lecturer, with any part of the

459 programme kind of holistically. They supervise the programme. They're there all the
460 time when you… It wouldn't work for part-time courses, but if it is a residential course it
461 does work: that person is there. If you've got issues you go and talk to them. You
462 phone them up when you're not there, etc. So creating that kind of circle of support,
463 inside and outside of the university, not necessarily employees of the university, so it
464 could in fact be people out of the organisation, it could be people that are previous
465 alumni, but I think that that is really what… where the success resides. Because in a
466 sense what happens is that the student isn't just left in a kind of a vacuum grappling
467 with, you know, obviously very often quite a sort of a tough situation, because I mean a
468 lot of them work as well. So you've got the practical pressures of trying to sort of, like,
469 run your life in a business environment as well as… it just… I think that the chances of
470 success are far greater.

471

472 Oh, another thing I want to mention there. They actually adopted a very holistic
473 approach at UCT, at the Graduate School of Business. Even the spouses of the
474 students were involved, not on a regular, regular basis, but you know sort of like twice
475 a year - it was a two-year part-time programme – but twice a year. They would actually
476 fly them… You know they would come down to Cape Town and they would actually
477 take them through the programme, so almost an orientation in order to enable those
478 people to support their other half.

479

480 RN    It's a really good point; a very, very good point.

481

482 C1    Because I think that that's another area. I mean if I just think of, you know,
483 some of the difficulties that one or two of my fellow students faced was pressure from
484 the family, particularly from the husband or the wife, because it is very time-consuming
485 and literally almost every single spare minute that you have outside of work is spent on
486 studying. So there's very little time over that period, for that two-year period, and you
487 have to have a very understanding and supportive other half, and if you don't… I mean
488 I know that there were one or two marriages that didn't last, or certainly got into deep
489 trouble. So yes.

490

491    RN    Great. So is there anything else you want to say, C1?

492

493    C1    No, not really. I don't know whether I've been able to, sort of, like, deal with
494    what it was that you were looking for.

495

496    RN    But I think that a lot of your comments weren't specifically around the MBA, a lot
497    of the principles that you spoke to can definitely inform how we actually do the MBA
498    better and create a bigger impact. Because these mini projects that you set up, and
499    these mini leadership courses have principles like the action learning, like the common
500    purpose, like the direction, if you can get that upfront and then get more interaction with
501    the business, I think that this could potentially help the MBA.

502

503    C1    Well, look. Our executives were very, very, very involved. Our CEO was… he
504    came to literally every session. So every time there was a new module, he could come
505    there. Even if it was five minutes just to say hi to everybody, how are things going, or
506    pop in for coffee, or something like that. And I think that if you speak to… if you speak
507    to JJJ and to BBB, one of the things that they will probably remark on is the degree to
508    which the CEOs and the entire executive were really involved and visible.

509

510    RN    Great point. So thank you so much for your time, C1. I really appreciate it.

511

512    C1    It's a pleasure. You know as I said, I'm sorry I cannot comment on the Gibs
513    MBA. I didn't… I didn't study at Gibs myself.

514

515    RN    No, that's fine. That's fine.

516

517    C1      I can comment very specifically on the UCT MBA, or the EMBA, which I really

518    thought was fantastic. But it had very similar principles to what I'm talking about here

519    that's been a success.

520

521    RN      That's great. I will be continuing [?] with some of the business schools as well,

522    so maybe I'll get some very good feedback from them as well.

523

524    C1      Yes.

525

526    RN      So thank you for your time.

527

528    C1      It's a great pleasure.

529    **APPENDIX C: TRANSCRIPTS OF COMPANY 2 (C2)**

530    **Speaker key**

531

532    RN      Ravindran Naicker

533    C2A    Respondent 1

534    C2B    Respondent 2

535

536    RN      Okay, great. So, my name is Ravindran Naicker, as you are aware, and my
537    research, so I am basically a second year student at Gordon Institute of Business
538    Science, finishing off my thesis, and my research is basically looking at how business
539    schools, students and organisations collaborate, or can collaborate to make the MBA a
540    better experience and to have more impact, and where this comes from is basically
541    because of lot of students leave after a year or two of having started their MBA, they
542    leave organisations. There's lots of rumour out there or there's corridor talk that, you
543    know, the MBA doesn't add any value, that it effectively, you know, because the
544    funding organisation never ever sees that benefit, to a large extent, and then they feel
545    that business schools aren't quite in touch with what business wants, and so I'm here to
546    try and understand from your perspective of business and obviously from C2B's
547    perspective as a student who went through the process, how we can make this a better
548    process, how we can make this, the MBA experience, better for all three parties to
549    collaborate.

550

551    C2A    I actually have no idea how I'm going to be helping you with that, because, you
552    know, we were just talking earlier, I mean, that is, that is a very difficult concept and
553    what C2B and I were discussing a little bit earlier was just the whole concept around
554    doing an MBA and the real reason for a person enrolling into an MBA, because in my,
555    in my opinion, the individual needs to understand what they want to do with their MBA;
556    just to go and do it to, you know, put something additional on your CV doesn't add any
557    value. Well, let me, let me qualify that statement; it doesn't add any value in our
558    particular environment, because I think you deal with a lot of highly qualified individuals
559    and, you know, if you've put in all the years of study for instance to get your CA, you

560    know, a lot of guys would then like to go and do their CFA once again, depending on

561    what they want to do with it; what is it, what is the next career goal or the next sort of

562    milestone step for them in terms of what they want to achieve? And, you know, C2B

563    and I were talking earlier about the MBA versus the, what was the other one?

564

565    C2B    The entrepreneurial.

566

567    C2A    The entrepreneurial

568

569    C2B    Oh, the entrepreneurship.

570

571    C2A    The entrepreneurship one, the MBL we were talking about as well, and I'm not

572    convinced that everybody going into it actually knows exactly what they're going to get,

573    because, you know, you need to know that so that you can know if it's going to meet

574    your needs as a student, and you were saying earlier about, you know, obviously

575    organisations who fund MBAs.

576

577    RN    Before we go on, we've got a consent statement that I need you guys to sign

578    which basically gives me permission to use the information that we get from the

579    interview. It's totally voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without any penalties

580    and it will be confidential, so your names won't be disclosed at all.

581

582    C2A    Sure.

583

584    RN    Okay, so that's for you and that's for you, C2B.

585

586    C2B    Cool.

587   C2A   Can I borrow your pen? Is this now... ?

588

589   RN   As a participant. You sign as a participant.

590

591   C2A   Okay.

592

593   RN   And then, just a quick one, your academic qualification, C2A?

594

595   C2A   CA.

596

597   RN   And C2B?

598

599   C2B   BCom.

600

601   RN   Okay, great, so. So, let's start, right, and we'll unpack what you've just said now,
602   because I think, I think you can add some value and maybe it's not specific to the MBA,
603   but other initiatives that you've done that we could use on the MBA programme.

604

605   C2A   Right, yes.

606

607   RN   So, I mean, just in general, what do you think are the successes of the MBA?
608   I'm sure you've worked with a couple of people who've done their MBAs or you've
609   employed a couple of... ?

610

611   C2A   Well, I think that's the thing for me, and, I mean, that's maybe that's your story?

612    C2B    Ja. You know, I think, for me, you know, Rav, when I was looking at this, I just

613    highlighted five key points in terms of what the successes of an MBA are and once

614    again, it's depending, and what I would say, look at the Gibs entrepreneurship one, all

615    right, are you wanting to get individuals that are entrepreneurially minded or would you

616    want individuals that have got the broad, you know, MBA? And specifically what I

617    identified is, in order for, and this is my opinion, in order for an MBA to be successful

618    within the South African context, maybe more of an entrepreneurship focus; from a

619    general perspective, I just think that, you know, an MBA gives an individual a broad

620    knowledge of business, all right, it gives knowledge of factors, external or internal, that

621    will and can affect how the business operates or the business world specifically; it will

622    enable the participant to develop their critical analysis thinking skills, and I think that is

623    very, that is very, very important, so that when you're looking at a picture, you're not

624    just looking at, you know, the number of strokes the painter used, but to delve in a little

625    bit deeper, all right, and give a broader overview, delving in deeper in terms of what

626    that, you know, so that critical thinking is very, very important; and then, teamwork. I

627    think one of the successes is teamwork where you have obviously assignments that

628    you have to do together as a team and yes, some people might have, you know,

629    different priorities, but you learn to work together and manage, you know, any issues

630    that you might have together as a team, and at times, just, there's a global perspective

631    that is brought into it, so not only, so it breaks down that silo thinking, so even South

632    Africa at a micro level, but we're part of a bigger global group. And I know that in the

633    time that I was there for the MBA it allowed us to be able to look, you know, outside our

634    borders, in terms of what is actually happening and how those models, you know, can

635    be used or can relate to South Africa. So, from a success perspective, those, that's

636    what I think, and as I said, if you're looking at the entrepreneurship one, it's just more,

637    the key skills that one needs to have in order to be able to run their own business.

638

639    RN    And yourself, C2A? Is there anything that you want to add to that?

640

641    C2A    I think just, you know, what I said earlier as well, I will always support someone

642    who comes to me and says to me that they want to enrol for an MBA if they know what

643    they want to do with it. I don't think it's just something that you can, as I say, do for the

644     sake of doing it. You really need to know what you're going to achieve with it so that

645     you are able to almost have a business case ready around what you want to do.

646

647     RN     Okay. So that's interesting point, right. This business case, so as a matter of

648     entrance should be a given, shouldn't it? What would it contain?

649

650     C2A     It needs to contain where it fits in, in your career path, you know, so you must

651     be very clear exactly what it is that you're going to get out of the MBA. I don't think a

652     high level overview is adequate, you need to know what you're going to get yourself

653     into, because these are professional people who are going to invest a lot of time,

654     generally after hours, and cost, into a programme; you need to know exactly what's

655     going to be in there, and how that fits with what you're trying to get out of your career,

656     or what you're trying to achieve as the next step in your career.

657

658     C2B     I think also, C2A, just to add to that, is that from a, let's say, you know, C2

659     funding, for example, it's got to be aligned with also what C2 wants to, you know, there

660     must be value add, you know, at the end of the day, so...

661

662     C2A     Well, C2 won't fund it if you can't demonstrate that this is going to achieve or,

663     you know, do something different, to be able to achieve a certain business objective.

664

665     RN     Okay.

666

667     C2B     Because typically what happens is, you know, individuals find themselves being

668     accepted onto an MBA programme, but in terms of their career path and their stepping

669     stone, they've learnt all these skills, but they're not going to be able to implement them

670     immediately, so, you know, was it the right decision from a business case perspective

671     instead of the individual?

672    C2A    And from a timing perspective.

673

674    C2B    And from a timing perspective, and then find out that, well, you're going to have
675    to wait for three, four years before you can actually, by that time, that knowledge that
676    you've...

677

678    C2A    A lot has changed.

679

680    C2B    You know, a lot has changed.

681

682    C2A    Ja, you're right.

683

684    C2B    So I think there's a timing aspect to it.

685

686    RN    It's an interesting point. I've heard that before in other interviews as well, in
687    terms of the stage of someone's career, and whether it's relevant or not.

688

689    C2A    Ja, definitely.

690

691    RN    Because then, you're starting to touch on some of the failings of an MBA or
692    some of the shortcomings of an MBA. C2B, your views?

693

694    C2B    I think leadership focus.

695

696    RN    So what are, how does leadership focus fail in the MBA?

697    C2B    So, I think, for me, is that it's a shortcoming in terms of it's not adequately
698    addressed. So it's okay to, and this is what we discussed as well, is that, you know, it's
699    okay to have that business administrative sense, but an MBA should be straight in
700    terms of, what are your leadership qualifications or credibility that you actually need to
701    be able to, you know, to implement this knowledge that you have? So it's one thing to
702    understand the value chain and the processes, but there's a leadership element to it,
703    you know, coaching of individuals, you know, being able to motivate...

704

705    RN    Tell me more about coaching?

706

707    C2B    Well, you know, I think for me is that it's, one of your important resources is
708    people, as an organisation, but we tend to look at the numbers, you know, quite a lot,
709    and if you can coach individuals and manage individuals, you know, effectively, you'll,
710    in my experience, you know, on the [unclear] perspective is that you can have the
711    numbers figured out as much as you like, but if you've got people that are not
712    motivated and you can't coach them properly, and if you can't, you know, show them
713    the bigger picture, you're not going to, you're not going to succeed in any way. So,
714    business is driven by people, you need to coach them, this is how things are done.
715    Coaching induction, taking them through a proper, you know, on-boarding process and
716    engaging with them from start to finish, you know, is very, very important.

717

718    C2A    Absolutely.

719

720    RN    And this, the MBA, obviously, in your experience, hasn't delivered?

721

722    C2B    For me, it hasn't delivered, not only, I think there are personal issues there, all
723    right, but from the way the course was structured somewhat also, you know, was one
724    of the factors that attributed to me, you know, deregistering, all right?

725

726     RN      What was challenging about the structure?

727

728     C2B     I think, for me, it was, I was lacking, I would have preferred to have that
729     entrepreneurship side, all right? Critically looking at, example, the marketing lecture
730     that we had, and I know that you can't please everybody in terms of how the
731     programme is conducted, but for me, it's to do a literate review, from a marketing base,
732     and maybe it was in preparation for the thesis that individual gave me at a later stage,
733     but it should have been more around, go and critically analyse your business's
734     marketing plan and, you know, break it down and have a look at the working parts, and
735     I think that would have been more learnings from them.

736

737     RN      So if I understand you correctly, it's basically too theoretical versus practical?

738

739     C2B     It was too theoretical, you know, versus, ja, the practicality side of things. And
740     also, for me, from a [unclear] perspective was, the practicality was there, but coming
741     into a theoretical base, I had already, even though I couldn't put the words to some of
742     the price discrimination, just to take economics, for example, but the practicality was
743     there and...

744

745     C2A     So if someone wasn't in your position, where would they find their practical?

746

747     C2B     Where would they find, you know, the practical example, whereas for me the full
748     time entrepreneurship would have been more, because you put together a business
749     plan and you present and you get given, you get coached on how to solve, how to
750     solve the business plan and make it more beneficial.

751

752     C2A     Especially if you are going to, you know, get people to prepare their own
753     business case to even start the MBA, you know, how do they then... That's the other
754     thing that I was thinking about as well, is you need that business case initially, but I

think where it sometimes falls down is, you don't get status updates, because, you know, you may agree that in a particular instance you want to assist this person to develop certain skills, you agree on the MBA process, off you go, and when do you hear, so what is happening, how is this adding to your performance, your development and that type of thing, it's always... And that's where the coaching comes in as well, you know, how do you make sure that message gets delivered? Because I don't think we hear that message very often.

RN     Ja. Who would be doing this coaching? So, someone comes to you, presents a business case, it makes perfect business sense, it's going to give this person a wide range of skills, leadership skills or whatever, right, and we'll probably get to that later in some of the other questions, but I just want you to think about how we can use your idea in terms of your initial business case and how do we manage that throughout the process so that the, so that firstly, you as an organisation, you're comfortable that having sent this person on the course, they're actually learning something and are being supported to facilitate that back into the organisation; that person then is fulfilling his views in terms of his career or his or her career, or what they want to achieve, and that's still on track, and, I mean, C2B can tell you, during  the MBA process, it's a very difficult process, there's many times when you get derailed, so what sort of support do we give back; and the other point is then, how does the university know that there's a business case and we must deliver on that business case, but ultimately see if you are tied together for the next two or three years?

C2A     So do you have a supervisor when you're doing your MBA?

C2B     So, from a Gibs perspective?

C2A     From a Gibs perspective.

C2B     I think you, for a, Warren Beatty, I mean, that was more from a...

785 RN     No, that was just an introduction genesis, so that was Dave Beaty, wasn't it?

786

787 C2B    Rav, for me, in terms of answering that, I'd look at, so here you go, performance
788 management, or, sorry, setting your goals, go to your supervisor and saying, I'm
789 interested in doing my MBA, you and your boss then have a look and, or your
790 performance manager, have a look at the timing, is it really correct, the business case
791 of it? What is it that you hope to achieve out of this and the costing involved, and I
792 know that in most cases most organisations have a work back strategy, so fine, we will
793 foot the bill, however, you may not leave within the next five years. So you establish
794 that and an internal contract gets signed, which the individual then has to adhere to.
795 Should you leave before then, you have to pay back this. So, it's not really that the
796 university needs to know, the mere fact that the individual's actually applying for that,
797 you've got the go-ahead from business because the business is paying this; yes, there
798 will be, you've got other functions that you need to perform at work, but however, in
799 terms of the policies that we have, these are the times when you can take study leave,
800 so, I mean, that for me is set in stone. And you yourself, as an individual, know that it is
801 going to be a rigorous process and I do have clients or other obligations that I have,
802 that I have to meet. I think it's a given that the university or institute that you're with, if
803 you are a sponsored individual, that the mere fact that you're actually joining this
804 programme means that it's going to add value to the organisation. Would you agree
805 with me on that one?

806

807 C2A    Ja.

808

809 RN     I want to ask a question, right, moving onto the next question; how do we
810 ensure that we achieve benefits for everybody and everyone's on the same page? So
811 you've got a, you've got a sort of a tripartite situation, you've got the organisation, right?
812 And you've just approved a business case, and you've sat down and you've got the
813 contracts and so all the formal stuff's done, right, so that's right upfront; then you've got
814 the business school and then you've got the student, okay? Now, throughout the
815 process, how would you ensure that, from an organisation perspective, right, because
816 you can only talk for yourself, how would you ensure that firstly, that this student is on

817  track in terms of what they're learning, and brings back, as they learn, into your

818  organisation? So you don't wait for a two year period until his MBA's finished and then

819  come back and say, okay, great, I'm now, I can do whatever I can. How do you ensure

820  that if I've been on a course on leadership, let's take a simple course, like Leading

821  through Storytelling, how do I ensure that some of the skills that I learnt there have

822  came back here, and how do you ensure that what they're learning stays relevant

823  here? How would you do that?

824

825  C2A   I would say that I would like to have a plan from the individual showing me

826  exactly what it is they're learning and when they're learning it and that would be part of

827  the business case already, and what I would like to get then, I would like to get status

828  updates from the business school, via the student, obviously, and, in my mind, if I can

829  see okay, they're now doing a module on XYZ, these are the two main outcomes

830  they're focussing on. I would then like to see, okay, well, the business school are

831  saying to me, this individual completed the module and they thought, you know,

832  everything went absolutely dandy, I want to then be in a position to get feedback from

833  the different people that that student is working for, get performance feedback, and say

834  to them, okay, you know what, this person, six weeks ago they achieved the following

835  things for the business school, you've worked with this individual now, over the past six

836  weeks, was this person able to demonstrate any of those outcomes that they, per the

837  records, per the records from the business school, that they have now learnt this new

838  skill?

839

840  RN    So that's a really good idea, and how would you support this as a business? So

841  how would the, so you're HR, right, and you've got the guys in line and you've got that

842  person's manager who's agreed the business case, how would, what would you like to

843  see from that individual to support the student, and vice versa? So they've been on a...

844

845  C2A   Well, you've got an existing performance development process in place

846  anyway, so if it is someone who's on a special programme like an MBA, for instance,

847  you may need to have a couple of extra conversations during the time that the person's

848  doing the MBA, but I don't think that you can expect, you know, you can place heavy

849 additional responsibility on the performance manager; the student is the one who

850 should be taking the responsibility for making sure the feedback is given, and the

851 student is the one who should be able to say to the performance manager, you know,

852 this was expected of me, these are the new skills and this is what I've done, either at a

853 client or in a project and, you know, with his team or whatever, this is where I've been

854 able to demonstrate it.

855

856 RN     So it's almost, it's almost, if I can summarise, i.e. developing a new contract

857 based on the outcomes of the MBA, so basically, these are the things you said you

858 were going to learn, how you applied what you've learnt to business and that basically

859 would then go in as part of the contract so that you have constant sort of feedback and

860 you have constant input back into business.

861

862 C2A     Yes.

863

864 RN     Sounds good. And what would you say, or how would you suggest the business

865 school support this process? So you've mentioned there that you'd like to get status

866 updates via the students, right?

867

868 C2A     Ja. I think that goes back to the whole comment around coaching and I suppose

869 it will be varying degrees of that, but you would basically need like a supervising person

870 at the business school who's able to actually provide such a status report. You don't

871 want a detailed, you know, I don't want a 50 page thesis on every module this person

872 completes; I don't have the time to read it. I want a basic, they've done this module,

873 these are the two main things, this is what we think the person... Yes, they achieved it,

874 no, they didn't. You know, one or two comments, Bob's your uncle. You don't need a

875 massive feedback form because no-one's going to look at it.

876

877 RN     Absolutely, ja.

878  C2B  Because, I think what also tends to happen is that we only look at those
879  individuals that are struggling, that's when you actually give out those reports. What
880  about those individuals that are actually doing well? So, regardless that the institution
881  would also have to say, as, you know, C2A stated, quarterly reports of, this is what this
882  person or, you know, after each module, C2B has really done well, and that is fed back
883  through either the student or an email to, who's your performance manager, and once
884  you get this feedback saying, doing really well, you know, 65% in this or whatever it is,
885  and they're the key skills that they should be able to demonstrate. So, not only for
886  individuals that are doing badly, but also for individuals that are performing.

887

888  C2A  No, absolutely. Well, I would expect that people who get accepted for an MBA
889  would certainly be individuals who are doing well.

890

891  C2B  Ja.

892

893  RN  That sounds good. That's actually very good. And, I mean, summarily, right, I
894  think we've touched on all of these questions. In terms of this relationship, what can,
895  what can each one of these do better that they're not doing now? I'm sure you've got
896  relationships with other, with business schools, right, in a capacity where they provide
897  you with leadership programmes or they provide you with input in terms of training and
898  development. Can you tell me what's successful about those relationships?

899

900  C2A  Look, we mainly work with Gibs, and...

901

902  RN  Firstly, does that relationship work for you?

903

904  C2A  Absolutely. I honestly think if you can get that structure that we've just spoken
905  about, because there you've got communication going between all three parties,
906  because you need to have a clear idea of what the outcomes are that you can expect,

907    you need to then get the individual involved, obviously doing it, going through the
908    learning process, you need to get the feedback from the business school; yes, in theory
909    this person should now be able to demonstrate these things, and then you need the
910    performance manager to say, oh, my goodness, what do you know, we actually saw it
911    happening in the workplace, and you're able to say, fantastic, you know, I can see a
912    return on my investment.

913

914    RN    What would you do in the instance where a person's been on a module but
915    haven't demonstrated it? But they've had the opportunities to? Have or have not.

916

917    C2A    Well, you'd generally need to follow I would imagine the same process you do
918    with any non-performance issues in terms of, you know, giving the person the
919    feedback, because there might be a difference in the perceptions, you know, the
920    individual may feel that they did actually deliver what they were supposed to. The
921    discussion around well, what are the expectations? Are we 100% clear that what you
922    see the expectations to be is what it is that we're actually expecting? So you have to
923    give them another opportunity to demonstrate it. But I do believe once you've really
924    clarified the expectations, you've given them a second opportunity, then, you know,
925    then you've got to question, well, you know, where did the process fail?

926

927    RN    Okay. In the model that you've just suggested, right, we've got, so clarifying the
928    expectations a second time, right, would there be a clarification of, or would there be in
929    that original contracting phase, would you set the expectations down there?

930

931    C2A    Must.

932

933    RN    Okay.

934

935    C2B    Because you'd link, you'd link it to the outputs at the beginning.

936    C2A    Yes, definitely.

937

938    RN    Great. Well, let me just check here... Okay, that's actually about, just about
939    time. Look, I think it's been very useful chatting to you; I definitely think that this, the
940    model that you've just given me gives me a lot of insight in terms of how we get this
941    relationship really going and close the gap between the three organisations. I think, I
942    think for me, it's probably going to end up being wider than just the MBA, it's adult
943    learning in any context, where, like you suggested, you set the contract upfront, you set
944    the objectives and you monitor it through the process, and if that happened then you've
945    a regular feedback, then perhaps that will lead to collaboration. Do you agree?

946

947    C2A    Ja.

948

949    C2B    Ja.

950

951    C2A    That's what we do with our normal training at C2, so...

952

953    RN    And that's what you do, is that in-house training?

954

955    C2A    Ja.

956

957    RN    Okay.

958

959    C2B    Just to check from your side, is the purpose of this, do you find that with the
960    Gibs MBA, does it disconnect between that? Business, Gibs and the student?

961

962 RN    What my initial research suggests is that there is a disconnect between
963       business, in general. So it's not necessarily aligned to the Gibs, it's MBA as a whole
964       and we find, what I'm finding more and more often is that people are becoming more
965       and more sceptical of the MBA because there is a disconnect between the three,
966       there's no feedback.

967

968 C2A   I agree with that.

969

970 RN    There's no feedback.

971

972 C2A   Ja.

973

974 RN    All right, great. Well, thank you so much for your time, I really appreciate it.

# APPENDIX D: TRANSCRIPTS OF COMPANY 3 (C3)

**Speaker key**

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RN      Ravindran Naicker

C3      Company 3

RN      Great. So, I'm Ravindran Naicker, I am a second year student or final year student at the University of Pretoria, or Gibs,  and my topic is understanding how collaboration can help business school students and business better improve or have a bigger impact of the MBA, because I think largely, to a large extent, where this has come from is, the corridor speak in business is that, you know, the MBA has got a really bad perception, MBAs, we fund them and they leave within one or two years, right? And then on the students' side, they never get to apply what they...

C3      What they've learnt.

RN      What they can, in their current organisation, so they look for things elsewhere; and then there's the view that the business schools aren't really relevant and aren't teaching what's relevant to business.

C3      Yes, absolutely.

RN      And so I want to pull that together and understand how we can do that.

C3      Okay, cool.

1001 RN    Great. So, I mean, the questions, just before we move on, C3, your current title

1002 is?

1003

1004 C3    I'm the Executive for Global HR at C3.

1005

1006 RN    And your qualifications?

1007

1008 C3    I've a diploma.

1009

1010 RN    Okay, great. So, effectively, the interview will be anonymous, so I won't be

1011 using any names. In terms of the data collection process, I'm going to have 15

1012 interviews; ten more business practitioners like yourself, five with the heads of the

1013 various business schools, just to get their views. I'll probably at some stage have a

1014 focus group with students. And so I think, I think, just in general, what do you think the

1015 successes of the MBA are?

1016

1017 C3    Just, before we go into that, obviously the comments I will make are a lot of my

1018 own personal comments. I have gathered some feedback from some of our HR

1019 directors as well, as well as our strategy guy, just to understand, to try and give you a

1020 bit of perspective from a C3 and from people, the profile of us that I've asked, are

1021 people that have been in business for a very long time, so you're looking at 20 years

1022 plus. So, the more mature, if I can put it that way, feedback. I haven't gathered

1023 feedback from our younger generation, so just, so that it might be a little bit skewed, I

1024 don't want it to be skewed, but it might be skewed. In terms of the successes of the

1025 MBA, some of the things that we believe an MBA does very well for the students is

1026 obviously understanding business concepts, it gives its students excellent ability to do

1027 that. It also, we think it assists the students for the ability to cope under pressure and

1028 work under a heavy workload, particularly if they are currently working full time and

1029 studying part time. Also, we believe it makes individuals think creatively, and obviously

1030 having to meet deadlines and complete assignments. I think the networking and team

1031 dynamics of the MBA students helps in terms of future business relationships. It does
1032 mature students to a larger extent, because you're not just at a university, you're
1033 obviously at business school and you're interacting with business people, not fellow
1034 undergraduate students. It gives you an opportunity to contextualise and consolidate
1035 your work experience. We believe it gives you the enhanced ability to write reports and
1036 assignments; it obviously improves your self-knowledge and it gives you structure to
1037 your thought processes.

1038

1039 RN    Okay. That pretty much sums up what...

1040

1041 C3    Okay? That's what we think is good of the MBA. Do you want me to carry on in
1042 terms of what is the failing?

1043

1044 RN    Yes, go for it, go for it.

1045

1046 C3    Some of the negativity you have already mentioned; in the, and one of the
1047 comments I had from one of the HR directors is, they don't believe the MBA has the
1048 standing as it used to in the old days, and why we say that, sometimes, maybe it's a
1049 perception, but we believe it's too easy to be accepted on the course; there used to be
1050 a minimum requirement of work experience prior to acceptance and just from our
1051 experience, we don't see that longer work experience coming in; you've got more and
1052 more younger students going in, who we believe have the intellectual ability, but they
1053 don't have what we call the railroad tracks, they haven't been down the path yet, they
1054 haven't had the chance to work, to experience things. And as I said, it's coming from
1055 the older generation, but that's our perception.

1056

1057 RN    So, in terms of that, right, that the students don't have enough experience,
1058 what, how does that devalue the value of the MBA?

1059

1060    C3    Because, what we have found is that the students are doing the MBA for self-
1061    purposes, the business has not sent them on it, because we believe they're too young
1062    at that point in time without the experience. So they're doing it for self-purposes. The
1063    negativity that comes out of that is that when they come out, like you've said before,
1064    they have higher expectations and demand things, but yet they haven't actually proven
1065    it, that they can do it, if I can put it that way. It's...

1066

1067    RN    That's an interesting point. So they haven't proven it, right?

1068

1069    C3    They haven't proven that they have the ability to deliver on certain elements, yet
1070    their demands and expectations because they now have this Master's, is, whether it's
1071    in remuneration, whether it's in positions, they expect to move quicker and they expect
1072    to be, well, they are probably more marketable, but, well, they haven't delivered
1073    something in the business for us, as yet, if that's...

1074

1075    RN    How does that differ to someone who's got experience who's been in an MBA?
1076    So what does having that experience plus the MBA give you over a student who... ?

1077

1078    C3    Because I think what they can then do is, it's not purely an academic solution
1079    that they present to the business; they understand the realities of what works and what
1080    doesn't work in business.

1081

1082    RN    Okay. So it's a lot more practical in...

1083

1084    C3    Yes. It can work, it's not just an academic solution.

1085

1086    RN    Okay. That's a great point.

1087　C3　Some of the other failings, depending on, I think because of this age limit, you
1088　　　can sometimes have a lack of maturity of the individuals on the programme, so you
1089　　　might have certain individuals who are a lot more experienced, a lot older, and then
1090　　　you have the youngsters, so we just saying, we just think that that has its own
1091　　　dynamics, that has to be sorted out. I think you have MBAs and you have MBAs, and
1092　　　sometimes we say it's too prolific and a lack of qualification credibility because this
1093　　　institute offers an MBA and that institute offers an MBA, and what are the credible
1094　　　MBAs?

1095

1096　RN　What would you, what would you or your team view as a credible MBA?

1097

1098　C3　We're the old school, so it's your traditional business school, so whether it's a
1099　　　Gibs; if it's a business school, business school from the Cape, you know, those are,
1100　　　some of these, the credible ones are the ones that are proven in South Africa for us,
1101　　　but where you have those that are online to the UK or the US, not credible to us. The
1102　　　ones where we have relationships with the institutions as well, we actually see it in
1103　　　practice. One of the other failings of the MBA is, sometimes it can be too academic and
1104　　　conceptual and obviously coming out of that, we call them arrogant graduates with
1105　　　inflated expectations...

1106

1107　RN　That a good quotation. I'm going to quote you on that.

1108

1109　C3　Thanks.

1110

1111　RN　Arrogant graduates... ?

1112

1113　C3　We call them arrogant graduates with inflated expectations.

1114

1115 RN    Great. So, in terms of that, right, so it's too academic and conceptual, so you
1116 get these graduates with inflated expectations; go on, go on...

1117

1118 C3    What we tend to find then, what we prefer, is what we call an in-house
1119 programme that we would develop with the business school, so take for example, at
1120 that level, an executive development programme, where it becomes real for the
1121 business, and the student is getting the academic and the conceptual thinking, but, for
1122 example, we do very much the action learning projects, and it is relevant to our
1123 business.

1124

1125 RN    Okay, so, tell me about this, tell me about these actions, I mean, projects. So,
1126 how does it work?

1127

1128 C3    Okay. If we just talk the programme, for example, if we do it through Wits or
1129 through Gibs, even our leadership development programmes, we sit down with the
1130 advisors at Gibs, at the business school, and we decide on the modules that we want
1131 covered, so whether you're talking about...

1132

1133 RN    How do you know, how do you know what modules you want to cover?

1134

1135 C3    Because we look at where we have a need in our business, so where we have
1136 a lack of expertise. So, if it's in financial skills, marketing skills, world class customer
1137 strategies, whatever it might be, and then on the advice of Gibs, in terms of looking at
1138 the number of credits, etc, they will advise that these are the modules that build up
1139 credits, so we talk to them about how we want it structured. So they will then obviously
1140 allocate lecturers and assign, whether it's business people or not, to those lecturers,
1141 who will then conduct those lectures to our students. One of the elements is what we
1142 call an Action Learning Project where our strategy teams identify, depending on the
1143 number of people that we have, six to seven key strategic projects for C3.

1144    RN    Okay. So, who comprises this team?

1145

1146    C3    The... Are you talking about the ones that decide on the project?

1147

1148    RN    The strategy teams, ja.

1149

1150    C3    It's our board. Our board and our strategy guys decide. So each of the... And
1151    our board is divisional CEOs, so they look in their own business, what is a key project
1152    that they need to be researched, okay? Then we divvy up our delegates into teams and
1153    they are mixed teams, mixed from our different divisions, etc, and they get allocated a
1154    project, they get a project sponsor...

1155

1156    RN    Who typically would be the sponsor?

1157

1158    C3    That could be the head of the department that that project would fall under. It's
1159    usually a high level person.

1160

1161    RN    So it's probably the CEO or head of the department?

1162

1163    C3    It could be the CEO, it could be the strategy guy, it could be, if it's a marketing
1164    one, it could be the marketing director, whatever it is. And then they have to go and
1165    research and do all the research behind everything and then come up with the
1166    business case and proposal, which they then present to our Exco. And then those
1167    projects usually get implemented, or if further research is required after the course, it
1168    gets tasked to the divisional strategy person to follow up. So it's more meaningful to us.

1169

1170    RN    So now in terms of this entire process, right, so you've got the initial feedback
1171    with the business school, so you meet with business, you have your initial feedback
1172    where you say, these are my needs, come back with a programme. They come back
1173    with a programme, they send the guys on the programme, you then consolidate that
1174    programme into an action project...

1175

1176    C3    Yes. There's a number of, there's usually six at a time that are running in that,
1177    it's not just one project, it's six. Because we usually have about, on the EDP, about 20
1178    to 25 and on the LDP about 40 to 45.

1179

1180    RN    Excellent. So, on these learning projects that you've got in place, right, you've
1181    got a senior person sponsoring this and giving the guys guidance; they go away, they
1182    do their research, they present their proposals, or their options, the viable ones get
1183    implemented, or if there's more research then they go away and do that, right?

1184

1185    C3    Yes.

1186

1187    RN    At this stage, there, is there any then feedback to Gibs or is there any further
1188    involvement on Gibs beyond the, or whichever university, beyond the initial
1189    programme?

1190

1191    C3    What we do, is we actually sit in, so if I'm the project manager, together with my
1192    admin assistant, we sit through the entire programme, we listen to the lecturers, we see
1193    the quality, we monitor the feedback, we see where the hiccups are happening, and if
1194    we believe a certain lecturer is not suitable for our business, in a review process with
1195    Gibs afterwards, we give them the feedback and we amend it for the following year.
1196    We're very involved with Gibs on that. I'm probably the, I think I've attended more
1197    programmes and don't have the qualification, because we sit in on all of them. And, if
1198    it's an EDP and we do an international leg, I, as project manager, go with on the

1199    international leg, we do the business visits, whatever it is, we go to the international
1200    business school, we get lecturers there, etc. etc. So...

1201

1202    RN    Okay. That's sounds really good. And, I mean that basically, so this system
1203    basically talks to my point three in terms of how you've achieved benefits for students,
1204    for your business and obviously for the business school with the feedback, right?

1205

1206    C3    Absolutely, yes.

1207

1208    RN    Let me understand; through this process, how has the business school
1209    supported you and the students?

1210

1211    C3    When you say how have they supported us, in terms of, obviously they are,
1212    they're not rigid, they're very flexible, in what we call our in-house programmes, so they
1213    will give advice, they will give best practice and they will then tailor the actual course
1214    content to our needs, which has been great. So it has to be that close working
1215    relationship, don't give us an inflexible, this is the programme, it's generic, it doesn't
1216    mean anything to us. If I can just come in on this, what we do is, before each lecture,
1217    so say the lecture is on finance, okay, just for want of a better thing, we always have
1218    our internal expert talk first on what does C3 do in finance? So, what is the strategy of
1219    C3 finance, who do we, who do we do our, how do we do, how do we raise money, you
1220    know, bonds, etc, where are we located, what international best practices do we
1221    follow? So we give our own version and then the lecturer comes in and talks the more
1222    generic type thing. We do it on all our subjects, so if you talk customer strategies, we'll
1223    have one of our CEOs from say, UUU, come and talk about their experience on
1224    customer satisfaction, something like that. Then you'll have the lecturer of E-card or
1225    whatever coming and talking on generic customer strategies.

1226

1227    RN    So let me ask you, in terms of this process, right, which I think is a really good
1228    process, do you guys fund MBAs?

1229    C3    We do fund individual MBAs, but it's on an individual basis and as a, I can't say
1230    it's a norm, because we would prefer our guys to do an EDP or an LDP, which is more
1231    meaningful to us, so it has to be, the MBA would have to offer something that our guys
1232    couldn't get through the EDP, which is very few and far between, because, as I said,
1233    it's more an individual need. The individual wants an MBA. Why does the individual
1234    want an MBA? Or maybe there's not an opportunity for them to go on the EDP at that
1235    particular point in time because it's restricted and we only do it every two years. Or
1236    they've come in, we've recruited them and they were doing their MBA; but it is on a
1237    select basis and only at a senior type level.

1238

1239    RN    Selected senior?

1240

1241    C3    I would say selected senior, or where it is agreed, because of the costs
1242    associated with it, it's, if you do two MBAs a year, it's a lot.

1243

1244    RN    So, on average you've got two MBAs a year?

1245

1246    C3    Two to three. Not a lot, because a lot of them funded themselves. Maybe I need
1247    to go back to the beginning. Our organisation is not, and I don't want to say it doesn't
1248    require MBAs, but because we are distributors of leading brands, you are very limited
1249    in terms of new business opportunities, so for example, if you're in C3 equipment,
1250    DDDD holds the franchise rights. It then selects who can be the dealer to sell DDDD,
1251    but then allocated to us, it says, you can sell DDDD in South Africa, Mozambique,
1252    Malawi, and gives us territory. We can't then go and sell a Comanche to competition,
1253    so we are limited, and I call it, in terms of expanding the brand possibilities. Now, most
1254    of our, most of businesses, take motor retail, they have the original suppliers, so it's
1255    BMW, Mercedes, Toyota, Audi, etc, those, what do you call them? OEMs, dictate
1256    where and how you sell and what you sell at and what you do with the business.
1257    HHHH, also, is controlled by HHHH and it says you can do XYZ. Equipment, DDDD,
1258    they tell us what you can and can't do. The only area where we have freedom to
1259    expand our brands, expand our footprint, we don't have a principal who dictates, is on

1260   our logistic side and that's where... So, the need for an MBA is not as a key element. It

1261   helps, it helps with the thinking and it helps with the broader thing, but if you're

1262   restricted and DDDD says you do that and BMW says you do that, we have to do that.

1263   We have to just look at smarter ways of doing things.

1264

1265   RN     Absolutely. So, in terms of, so you bring it back to the MBA, right, the principles,

1266   do you find the two people in an MBA?

1267

1268   C3     I don't have those records, but there's not a hell of a lot.

1269

1270   RN     The principle of, if you could have input into the curriculum of the MBA right at

1271   the beginning, and then for those two people having action learning programmes

1272   throughout the MBA...

1273

1274   C3     Or their thesis, whatever it is.

1275

1276   RN     Or, well, I don't know about the thesis, because that's a, that's a... The

1277   challenge with the thesis is, it can't be a business problem, but the skills that you learn

1278   in the thesis and the skills that you learn throughout, there's no reason why you can't

1279   implement those during or after the MBA. Now, if you, I'm just trying to catch whether

1280   you would be open to the idea of having input firstly into the MBA programme right at

1281   the inception, then have an action learning programme; those people you've funded

1282   and obviously anybody else who is on the MBA, but you've obviously got to give them

1283   time off, you've got to do all that sort of stuff. So if you get together a group of five

1284   people doing an MBA, right, and you did a similar thing here where they have to deliver

1285   an output, would that work for you?

1286

1287   C3     It could work for us. I would have to look at the cost effectiveness of it, because

1288   if it's going to deliver the same end result as an EDP does, I would just look at the cost

1289   effective... But it would help, it would definitely help. Even when you come to your
1290   thesis and I know you say it can't be business related, but maybe a good thing for us is
1291   ex-patriots, so do something relevant on ex-patriots that could help us as a side thing,
1292   instead of this generic thesis on whatever, which adds bugger all value to us as a
1293   business.

1294

1295   RN    No, I get exactly what you're saying. I get exactly what you're saying. So, input
1296   into thesis. Now, in terms of delivering value, right, these people that go out, and as
1297   you say, it's very individualistic and it's basically that person, that person drives it. Is
1298   there any feedback?

1299

1300   C3    In terms of?

1301

1302   RN    So, do you as a business get any feedback in terms of this person's progress in
1303   terms of whether they're achieving the objectives, whether they're more effective at
1304   work?

1305

1306   C3    No.

1307

1308   RN    So there's no feedback, right?

1309

1310   C3    No.

1311

1312   RN    And how would, how would feedback work? Would it help you in any way?

1313

1314   C3    If we've sponsored someone to do an MBA I would expect feedback, I would
1315   expect to know the attending lecturers, their progress; I would expect to know how

1316    they're doing on the relevant... I would also need to have sessions with the individual to
1317    understand from their line manager, are they meeting business expectations, as well?
1318    Because it is quite difficult and what we have found is that they start ducking and
1319    diving, unfortunately, on the work side, in order to complete the assignments or
1320    whatever because they haven't planned correctly. And what we've got to guard against
1321    is favouritism towards those students; we have policies in place for the number of study
1322    days, leave, etc, and if you start then doing special treatment to an MBA student versus
1323    a CA, a person who's doing a CA, you're going to have unfair labour practices in terms
1324    of for us. So it's, it is a tricky one, but we do tend to find that sometimes the students,
1325    depending on their maturity, it does affect their ability to deliver their outputs at work.

1326

1327    RN     Okay. So would that suggest that the more mature students are able to cope
1328    with it?

1329

1330    C3     I think what happens is, the more mature students have learnt how to manage
1331    multiple things at the same time; often they are in a more senior position where they
1332    can allocate certain duties to others. I think if it's somebody just into junior
1333    management or middle management, they are doing a lot of the things themselves. So
1334    it's a bit of a balancing act, but it's the same with the EDP and the LDP that we run,
1335    they have to balance, but we don't want, we don't want it to be seen as favouritism
1336    towards MBA students, that we're now going to give you, if we normally give 12 days,
1337    now we're going to give you those 30 days, and then if they're having to attend
1338    lectures, how do we... ? Because it is, it has a big impact on when they attend lectures;
1339    if some of them are doing it in the evening, some of them are doing it during the day,
1340    then they're taking two weeks off for this block and two weeks off for that block, it does
1341    impact on the business.

1342

1343    RN     For sure. For sure. That feedback, you mentioned that feedback, how would
1344    you, or, in what form would you like that feedback, and from whom?

1345

1346    C3    I would presume from the lecturers, or in a written format, like a report, you
1347    know, a report would be good to say okay, this person's done these modules, they've
1348    achieved these results; attendance, diligence, attitude. What we don't often find is,
1349    when we run the programme ourselves, we see the interactions between delegates
1350    and we can address if there's problems on those interactions. If this person is
1351    representing us as an MBA student and they're not living by our code of conduct and
1352    our values, we've got to know about that.

1353

1354    RN    Excellent. And then finally, what do you think business schools, organisations
1355    and students, can do to improve the impact of the MBA?

1356

1357    C3    Okay. I think, essentially, obviously the relationships between business to
1358    consulting the curriculum and course content is important. We would prefer that the
1359    lecturers are experienced individuals from the business sector and not pure academics,
1360    okay. It just complements the theoretical side of things. We would prefer to have
1361    mentors for those students from business.

1362

1363    RN    So, where would these mentors come from? Would you like either the university
1364    or business to have a mentor?

1365

1366    C3    I think business should be able to mentor, somebody who has been down the
1367    railroad line, who knows and can assist the students.

1368

1369    RN    Right. What impact do you think a mentor would have?

1370

1371    C3    I think it just keeps them level headed, you know, in terms of wild ideas and,
1372    you're not chucking it out, but more so just guiding them and keeping them realistic.

1373

1374    RN      Good point.

1375

1376    C3      I think, I think also have, allow the students to have access to other large
1377    organisations, senior employees or mentors, just to get a different perspective as well.
1378    So, not just the C3 perspective, but if there is an agreement with Gibs that our C3
1379    employee could also, you know, have access to other senior people just to get a
1380    different perspective. I think it's important that we need to balance the expectations of
1381    the students with reality in the workplace and it's important for us that the exclusivity
1382    and integrity of the qualification is maintained.

1383

1384    RN      Just before we move on; so to balance the expectations of the students with the
1385    realities of business?

1386

1387    C3      Yes. You know, just somebody will, and I've had experience before; okay, I've
1388    now got an MBA, I now, for example, should be paid X, but I'm doing that job, but I
1389    can't pay you X because you're doing that job, and I pay you for the job that you're
1390    doing, I don't pay you for your qualification unless it's an inherent requirement in that
1391    job. And it's just tempering those sort of things.

1392

1393    RN      Sure. I assume that, based on what you said, it keeps the person level headed.
1394    The mentor in this scenario would have a big input into managing those expectations.

1395

1396    C3      Absolutely. Yes.

1397

1398    RN      What role would the business school play to manage those expectations?

1399

1400    C3      I think they also need to have a handle on what's going on in business. You
1401    know, I've seen it before, where international business schools say, well, they do

1402  research and say, okay, MBA graduates now from our business school can look at
1403  salaries between X and Y, and yes, maybe some of them have been appointed into
1404  very high level positions, but it's not the norm. So it's more business school, get a grip
1405  on what, where do your MBA graduates end up, right, just as they graduate; do some
1406  research. Do they move, don't they move, how many of your graduates have moved
1407  within the past two years, three years; has salary changes happened, you know, just
1408  give the guys a real understanding of what happens in the business environment.

1409

1410  RN    In terms of the mentors, what would you think of students who've finished the
1411  MBA, as being, obviously outside companies, as being mentors for current students?

1412

1413  C3    I think that would help, absolutely, because they've been through it, they know,
1414  they can talk from the experience.

1415

1416  RN    And what else? What else do you think they can do better to work together?

1417

1418  C3    I think just, just to sum it up, to make it more business orientated as opposed to
1419  purely academic, but more practical.

1420

1421  RN    What can, what should students be doing better in this regard? So you've
1422  funded two people on the MBA per se; what can they do better?

1423

1424  C3    I think they should be communicating more with their line person and/or their
1425  HR person, whoever is the person that has agreed to put them on the MBA. I think they
1426  need to also then transfer some of their learnings to colleagues and others and that
1427  could be in, like for example, in their team meetings, just say, oh, by the way, this is
1428  what we've learned and maybe be an easier way of doing this is we could do XYZ in
1429  the team, and bringing some of their academic learnings and implementing it practically
1430  in their own teams.

| 1431 | RN | Excellent. Is there anything else, C3, from your side? |
|---|---|---|
| 1432 | | |
| 1433 | C3 | No. I think, I think if we can work together and make it more practical, and keep |
| 1434 | | it exclusive. |
| 1435 | | |
| 1436 | RN | Ah, yes, that was the other point. |
| 1437 | | |
| 1438 | C3 | Churning out hundreds and hundreds of MBA graduates, it's not dong the |
| 1439 | | businesses any good and it's not doing the students any good. |
| 1440 | | |
| 1441 | RN | Absolutely. So, thank you so much for your feedback. |
| 1442 | | |
| 1443 | C3 | It's pleasure. |
| 1444 | | |
| 1445 | RN | There's some really valuable insights that you've given. |
| 1446 | | |
| 1447 | C3 | Okay, good. |
| 1448 | | |
| 1449 | RN | And I really appreciate your time. |
| 1450 | | |
| 1451 | C3 | No, pleasure. Thanks. Ja, Ravi, I think we're a very, we're a very practical |
| 1452 | | organisation, we. |

## 1453 APPENDIX E: TRANSCRIPTS OF COMPANY 4 (C4)

1454 **Speaker key**

1455

1456 RN    Ravindran Naicker

1457 C4    Company 4

1458

1459 RN    As I've explained right through, effectively I'm trying to get the situation where
1460 we can have a model that helps business schools provide a curriculum that's more
1461 relevant for business, and helps supports students, and at the same time, business
1462 feeds back to business schools, to give them what's relevant.  So that's from the
1463 business school perspective.

1464

1465 From a student perspective, a student wants to be supported, so how do we support
1466 the students, in terms of transferring their learning from school to work, and to make an
1467 impact quicker than after two years?  So, through the process, understanding that
1468 process.

1469

1470 C4    Okay, I don't know if I can help you, but I haven't done an MBA, so obviously I
1471 haven't done an MBA, but I've got a Doctorate in Psychology, and we're working with
1472 the MBA students.

1473

1474 RN    Let's go there.

1475

1476 C4    We're working with some MBAs but not closely, though we are working closely
1477 with Gibs on our executive and senior programme, but that's not an MBA, that we're
1478 doing there.  That is a business focused short courses, training that they're giving us.

1479

1480 RN    Do you employ MBAs?

1481

1482 C4    We don't go out and employ, look for MBAs.  There's a number of people in the
1483 organisation who are busy doing MBAs, and who have done MBAs.  There are a
1484 number of those people, and are busy or have been doing MBAs, but we don't put a
1485 requirement on, to say we want to employ MBA students.  We don't go look for MBA
1486 students.  People who are here, doing MBAs, do that because they want to enrich

1487    themselves, they want to get more information, more knowledge, more competence,
1488    business understanding and so forth.

1489

1490    And, we don't increase their salary afterwards, so you know, there's nothing like that
1491    here.  It's just...people go and do MBAs.

1492

1493    RN      We'll come back to that part, because I think some of the business learning
1494    things that you've got in place, we could probably use some of those principles in terms
1495    of transferring the learning back to the MBA, or what not, in terms of relationships.

1496

1497    Let's start at the top, so, what do you think, in your experience in terms of MBA or the
1498    people that you've employed, or your experience, what do you think the success of the
1499    MBA is?

1500

1501    C4      MBA gives you a proper understanding of the business landscape, and
1502    challenges of the day, in other words, the present.  They also give you a wider view of
1503    the business world, in other words, it's the opposite of isolation.  It is openness,
1504    understanding what goes on in different parts of the world.  It gives you a strategic
1505    understanding of the global economic issues and powers.

1506

1507    And, it gives you, on a personal basis, it also gives those individuals access to other
1508    businesses and contacts, business contacts in their immediate, local environment
1509    where they operate, so they form friendships, they form contacts of the other logistics
1510    company on the western side of Jo'burg, type of thing, or they have now this contact
1511    with insurance or with glass manufacturers, or motor dealership, so it gives you a wide
1512    contact, group of contacts, so that's what it does.

1513

1514    To my view, it does not necessarily increase management competency.

1515

1516    RN      Would you see that as a failing, leading to my second question, is that one of
1517    the failings of the MBA, or is that not its purpose?

1518

1519    C4      Actually the question is not so easy, because what it gives you, or also gives
1520    you, to carry on with that, what it also gives you, it gives you a toolkit to manage, to be
1521    a general manager, meaning it gives you a skill in analysing financial statements, if

1522     that's not your background, you can start doing that. It gives you an understanding of

1523     the whole human resource, recruitment, selection process. And, there's a number of

1524     other things that it gives you, that I don't have all the topics.

1525

1526     So, whether the person applies that toolkit or not will depend on his personality, so we

1527     have not seen a person coming back from that has got better margins, making better

1528     profits, that hasn't happened. That's a personality thing.

1529

1530     An MBA is a three years, it doesn't, it grows people. There's personality growth, most

1531     definitely, but it doesn't change your personality to be something that, or someone that

1532     you haven't been.

1533

1534     RN     I see what you're saying.

1535

1536     C4     If you're not a go getter, if you're a bit of a reactive person, and so on, and

1537     you're not a good business person, then you're not going to be a good business person

1538     after your MBA. So, an MBA can't grow a limb, it can't grow neurons, it realises certain

1539     potential that you have. If you haven't got that, you're not going to change.

1540

1541     The other thing is you find people who are very inclined to deal with stuff in an

1542     academic way, to deal with...they like to look at stuff from a scientific, academic

1543     perspective. They will be good MBA students, because they like the academic

1544     environment, and they can write nice reports and dissertations and whatever.

1545

1546     Those people, I'm not saying all, but those people who like to deal with the business

1547     world or the world in terms of that academic orientation are not necessarily good

1548     business people.

1549

1550     So, they are not going to be good business people after they've done their MBA.

1551

1552     RN     Basically, in terms of that point, which is a really good point, so these people

1553     who are stuck in the theoretic realm or academic realm, lack practical applicability in

1554     business, if I'm understanding you correctly?

1555

1556     C4     You can't say they lack it, but it's not their style of preference.

1557    RN    Not their style of preference.

1558

1559    C4    Nobody lacks nothing, you understand?  You've got more of stuff and less of

1560    stuff, and you've got a certain preference, how you deal with business, how you deal

1561    with people, that's your typical behaviour.  Typical behaviour is behaviour that comes

1562    with little effort.  It's your normal behaviour, if you don't think you're being watched,

1563    that's what you normally do, so if that's your typical style, that's going to be your typical

1564    style.  The MBA is not going to change you, to be this high flying entrepreneur.

1565

1566    RN    Sure.

1567

1568    C4    If you're not an entrepreneur, if you don't like taking business risks, then you're

1569    not going to like it after your MBA, because an MBA doesn't change your personality,

1570    but it grows a person, meaning it grows certain strong points, potential points that you

1571    have.

1572

1573    RN    What else would you see, or what would you see as other failings of the MBA?

1574

1575    C4    That's not a failing of the MBA that we spoke about.

1576

1577    RN    Yes, this is a...

1578

1579    C4    An MBA, I don't think...

1580

1581    RN    How would you class this point, this is more...its purpose?

1582

1583    C4    No, the fact of the matter is, you've got to understand what the purpose of an

1584    MBA is.  If you see that as the purpose, personality growth, giving you a toolbox to

1585    manage, then it's not a failure.  The MBA hasn't got a failure.  If you as a person see an

1586    MBA as a way to change your personality, and make you an MD of a company

1587    instantly, then it's going to be a failure, but failure is not on the MBA side.  The failure is

1588    on the expectation of the individual side.

1589

1590    RN    Sure.

1591

1592    C4      So, I can't say MBAs have got failures.  As you know, so it's all the expectation

1593    of the individual. How the MBAs are sold to the individuals, I don't know, how it's sold.

1594    In other words, an MBA marketing, the market that can make huge claims, I don't know

1595    that.  So, I can't talk about that.

1596

1597    RN      Let me ask you the question then, in curbing the expectations, or in managing

1598    the expectations of what the MBA gives you as a student and as a business, how

1599    would you suggest that that be managed?

1600

1601    C4      I think that there must be a realistic marketing or presentation of the purpose,

1602    and the unique contribution of an MBA.

1603

1604    RN      And, this is on the part of the business school?

1605

1606    C4      Yes, obviously, now I know, you see, business schools can make huge claims,

1607    because they might not be aligned to a reputable tertiary institutions.  Like, Gibs, Wits,

1608    University of Stellenbosch, those are reputable business schools, they are aligned to

1609    reputable institutions, such as universities of Pretoria, of Wits, of Stellenbosch, or

1610    Jo'burg...you know?  So, those, I can't talk about that.  I think they're pitching correctly

1611    but I don't know how they pitch.  I don't think they will be unethical in how they pitch,

1612    but there are business schools, you can find, go onto the email, internet now and you

1613    can probably find 20 business schools in Jo'burg.

1614

1615    RN      Yes.

1616

1617    C4      Anybody can sell anything, and I don't know, so I don't know how they pitch,

1618    how they sell, so I can't talk about them.  My dealings are with Gibs, and to an extent,

1619    Wits, but that's people I've dealt with, and to an extent, the old, not old...UNISA School

1620    for Business Leadership.  So, I've dealt with people from there, and from Stellenbosch,

1621    obviously.

1622

1623    So, if you talk business schools, it's not a single, it's not a simple concept.  It's too

1624    wide, it's like talking cars.  What car are you talking about?  I'm talking about places

1625    like Gibs, which is reputable, you know?

1626

1627    So, what are you talking about, if you talk business schools?

1628

1629    RN      I'm talking about in general, a business school is any school that offers an MBA,

1630    and you've drawn a distinction here between one that's reputable, i.e. linked to a

1631    longstanding university or someone who has a reputable history.  Versus the business

1632    schools who actually offer almost over the counter MBAs?

1633

1634    C4      Yes.

1635

1636    RN      Over the internet or wherever, so I think that's the distinction that you've drawn

1637    here, which is very interesting, and it's a point that I'll make a note of.  So then, in terms

1638    of business schools, you've talked about your dealings with Gibs, Wits, Stellenbosch

1639    and these things, how have you achieved benefits for the business school, your

1640    business, and let's say, your students, and maybe not necessarily the MBA but you've

1641    said you run some programmes?

1642

1643    C4      Yes, if we don't talk MBA, we've received quite good benefits from our dealing

1644    with Gibs.  We're running an executive programme, and a senior programme.  These

1645    programmes are about, consist about on average about eight days per programme.

1646    The people do an action learning assignment on top of that.

1647

1648    We have designed the programme, I specifically was involved in designing the

1649    programme with Gibs and with our executive directors of the business, of AAAA, so we

1650    obtained the needs from the businesses, executive directors.  I discussed that with

1651    Gibs, and we came with a draft curriculum, that draft I've tested with the executives

1652    again, and then we have finalised the two curricula and one of the executive

1653    programme, and we revamp that every year.

1654

1655    So, we get feedback from Gibs, we get feedback from our students, and in terms of

1656    those programmes, we think that we are quite close to our business requirements.

1657

1658    RN      Do you go through this process then, i.e. so when you refine, so you've been to

1659    this process, it's been approved.  The following year, Intech says, I think you should do

1660    these ten things, you choose maybe two or three things there, then you retest it with

1661    the...

1662    C4    Yes, several things, yes.

1663

1664    RN    It's almost a feedback loop there?

1665

1666    C4    There's definitely one, and then...

1667

1668    RN    And, if business needs change, how do you cater for that?

1669

1670    C4    We just talk to Gibs, and we say, this coming programme, senior programmes
1671    for example, let's look at the curriculum, what have you got?  This, this, this, okay I
1672    want you to put something for us there, take that out, whatever and then they say,
1673    okay, we've got this, with TTTT at Gibs, and then with RRRR, who is he?  RRRR, that's
1674    actually where we started, I started with him and with TTTT, so we've put...and they're
1675    very...so, we keep them focused on our needs because we design the curriculum with
1676    them, in regard to our needs.

1677

1678    And, there is benefits.  There are benefits there.

1679

1680    RN    What sort of benefits there?

1681

1682    C4    It gives the people a toolbox of management, those other stuff.  It leads to
1683    personal growth, it leads to...for us, we got a situation where we are developing an
1684    AAAA brand and an AAAA awareness amongst our senior executive managers.  We
1685    also identify, it helps us to identify our high potential people, see how they perform on
1686    that programme.

1687

1688    So, that's the benefits we've got, and that's in-house obviously.  Remember, we don't
1689    share with outside people, but in-house, we are so big, and we've got so many
1690    divisions, that we can benefit to that.

1691

1692    RN    What would you think, so...if you have experts, let's take the logistics
1693    department, you're an expert at logistics, and delivery of that logistics?  Now, in the
1694    MBA, there's various courses like operations management, where it's...they teach you
1695    areas of logistics, and I think certain areas of your business can be valuable there.

1696

1697 In terms of helping design that curriculum, would you be interested, in terms of MBA
1698 now, would you be interested in providing input into that block?  Would it add any value
1699 to you?

1700

1701 C4      No, we don't go for technical knowledge of the specific divisions.  Have you
1702 heard about Hersey and Blanchard?

1703

1704 RN      No, I haven't.

1705

1706 C4      You haven't, how old are you?

1707

1708 RN      32.

1709

1710 C4      You must go and see the work of Hersey and Blanchard.  I'm busy drawing you
1711 something.  If you take that, that is supervisory management.  We're going up in the
1712 organisation, that's non-management, that is ground working people.  There is middle
1713 management, there is senior middle management, this is first line management.
1714 There's top management and this is the whole thing, there's senior management.

1715

1716 If you take that, I'll just get some colours.  If the capability or competencies of a person,
1717 what we're talking about, look at that triangle, and we call that technical, professional,
1718 technical capabilities or competencies.  And, you look at that triangle, and we call that
1719 strategic or conceptual capabilities.   That's that, so the higher you go in an
1720 organisation, the smaller your technical competencies.

1721

1722 RN      Yes.

1723

1724 C4      I'm going to actually even complete the picture for you.  This is your people or
1725 human capability.  So, if we now look at that, so remember, there's our cut off, and
1726 there's our cut off.  So, the higher you go in organisations, the less important technical
1727 capability gets, the more important your strategic and conceptual capability.  Your
1728 human, let's call it leadership human capability stays important, as you go throughout
1729 the organisation.  It's constant, you see that?

1730

1731 Now, Hersey and Blanchard actually in a very long time ago, 1982, or something there,
1732 they came up with this model, so if you look at the business school, where do we pitch?
1733 So, you ask me about logistics, we don't go logistics, technical. If you go into the motor
1734 industry, this thing looks different than from the logistics industry, you understand that?
1735

1736 RN    Yes, that's right.

1737

1738 C4    But, there are certain things that stays the same, your human leadership and
1739 then strategic, conceptual. And so, what do we teach, how do I build my curriculum if I
1740 talk to Gibs? I tell them, forget that pink, we're not interested in that. We're looking at
1741 this, you see this portion? So, we break this down in certain things, where we cover
1742 the strategic, conceptual and human.

1743

1744 Now, in this, we're also covering financial stuff, but that is financial management on this
1745 level. It's not accounting. An accountant would have a different technical, an
1746 accountant would sit there, he's got an accountant thing. If you're an operations guy in
1747 the logistics, you must know operations, you must know how to operate, and that's the
1748 part of your technical, so if we go here, we don't teach them that.

1749

1750 You know, we're not teaching, because we've got motor people, logistics, insurance,
1751 we've got everybody so we don't focus on the people. You can take that with you.

1752

1753 RN    Thank you for that. That actually makes a lot of sense, we've been through that
1754 model, I remember it, now that you mention it. It definitely makes sense.

1755

1756 In concluding, just two questions quickly. How does Gibs support and interact with you
1757 and the students on your programmes?

1758

1759 C4    No, they communicate constantly with them. They provide learning coaches
1760 which deal with those people, so the action learning assignments are communicated to
1761 those people, assistance from the Gibs side, for our students to do, to study the action
1762 learning, to put together their presentation and their work, their actual small dissertation
1763 or whatever. The coaches deal with the people directly, so our people are divided in
1764 teams, and the teams are assigned to learning coaches, and those coaches are on a
1765 constant, continuous basis, meet with the students, and give them guidance and so

1766    forth, and then what we have.  We also have a panel, our own panel, that evaluates the

1767    people.  It's consisting of our directors and so on, but...

1768

1769    RN    That evaluates your students?

1770

1771    C4    Yes, and the action learning and so forth, but Gibs would also provide

1772    assistance in that regard, and they would orientate and coach our panel, and actually,

1773    we are quite happy with the support that the students get.  Now, they don't....support

1774    when the students get back to the work environment, that's not from their side.  It's not

1775    necessary, they are in the work environment, and...

1776

1777    RN    Where does that support come from?

1778

1779    C4    It comes from executive members, because the executives have been on our

1780    executive programme, so senior people are now on that programme, and that support

1781    comes from the executive people.  Also, we have in the organisation, we've got action

1782    learning sponsors, it's called.  So, the sponsors are people who take responsibility, the

1783    sponsors have been through the programme, they're senior.  Actually, on an executive

1784    level and so on.  So, the senior managers would then form groups, and they would go

1785    to their sponsor and the sponsor, these are now people from AAAA assist them with

1786    the assignment and direct them and so forth.

1787

1788    RN    This obviously has a direct benefit because they are implementing little...

1789

1790    C4    Yes, they are, they are doing implementing, they're researching implementable

1791    projects for us in the organisation.

1792

1793    RN    That's excellent, and finally, what do you think business schools, organisations

1794    and students together can do to improve the impact of an MBA or a similar type of

1795    programme?

1796

1797    C4    I can't answer that.  I'm sorry, because there are so many business schools, I

1798    can't say.  I think they must just be, deliver more to the demands of business, or

1799    industry.    In other words, the business environment, the landscape, business

1800    landscape, the business demands.  They must be realistic, but I think Gibs are there.

1801  I'm certainly not unhappy with Gibs.  I really don't, I know also Stellenbosch is very
1802  good, Wits is good.  Those, I've got no problem with, but I haven't really dealt with the
1803  other non-reputable business schools.

1804

1805  RN    That's an interesting point.  Is there anything else you want to add?

1806

1807  C4    No, that's good.

1808

1809  RN    I really want to thank you for your time.

1810

1811  C4    It's a pleasure.

1812

1813  RN    And, I look forward to, as soon as I'm done with this, I'll give you a copy of it,
1814  and then you can see some interesting things in there.

1815

1816  C4    That would be interesting.  Thanks very much.

1817 **APPENDIX F: TRANSCRIPTS OF COMPANY 5 (C5)**

1818 **Speaker key**

1819

1820 RN    Ravindran Naicker

1821 C5    Company 5

1822

1823 RN    So as you know I'm Ravi Naicker, right, and I am trying to understand as part of
1824 my research how collaborate learning and collaboration basically between business
1825 schools, organisations, and students, can help improve the impact of the MBA.  So just
1826 to let you… I need obviously your consent to conduct this interview, just to let you know
1827 that you can withdraw at any time you want to.  If you have any concerns, you can
1828 contact myself or VVVV, and everything or all the information will be kept confidential.
1829 Okay, so do I have your consent?

1830

1831 C5    Absolutely, yes.

1832

1833 RN    Okay, great.  So just to understand what's your background, C5?

1834

1835 C5    I was MD of KKKK Business School, so I come from a business school
1836 environment.  I was the director of education at FFFF, and then I was a strategy
1837 consultant for three years.  And my academic background is an industrial sociologist
1838 with an MBA as well.

1839

1840 RN    Okay, great.  So let's understand firstly, right, so what do you believe are the
1841 successes of the MBA?

1842

1843    C5    I think that the breadth that a good MBA could offer a student, because there's
1844    obviously a number of people who don't come from traditional business backgrounds.
1845    And when they then go into management in leadership positions, an MBA is able to
1846    bridge that gap between being a technical expert, and what is required of you as a
1847    leader or manager within an organisation, both public and private.

1848

1849    RN    And what else do you think are the successes of the MBA?

1850

1851    C5    I think that what an MBA potentially does is gives the student the ability to work
1852    across different disciplines.  So often a good MBA is around who sits in the MBA, so
1853    access to different perspective, and therefore processes, team projects, and team work
1854    for me is one of the differentiators.  And then certainly I wouldn't say academic faculty,
1855    but faculty overall over on around being able to bring different perspectives to the table
1856    where the students would otherwise not be able to meet business leaders, and school
1857    leaders.  I think those are the three most important ones.  And then obviously it is also
1858    around best practice potentially, good MBAs are able to bring some best practice, and
1859    getting students to work in understanding this way.

1860

1861    RN    Okay, excellent.  And leading on from the successes, what would you suggest
1862    then are the failures of the MBAs today?

1863

1864    C5    I think some of those who haven't changed over time.  It's still around the fact
1865    that when MBAs become too theoretical, when they become too academic and it
1866    becomes hugely problematic.  Also where MBAs make use of faculty that are actual not
1867    practitioners, so research-based academic institutions have got a challenge.  Whereas
1868    institutions that is able to bring real business expertise, be it public or private sector to
1869    the table, entrepreneurs, and really people that practice.  That is the difference
1870    between as good MBA, you know, and not a good MBA.

1871

1872    I think that is a challenge that we made, I think still… and it doesn't go away, but there
1873    is often not integration between the different subjects in an MBA.  And that remains a
1874    problem because business doesn't work like that.  We don't have a perspective on
1875    finance, and a perspective on marketing, and a perspective on strategy, and in practice
1876    those three things live together.  So the second failing is around the lack of integration.

1877

1878    And the third thing is around an MBA that lives only in a business school versus an
1879    MBA that takes into account what happens in economy, what are the core issues that
1880    business people face, and how traditional is the way of teaching.  Because I think the
1881    reality is that theoretical MBAs fail specifically because adults don't learn in classes.

1882

1883    RN    So that's an interesting point, right, in terms of adults not learning in classes.
1884    What would you put forward as some of the most effective ways in your experience to
1885    get adults to learn?

1886

1887    C5    Well the reality is that if we're looking at where does learning happen, and
1888    irrespective of whether it is totally academic or not, 70% of learning happens on the job
1889    and although… MBAs obviously try and inculcate, you know, that take learning back
1890    into the organisation.  In practice what it means in learning divisions within
1891    organisations, is they are at a huge advantage because they're embedded within the
1892    business.

1893

1894    And the second issue is around, you know, mentoring and coaching, and mentoring,
1895    and how often we use internal mentors for leaders in an organisation.  And it is
1896    challenging from a coaching and mentoring perspective where you are running these
1897    processes within a business school, and how do you get people that understand the
1898    dynamics within organisations to coach and mentor.  So you need quite as high level of
1899    individual that is able to mentor successfully really within an MBA.

1900

1901    The third is around the actual theoretical knowledge needed to practice. So simply

1902    there is some information that you need to understand in finance before you can

1903    practice, and that is true for any other discipline as well. So in that 70%, how you work

1904    through best practice visits, how you work through emergence, how you work through,

1905    you know, networking, how you work practically sort of much more of a blended

1906    approach is an actual fact, you know, how you dialogue case studies rather than, you

1907    know, getting people to read a city page case study, which is not necessarily the best

1908    way. But that would be my perspective.

1909

1910    RN     And then how have you in the past, I mean, you ran KKKK, and you've had a

1911    couple of really senior positions, how have you… or what have you done to ensure that

1912    there's benefits achieved for all three parties, that's the students, the business school,

1913    and the organisation? What have you done specifically?

1914

1915    C5     I think first and foremost when you're working with corporate clients, and you're

1916    actually contracting them as an organisation rather than just as an individual, it does

1917    make a difference, because, you know, if you've got, for example, 25 students from

1918    Nedbank, it is a sensible approach to actually understand the organisation in a much

1919    better way.

1920

1921    The second thing is around business sponsorship, and how actively a business school

1922    should be engaging, not only the learner, but also the organisation.

1923

1924    And then thirdly, the practical relevance of projects done by MBA students, because

1925    the reality is back in the boardroom the only thing I'm interested in is does it make a

1926    difference in my business, what are the metrics around it, and how am I going to

1927    implement it?

1928

1929    So the reality is that if business schools are able to engage… and then the fourth thing

1930    is around what relevance can the business school have for me as an organisation,

1931 because clearly I would be much more interested in connecting with a business school
1932 where I'm getting business advice, rather than a business school that, you know, takes
1933 hundreds of hours from an employee's time with actual no real tangible benefit other
1934 than what the employee, be it he or she, is doing better.

1935

1936 So it's a significant partnering shift in the role of the business school.

1937

1938 RN     So partnering shift, right, so let me try and understand what you just said.  So
1939 let's say there's an organisation and it's dealing with an organisation on an
1940 organisational basis rather than an individual.  So let's say you've got a larger
1941 organisation with let's say 20 or however many students, looking at the needs of that
1942 business, and ensuring that those students then deliver back to the business, and
1943 some of those initiatives would be projects.  And it's about the business school being
1944 very close to the organisation and giving feedback, and helping through this actual…
1945 helping through the implementation of some of these projects in terms of coaching the
1946 individual, providing them with the support.  So that ultimately what was contracted for
1947 at the beginning is what's delivered at the end through an MBA.

1948

1949 C5     Absolutely.  Yes.  So it's not around inviting the business for finger suppers
1950 when, you know, at the end of the first year.  It is around how you actively engage with
1951 that business, as an example, you would have been taught Nicola Klein, I assume.

1952

1953 RN     Yes, I have.

1954

1955 C5     So Nicola's expertise in strategic branding puts her in a very good position
1956 given where each of the banks are at the moment to work with students with projects in
1957 collaboration with business sponsors within the bank, rather than students doing
1958 slightly inane projects around things that don't in actual fact have business value.  So
1959 the closer the business school is to the business with the employees doing the actual
1960 programme, the easier it is to facilitate some of those conversations.

1961  RN    Okay, so you've talked through.  I get the value that would be added to
1962  business if we achieve some of these projects, and some of these sponsored projects,
1963  as you said.  Because then it basically talks directly to the strategy of the bank, and it
1964  talks to exactly the outcomes that the bank wants to achieve if it's a bank, or what not,
1965  right?  What benefits would there be to the student in this instance?

1966

1967  C5    Oh, yes.  A very, very important benefit because fundamentally you know that
1968  some organisations, some students have challenging organisations, because the
1969  reality of an MBA is the fact that there is time commitment to it.  There's commitment to
1970  access, in other words, you know, the type of research, the type of projects, the type of
1971  processes that you need to do in your MBA, it is in actual fact facilitated if you have
1972  access to organisational information, access to business sponsors, and brand
1973  ambassadors, within the organisation.  So there's huge benefit for the employee to
1974  have a business school partner then differently.

1975

1976  RN    Would you say…? I mean, effectively, right, if a business supports a student to
1977  this extent by giving them access and helping them to do, and helping them implement,
1978  strategic projects, there's obviously quite significant upside for the students.  Now in
1979  terms of the student and their access and time, I get that… will there probably be better
1980  transfer of learning from school to work?

1981

1982  C5    Yes.  Sorry, I didn't hear the last part of the question, apologies.

1983

1984  RN    So will there better transfer of learning from school to work if they're
1985  implementing projects at work, based on what they learned at the MBA?

1986

1987  C5    Yes and the other way round as well.  Remember that if you're working with
1988  faculty, it is clearly impossible for faculty to have a keen understanding of all
1989  businesses, and business areas, right.  So what the organisation then inevitably does

1990    is actually also drive the learning for the business school, and for faculty within the
1991    business school.  So it ends up being quite a win-win situation.

1992

1993    RN    That's brilliant.  So that's excellent, so basically there's almost three-way
1994    feedback loop here?

1995

1996    C5    Yes.

1997

1998    RN    In that, you know, having contracted and partnered upfront, students are getting
1999    to apply what they learned in the MBA, and then faulty, who's also close to these
2000    projects, and these implementations, then learn and take it back to the business
2001    schools.  And then obviously they can then update their curriculum going forward I
2002    suppose.

2003

2004    C5    Yes, absolutely.  And I think that that's often where there is a mismatch
2005    between fundamentally how well the faculty is schooled in what the business
2006    challenges are faced by organisations.  So often what you have a sense of is what
2007    faculty is teaching may not be as updated.  So, you know, in banking we've had
2008    automatic changes in the last two to three years, within most good, you know, within
2009    most banks.

2010

2011    So the whole thing around faculty saying, yes, but you know 15 years ago, you know, I
2012    was a business banker in EEEE, really just doesn't work.  So it is also around ensuring
2013    that it is not the student that is faced with faculty that is in actual fact not understanding
2014    the current business realities, and often what happens a student is teaching faculty in
2015    essence in class.  So those conversations that surround, you know, you don't
2016    understand my business, because these are the challenges we now face, you know,
2017    and, and, and, could certainly be less challenging if faculty is looped into some
2018    organisation.

2019    RN      That sounds great.  What other means of collaboration do you think we could…

2020    or business schools and organisations, and even students… so let me go back to your

2021    mentoring point, right.  Would alumni make good mentors in your opinion?

2022

2023    C5      Yes.

2024

2025    RN      And how would that be facilitated, how would you suggest that be facilitated?

2026    Let me tell you…

2027

2028    C5      We are actually in this instant we are… we should be learning from our

2029    American colleagues, because the way in which American business schools contract

2030    both from a financial perspective, from an emotional perspective, with the alumni, is not

2031    something that I have seen in South Africa.  So we have a lot to learn from that, okay.

2032

2033    We don't leverage our alumni in South Africa the way in which it is done in the States.

2034    The pride at which… because before I took over the business school, I did some

2035    international benchmarking around, you know, what is out there that is different from a

2036    sort of a more traditional approach to MBAs.  And what struck me, and I spent some

2037    time at the University of Michigan, what struck me was the level, not only the sort of

2038    level of faculty which we all believe is… we take for granted, but the level of guest

2039    speaking, and alumni associations, and how American institutions track where their

2040    alumni is placed, so they have an enormous emphasis on sort of a lifelong alumni

2041    contract.

2042

2043    And we never do that, in South Africa you get phoned by your university, you know,

2044    that they want to… they either want money from you, or they want some inane do for

2045    you to come and attend.  In America it's around your responsibility once you've

2046    graduated from a business school in what you will be giving back to that business

2047    school.  And clearly obviously often it is money as well, but how alumni stays involved

2048    in a lot of business schools in America.  We do have some lessons to learn.

2049 RN    So in terms of contracting, right, in positioning the MBA upfront, typically a
2050 business school should then, or it would be idea, if they positioned that this is a lifelong
2051 contract that we enter into, and these are our expectations upfront before someone
2052 undertakes the MBA.  Would that be the right time to do it?

2053

2054 C5    I think so, and also the reality is after only when would you then can contract is
2055 if the previous alumni's in the room, and, you know, Americans are maybe a bit over
2056 the top with things, but in some ways it's around, you know, handing over the banner of
2057 the next level and generation of leadership, and students from one alumni to another.

2058

2059 So I do believe that that will be quite, you know, that will be quite impactful.  And also
2060 the fact that, you know, when I was at the business school, one of the things that I
2061 always did was we had a guest speaker programme, and it was 15 MBA bursaries that
2062 we awarded every year for the 15 guest speakers we invited.  And at that naming
2063 convention of that bursary would be the person's name.  So, you know, we would have
2064 QQQQ, SSSS, we would have [unclear].  And fundamentally what you're doing is
2065 you're building brand ambassadors within an organisation for your business school
2066 irrespective of them actually having been part of your alumni.  So I mean those are
2067 ways in which you can do it.

2068

2069 RN    And then coming back to students, right, so we understand what business can
2070 do to support students, so we understand what business schools can do to actually
2071 connect more with businesses.  What can students do better?

2072

2073 C5    I think the reality is that often what happens is that students sometimes see an
2074 MBA as an individual learning journey, and in some ways it is, I mean we all know that.
2075 But often what does not happen is that the students may not be making the
2076 connections back into the organisation proactively enough as well.  So, you know, give
2077 those a great guest speaker programme.  When it is successful it is around how
2078 students make sure that they have the right people from the organisation in the room
2079 when they have great guest speaker events.

2080     Or the way in which, as an example, every year you have McKinsey, McKinsey does as
2081     lot of business reports, sometimes even before it's out in the marketplace.  Why don't
2082     the students engage with the business to in actual fact show the business what they
2083     are learning, what the framework is, how do they connect the dots for the organisation.
2084     And I think that that's not something that often students do proactively enough, it's as if
2085     sometimes they sort of wait for the business school to take the first step.  And I think it
2086     is a partnership rather than, well, you know, the business school needs to invite my
2087     boss, it's around actively engaging and making the dots between what I'm learning as a
2088     student, and how it will be relevant for my organisation, and how I bring my
2089     organisation into the room when we have these conversations.

2090

2091     RN     That's great.  So, C5, in closing if I you could make this as perfect as it could
2092     be, right, so what do you think these three parties can do better further in terms of what
2093     you've suggested?  Is there anything else that you think that they could and should be
2094     doing?

2095

2096     C5     No, I think if I had to give one to each party, I think business schools need to be
2097     business relevant, and practical and appropriate in their approach.  I think the
2098     organisation needs to be involved in that relationship, so it needs to have practical and
2099     relevant ROI as well.  And the third thing that the student needs to actively make those
2100     links, so that on the one side they have brand ambassadors in their business, and on
2101     the other side they have the practical information needed to do the right projects within
2102     an MBA, and to actually make it business relevant, rather than doing projects that does
2103     not have business value. So to connect those dots. Yes.

2104

2105     RN     That's great.  That sounds great.  Okay, so thank you so much for your time,
2106     C5, I really appreciate it.  It's been really good chatting to you, I think you've given me a
2107     lot of insight and information.  And it's quite good to hear that the message seems to be
2108     quite consistent in terms of what the three parties need to do to actually get a
2109     collaborate relationship.

2110

2111    C5      Great stuff, I hope it was valuable.

2112

2113    RN      Yes, it was actually very valuable.  I'm just going to take you off speaker now.

2114 **APPENDIX G: TRANSCRIPTS OF COMPANY 6 (C6)**

2115 **Speaker key**

2116

2117 RN    Ravindran Naicker

2118 C6A   Respondent 1

2119 C6B   Respondent 2

2120

2121 RN    Thank you, C6A and C6B, for joining me today.  Let me give you a brief.  My
2122 research is basically covering how collaboration between business schools,
2123 organisations, and students, can improve the impact of the MBA.  And a lot of what I've
2124 found to my research is that that process doesn't work very well.  And I'm trying to
2125 figure out how do we get this process working.

2126

2127 So just in brief, to start with you, C6A, your career history.

2128

2129 C6A   I have been in learning and development roles my whole life, either as a
2130 consultant with training companies, or as an L&D manager in corporate.

2131

2132 RN    And then your academic qualification?

2133

2134 C6A   I have honours in psychology, and HDipEdAd, higher diploma for educators of
2135 adults from [unclear].

2136

2137 RN    Excellent, I know these.  And yourself, C6B?

2138

2139    C6B    I have been in C6 more than 25 years, I've come out the line, and I've been HR
2140    now about three, three or four years, yes.

2141

2142    RN    Four years.

2143

2144    C6B    And I'm in this skills development facilitator role for about a year and a half now.
2145    Qualifications, I have an ODETDP.

2146

2147    RN    OD?

2148

2149    C6B    ETDP.

2150

2151    C6A    Occupationally directed…

2152

2153    RN    ETDP?

2154

2155    C6A    Occupationally directed education training and development practitioner.
2156    ODETDP.

2157

2158    RN    Excellent, great.  So let's start.

2159

2160    C6B    Plus you are busy with the next one.

2161

2162    C6A    No, but you're also a registered moderator in SETA, and all that stuff.

2163    C6B    Yes.

2164

2165    C6A    Because that's quite important.

2166

2167    C6B    So I'm registered with ETD SETA, and BANKSETA as a registered assessor
2168    and moderator.

2169

2170    RN    Okay, excellent.  So let's start with the MBA, right.  My focus is predominantly
2171    the MBA, and adult learning, okay.  Let's focus on the MBA, right.  What do you believe
2172    are the successes of the MBA, based on the experiences that you've had with people
2173    that have attended the MBA, that you've funded, you know, that sort of stuff?  Tell us
2174    what do you think the successes are?

2175

2176    C6B    I actually don't think the successes have been great, I don't believe.  Personally
2177    I think the MBA is becoming very much like the BCom was five years ago, and I don't
2178    think we always see the academic learning applied in the business environment.  So it
2179    becomes more or less an academic exercise and the fact that you've got an MBA,
2180    more than that we don't very often see the application.

2181

2182    RN    Tell me more about that in terms of what are you experiencing?

2183

2184    C6B    Well we don't, I mean we're not hearing anything.  I mean, if we look at people
2185    that have applied for bursaries with an MBA, we're not hearing major strides in
2186    changing business, or influencing business, to do things differently whether it's a
2187    process, whether it's products, whether it's strategy.  We're not seeing or hearing
2188    anything that's wow.

2189

2190    RN    Okay.

2191

2192 C6A    And that would maybe tie in with a perception, and I think it is a perception, that
2193 people do MBAs for themselves, and for their CVs, rather than seeing it as a business
2194 value add for their current roles.   I'm saying that's a perception rather than my
2195 perception, or reality.

2196

2197 RN    Is that a general perception across the organisation?

2198

2199 C6A    If I chat with other learning and development practitioners that would be a fairly
2200 general perception is that MBAs are for the benefit of the individual and his or her
2201 marketability, rather than there be a direct expectation of payback to organisations.

2202

2203 RN    While we're on that point of expectations, what is your expectation, or what is
2204 your experience of the expectations of the MBA students?

2205

2206 C6A    How MBAs expect their organisations to support them?

2207

2208 RN    Yes.

2209

2210 C6A    MBAs are quite rare in C6, so I can talk for Exco's expectation, Exco's view of a
2211 person applying for an MBA is that that's a good thing, because they're wanting… so
2212 Exco's perception of an MBA is that it does provide a broader view of general
2213 management.   So they see value in that.

2214

2215 However, MBAs were singled out by Exco to ask for the 50% contribution from the
2216 person themselves, A, because of the cost, and B, because that would truly
2217 demonstrate that someone was committed.   So there is a wide spread acceptance that

2218    MBAs are a lot of work, and very demanding for the individual, and that in itself is
2219    almost… if someone passes an MBA, it's demonstration that they've got backbone.  So
2220    I think again that's a perceptual issue that if somebody's enrolled in an MBA, paid for
2221    half of it, that they are made of good stuff.

2222

2223    RN    That sounds good.

2224

2225    C6A    So it's not about the content so much, as about what it says about the person.

2226

2227    RN    And then, you touched on it briefly, what do you think are the failings of an
2228    MBA?

2229

2230    C6B    Explain?

2231

2232    RN    Well you said it's very… you know, it becomes a very academic exercise, so the
2233    business doesn't really see any practical applications or benefit from it directly.  Again,
2234    you've touched on the point that it becomes, it's a more personal journey, rather than
2235    meeting a business need.  So I'm interested in unpacking a bit more of why hasn't the
2236    MBA produced what you as a business would want.

2237

2238    C6A    And maybe I'm behind the times, because I've seen particularly with you, but
2239    I'm not speaking to you personally, two engagements with business around MBA.  The
2240    one was the work you did on the talent, the other is now, this piece.  And that's been
2241    the first time of any of our MBA people that I've seen MBA assignments, or work,
2242    directly linking to the business.

2243

2244    But bearing in mind that I'm in a support function, so it could be that MBA students are
2245    engaging with the business around their thesis, that's with a THE, not SHE.  So it could

2246 be that the MBAs are engaging with their business around the MBA thesis. But in
2247 terms of looping that into the formal learning functions in an organisation to either
2248 disseminate that, or create a formal expectation of the students, that hasn't happened.
2249 So when you say the collaboration between business schools and business, I'm saying
2250 there isn't any, not formalised in the way that there is in a learnership space. It's
2251 extremely poor between the learning provider, the organisation, and the learner.

2252

2253 RN     So tell me about that, what's different, tell me about that piece there. How do
2254 you work together?

2255

2256 C6A     In a learnership environment?

2257

2258 RN     In a learnership environment.

2259

2260 C6B     I think predominantly it's based more on a partnership as opposed to a
2261 business arrangement. And it's always done with workplace application in mind. So if
2262 people need to do assignments, or they need to submit portfolios of evidence, it always
2263 has to link directly into a workplace application. That's the evidence they provide.

2264

2265 So at the beginning of a learnership, everything is linked to business application, and I
2266 think that's where it differs from the MBA. There isn't a requirement that C6 get
2267 involved and have a say in terms of a research project, for example. So the person
2268 could research anything and maybe some of the research projects have absolutely
2269 nothing to do with our business environment. They could go…

2270

2271 C6A     Or maybe they do, but we don't know.

2272

2273    C6B    Well it's possible, we're just not involved.  And maybe that's where the business

2274    schools could collaborate with business.   You know, Exco may have a particular

2275    research project that they want undertaking, and it would be idea that one of the MBA

2276    students maybe pick up on that research.

2277

2278    RN    So you make a very interesting point.  Based on this requirement, right, so if

2279    Exco came up, and I'm just bouncing an idea off you, if Exco came up with a list of

2280    research topics that they'd like researched.  And then having said that, you know that

2281    you've got a couple of MBAs at C6, and if you created, i.e., a workplace

2282    application/action learning project based on those topics that Exco, those broad topics

2283    Exco, would that add value?

2284

2285    C6A    Hugely.

2286

2287    RN    To the business.

2288

2289    C6A    Hugely.

2290

2291    C6B    Massive, massive.

2292

2293    C6A    And I just want to make a link back to your… because you said it's more of a

2294    partnership than a business arrangement backing learnerships, but there is a formal

2295    three-way contract.  So it is way more formal in terms of the business's involvement.

2296    So the business has to commit to providing coaching, and line management support,

2297    line management supervision almost.

2298

2299    C6B    And involvement, yes.  And they sign them off for each individual.

2300

2301    RN    Who would typically sign that off?

2302

2303    C6B    The line manager, if we're talking learnerships, the line managers sign off all
2304    their submissions.

2305

2306    RN    So, in an MBA, if you've got five or 10 people on the MBA, if you had that same
2307    level of commitment, so one, the line manager commits to, as you said, to supporting
2308    individual to providing the coaching, and what not.  What would the individual have to
2309    commit to, and what would the business school have to commit to?

2310

2311    C6A    The individual would have to commit to doing projects that are work related, and
2312    to taking responsibility for communicating those internally.

2313

2314    RN    So would that be then, i.e., if I'd learned a module on accounting, or if I'd
2315    learned a module on leadership, I would then come back and come up with a project to
2316    demonstrate that I've learned a certain…

2317

2318    C6A    Or possibly just have a conversation, so it wouldn't have to a project in each
2319    module, unless each module… because most of your modules have exams, rather
2320    than projects.

2321

2322    RN    Exam and assignments, yes.

2323

2324    C6A    Okay. So that those assignments would have to be co-signed by the SME in the
2325    area, because I think most line managers would have a heart attack if we asked them
2326    to sign off an MBA's project on an area outside of their discipline.

2327    C6B    You know what maybe a good idea, much like we did with the LDP, we had
2328    the…

2329

2330    C6A    PDF type role?

2331

2332    C6B    Yes.  And I mean that would be something that would suit the MBA learners.

2333

2334    RN    So the PDF is effectively a mentor, right?

2335

2336    C6A    No, they're not.  So let's be very precise about our terminology here.  A mentor
2337    tells you what to do, so a mentor shares their own wise experience with you.  A coach
2338    helps you come to your own realisations around your skills and development
2339    requirements.  So coaching is a much more interactive, you've got the answers, let me
2340    help you get to them.

2341

2342    A PDF is a kind of combination, that's why we gave it a whole new name, personal
2343    development facilitator.  The role of the PDF in the LDP is not to be a subject matter
2344    expert, is to keep you honest with regard to your own learning process.  So the PDF's
2345    role is to say you've got assignments due, let me see what you've done.  Not to critique
2346    the content, although some of them are able to, but it's not an expectation.  So it pulls
2347    in your wisdom around how you can use the stuff you're given in the organisation, how
2348    you could improve your visibility.

2349

2350    So there's an aspect of mentorship and guidance, but the coaching in terms of
2351    questioning and grilling people to come to their own realisations is around their own
2352    learning contract.  So I don't impose any of my expectations, I'm outside of the line
2353    manager relationship, that's important, and ideally I'm outside of your function as well,
2354    as I can't fall into the trap of getting into job content.  I'm there to say what are you

2355     doing to apply your learning in your environment. Not to tell you how to do it, I'm there
2356     to force you to do yourself.

2357

2358     C6B    Which you would actually…

2359

2360     C6A    It's a very subtle role, and I'm not sure what your experience of your PDF was.

2361

2362     C6B    It's quite important because if you look at a PDF at poor staff at a lower level,
2363     they would have to be a lot more involved in terms of holding hands. But if you're
2364     looking at MBA students, and exactly what C6A said, they need to do the stuff for
2365     themselves, so there's no coaching in the sense let me give you, feed you, and help
2366     you. So I think at that level the PDF in my mind would be actually a good idea.

2367

2368     RN    So ideally, I mean based on what you've said, the PDF at a level of an MBA
2369     would obviously be a very senior person in the organisation, and their role would be to
2370     almost open you up to applying what you've learned in the organisation.

2371

2372     C6A    Yes, they would be the catalyst or the Jiminy Cricket conscience just saying,
2373     okay, so you've done finance, so? And maybe that ties to the other approach, which
2374     would be to more formally say, every assignment around a particular discipline would
2375     get a once over from an SME in that discipline, and be countersigned, and that would
2376     have to be the organisations commitment.

2377

2378     So if you've done a finance assignment, Andrew would take a look at it, or Michael
2379     would take a look at it, and add a comment and sign if off. Because then at least
2380     there's a seed that says, we've got some embedded knowledge, someone's done a bit
2381     of thinking about this area, hooked right into this project or that project. Because I
2382     mean, this is an unfair example because he's funded himself, but PPPP's I think
2383     finishing this year as well. And I've not heard PPPP's name being mentioned, well

2384    look, PPPP's done his MBA, or doing his MBA, maybe he's got a view on this.  Maybe

2385    it happens in the office space, please accept that we're coming from a support function.

2386    Are you interviewing line as well?

2387

2388    RN    Yes.

2389

2390    C6A    In your project.  Okay.  It'll be interesting to see if they experience it differently.

2391

2392    RN    I mean effectively I've interviewed a lot of the L&D HR type of people, yes.  I've

2393    had one or two line people who've actually done the MBA and are now heading up a

2394    HR space and what not.  I think the views are very common, the lack of collaboration is

2395    clear.  What you've come up with, a PDF, is almost a unique approach to it, i.e., yes,

2396    people have mentioned mentors, and what not, but this is a different approach, and I

2397    think this is quite useful.

2398

2399    C6A    In terms of defining it, quite subtly differently.

2400

2401    RN    Yes. And it's getting it… and it's doing these things like getting an SME to sign

2402    off on the…

2403

2404    C6A    Assignments.

2405

2406    RN    Assignments, very interesting view.

2407

2408    C6A    And I think that the idea that we go back to the Exco and their list of hot topics,

2409    it talks to at one stage ZZZZ flagged with YYYY that it would be nice to have a mini-

2410    Exco.  And I think it was something he did at a cocktail party the night before, sort of

2411 thing, and it was like, okay, we need a mini-Exco the next day. But a different version

2412 of that and something that we might be… that we will be proposing in the LDP space is

2413 the organisational swat team.

2414

2415 So you've got the guys who are currently doing MBAs, or who are MBAs, and those hot

2416 topics that aren't like the more pressing than can wait for your research topic, like we

2417 need a swat team now, then you haul in your MBA guys to drive into it.

2418

2419 RN    So let's move on, right. In terms of, so you haven't really achieved any benefits

2420 of the MBA, right, for all key parties, but in your learnership programmes you have.

2421

2422 C6A    Well except for the individual, remember the individual gets the benefit of the

2423 MBA is the general perception.

2424

2425 RN    Sure. And I'm looking at all three.

2426

2427 C6A    The business school.

2428

2429 RN    Exactly. So I mean your learnership you would have partnered with a business

2430 school type organisation.

2431

2432 C6A    Provider.

2433

2434 RN    A provider, service provider. You would have the student, and you would have

2435 the bank, right. So basically you've alluded to the fact that the bank gets back these…

2436 the bank puts out these things and they get back actual projects, or actual programmes

2437 that happen within the bank. Your PDF…

2438    C6A    Well what you get is not necessarily action in projects, but you get people who

2439    have demonstrated workplace based learning, so you are getting enhanced skills in

2440    their job environment.

2441

2442    C6B    Yes, because you're taking the theoretical and you're actually applying it in the

2443    business.

2444

2445    C6A    So, for example, our ODETDP learners, which is everybody in PD has now

2446    gone through that, or is in the process of it.  They have to do a design and developer

2447    training programme, so out of this year's crop I'm getting eight training programmes.

2448

2449    RN    Okay, excellent.

2450

2451    C6B    So that's how we've done it differently.  We've given them, we made the

2452    decision that we would give them topics…

2453

2454    C6A    These are the workshops we need developed.

2455

2456    C6B    Yes, and we've made it part and parcel of the qualification they're busy with

2457    now.  So they have to design and develop.  And we want to implement.

2458

2459    RN    So you get the programmes or the ideas and you can implement that.

2460

2461    C6A    Yes, so we're going to get a product from each of them, but, yes, we'll probably

2462    need to do more work on.  But we're getting eight different workshops developed,

2463    because their module is called design and developer workshop.

2464 C6B And they're all in [unclear], they have to be [unclear] assessments, and then all
2465 we would basically do is register.

2466

2467 RN And then the student obviously gets the… gets to take their theoretic knowledge
2468 and apply it to a programme.

2469

2470 C6B They have to, yes.

2471

2472 RN Right, so they would learn through that process. And then what about your
2473 service provider?

2474

2475 C6A They get the bucks.

2476

2477 RN Do they get anything else in terms of…

2478

2479 C6A I think they get to maintain their accreditation and their reputation with SETA.

2480

2481 C6B Yes, but also in the same token, I mean every group of people is different, so
2482 whatever the experience is for the individuals on the programme, that's the feedback
2483 we give to the provider, and they often, if it's in terms of their content, or the structure of
2484 their programme, they would very often make changes.

2485

2486 C6A So they get to stay current. Excuse me, but it is a commercial enterprise for
2487 them, so it is around reputational and financial gain.

2488

2489    RN     Great.   How does the… so currently in terms of the MBA, how does the
2490    business school support you and the students?

2491

2492    C6B    They don't.

2493

2494    C6A    They don't.  I don't know about the students, but they certainly don't…

2495

2496    C6B    Just from our perspective, we just pay.

2497

2498    C6A    And an interesting example of that, not specifically MBA, but business a school,
2499    is the BANKSETA funded international executive development programme, IEDP,
2500    which is a BANKSETA, this partnership, but business school.  We as the business
2501    phoned to get feedback on how our participants are doing, and how we could support
2502    them.   And the business school told us they cannot give us any information
2503    whatsoever, because this is something they're doing for BANKSETA.  So that was
2504    quite interesting, and we were quite pissed off.

2505

2506    C6B    No.

2507

2508    C6A    Because we weren't paying, it was a BANKSETA funded thing, and I mean it
2509    was coming from a positive intent, which was how can we support the guys.

2510

2511    RN     So then what sort of feedback would you like to get from the business school in
2512    terms of the MBAs?  Or what sort of collaboration would you see happening there?

2513

2514    C6A    Well the content in terms of projects that the business school would be open to
2515    that, I think that a kind of progress report.

2516    C6B    Yes.  And that's not just, I mean look we get the results for the guys that have

2517    got bursaries but, you know, there's people that are probably doing MBAs, PPPP for

2518    example, who's not funded by C6, but it would be nice to actually get that feedback…

2519

2520    C6A    A twice a year report that says how can we support, how are our SMEs doing in

2521    terms of the feedback they perceive to.  So a three-way feedback meeting that says,

2522    are our SMEs/PDFs, whoever has contracted to support MBAs, doing, and how are our

2523    students doing.

2524

2525    RN    In terms of the school itself, right, and I'm just talking about…

2526

2527    C6A    Any business school?

2528

2529    RN    Yes, in terms of any business school, right, in terms of being open to ideas,

2530    would you be open so then you've got a certain project, or you've got certain things that

2531    you want done, right.  Now there's a difference between consulting, versus active

2532    learning, okay.  But obviously your students would do the assignments, whoever, or do

2533    the project.  They come up with ideas, obviously they'd have some input, they would

2534    like to get some input from the business school in terms of guiding those students'

2535    progress, i.e., the expert whoever is teaching them.  Would you then be open to having

2536    some of those implemented successful stories be used as case studies?

2537

2538    C6A    Absolutely.

2539

2540    RN    To the business school.

2541

2542    C6A    Yes.

2543    RN    Okay.  So the case studies, would you open to doing presentations for the class
2544    for the benefit of MBAs?

2545

2546    C6A    Yes, because I think that's the other possible collaboration and I know it
2547    happens.  It doesn't happen in the MBA space, it happens in other spaces, where for
2548    example the ADP, XXXX's accelerated development programme, which UCT is running
2549    now at the business school there, the CEOs spend a day with them, but this is an in-
2550    house programme.  So the CEOs each collectively spend a day with the ADP students,
2551    and then ZZZZ, for example, presented part of, and at least signed off, the customer
2552    service module for ADP.

2553

2554    So having your senior executives come and talk at an MBA programme I think it should
2555    be something that organisations could commit to, in the same way that having a Steve
2556    Bluen, the rock star of HR, come and share knowledge with us would be great, other
2557    than paying, [unclear], breakfasting, which is the way I heard it.

2558

2559    RN    So that's interesting.

2560

2561    ME    So it's not in sharing, if you like.

2562

2563    RN    Mind you, Steve was one of my lecturers.

2564

2565    C6A    Do you think he's an HR rock star?

2566

2567    RN    Absolutely.  But great, so finally, what else can we do as business schools,
2568    organisations, and students, to make this relationship better?  You've said quite a lot of
2569    things that if we put together…

2570    C6A    Could be powerful.

2571

2572    RN    Could be very powerful, yes.  What else do you think we can do?

2573

2574    C6A    Have you chatted to DDDD, by the way, about hers?

2575

2576    RN    DDDD

2577

2578    C6A    Yes.

2579

2580    RN    No.

2581

2582    C6A    The MBA at Stellenbosch.

2583

2584    RN    No, not yet.

2585

2586    C6B    I think, you know, just from our experience with the bursaries, it's very much just
2587    as financial arrangement.  And ideally, and maybe that's where it's different with the
2588    learnerships.  When you're contracting with the providers, you put in certain provisos in
2589    your agreements, and maybe it's something we should look at with the business
2590    schools, where there's something in a contract that requires them to provide progress
2591    reports to I don't know what else.  But you would kind of formalise it in a contract, and
2592    maybe that's why we're getting a lot of successes with the providers bar the fact that
2593    they're in it for the money as well.

2594

2595    C6A    So are the business schools.

2596 C6B And also because we have regular meetings with them, and the business
2597 schools kind of seem out there somewhere and we see an invoice.

2598

2599 RN In terms of this formalisation of the contract, right, it is moving it away from an
2600 individualistic…

2601

2602 C6B No, but maybe not a contract, but maybe it's something like a memorandum of
2603 understanding, or you know, something along those lines where we can take it to the
2604 next level so that we're all on the same page, and we collaborate.

2605

2606 C6A So we almost need to make a distinction between which of these will be a valid
2607 expectation when the organisation is funding the MBA. Is that the basis of your scope?
2608 Or is it any MBA student?

2609

2610 RN I would think it would be any MBA students.

2611

2612 C6A Because maybe it's worth making that distinction, that if PPPP chooses to do an
2613 MBA, and pay for it himself, then do we as an organisation have any right to expect a
2614 return on that?

2615

2616 RN Now do you give the individual time off?

2617

2618 C6A He gets a proper study leave in the same way, the study leave policy applies,
2619 absolutely.

2620

2621 C6B Whatever's policy applies to everyone.

2622   C6A   There's no special MBA study leave thing in C6.

2623

2624   RN   Is that not a commitment already on behalf of the organisation?

2625

2626   C6A   What, that we get study leave?

2627

2628   RN   The fact that you get study leave, and you give a whole lot of other things
2629   during the process.   I mean, an individual doing an MBA, there's a lot of time
2630   commitments, there's lots of mental commitments, and you as the organisation are
2631   required to support that, aren't you?

2632

2633   C6A   Okay.

2634

2635   RN   Whether it's a financial [unclear] or not.

2636

2637   C6A   But the taking the step further to the kinds of memos of understanding, or
2638   tripartite agreement, or meetings, would be more so if the organisation were actually
2639   funding.

2640

2641   RN   Yes, absolutely.

2642

2643   C6A   All or part of MBA.   I wanted to say something about… oh, I think what's
2644   puzzling is the huge disparity in fees.   When we did that piece of research, it was… and
2645   one understands that an MBA is not an MBA, is not an MBA.   But an MBA from
2646   Regenesis cost R30,000, and the person will put MBA behind their name, they're not
2647   going to say, brackets Regenesis, close brackets, versus I think Gibs is the most
2648   expensive.

2649    C6B    Yes, they are.

2650

2651    C6A    By far.

2652

2653    C6B    They are.

2654

2655    C6A    So what is the rationale, what is the justification, because at the end of the day
2656    if somebody comes to me with say an MBA, and the job requirement says we require
2657    an MBA.

2658

2659    C6B    We don't stipulate and from…

2660

2661    C6A    And we're not saying an MBA from Gibs.  So we haven't in C6 taken it into a
2662    space which says we will only fund MBAs from X or Y institution, we've kind of put the
2663    50/50 in place which would steer people to an MBA that wasn't hugely expensive.  But
2664    some of my colleagues in other organisations have, so RNB does Duke, or Gibs I think,
2665    those two.  So it's to bring it into line, and I'm talking the mainstream varsities, I'm not
2666    really talking your Degrees R Us colleges.  But UCT, [unclear], Stellenbosch, whatever,
2667    why is there such a difference in how they structure the fees, and in actually the fees
2668    themselves?

2669

2670    RN    Okay, so that would be something that would relate back to the…

2671

2672    C6A    Yes, but if that were more transparent…

2673

2674    RN    Transparency, yes, I suppose.

2675  C6A  Then one would develop a level of comfort that an MBA has the same
2676  substance.

2677

2678  C6B  And they're equally credible.

2679

2680  C6A  And I mean one realises that people are building their brains, but the business
2681  schools are also running a business, that they're building brains around it.  But there
2682  isn't a perceived… if we say businesses don't really see as much application as they
2683  would like, we would also not see a difference in application between a Stellenbosch
2684  MBA student, and a Gibs MBA student, so why are we paying twice as much there.
2685  And that's why we had to bring in the cap of the maximum R35,000 for our MBA
2686  students, the 50/50 original just blanket approach suggested by Exco actually had
2687  flaws because of the huge disparity.

2688

2689  RN  What would your views be then if you were seeing a lot more application of
2690  what was being learned back into business?  What you look at the cap?

2691

2692  C6A  Then I think I'd look at it that they weren't.

2693

2694  RN  And ultimately the cap came in place because you weren't seeing that
2695  application.

2696

2697  C6A  And also because it was perceived to be just so expensive.

2698

2699  RN  Okay, sure.  So ultimately if you were seeing the value, you wouldn't question
2700  the costs?

2701

2702    C6A    Exactly right. And I think the other thing to maybe mention is that in our role
2703    profiling exercise now, I think only seven role profiles have MBA as a preferred
2704    qualification.

2705

2706    RN     Okay.

2707

2708    C6A    We haven't had a single role profile where MBA is a required qualification. So
2709    MBAs seem to be positioned as icing on the top.

2710

2711    C6B    Nice to have, but not a have to have.

2712

2713    C6A    Whereas we have got in some of the roles a requirement for Masters.

2714

2715    RN     Okay, great.

2716

2717    C6A    So that's quite interesting.

2718

2719    RN     Is there anything else that you want to add to the conversation? Okay. Great,
2720    thank you for your time, I appreciate it. When we've done we'll get you a copy of the
2721    research.

2722

2723    C6A    Thank you. Fascinating. When do you have to have this all in by?

2724

2725    RN     November 7th.

2726

2727    C6A    Okay.

**2728** **APPENDIX H: TRANSCRIPTS OF COMPANY 7 (C7)**

**2729** **Speaker key**

**2730**

**2731** RN    Ravindran Naicker

**2732** C7    Company 7

**2733**

**2734** RN    So hi, C7. Basically I'm Ravi Naicker, right, and my thesis is going to be based
**2735** around how collaboration between business schools, students, and organisations, can
**2736** optimise the impact of the MBA. And effectively we're just going to go through a couple
**2737** of questions, it's a 30-minute interview, and you can pull out any time you want to. And
**2738** your feedback will be valued, and will be kept confidential.

**2739**

**2740** So I think the first question that I'd like to unpack is what do you think are the
**2741** successes of the MBA specifically?

**2742**

**2743** C7    Do you mean in terms of the outcomes of the MBA students?

**2744**

**2745** RN    Yes.

**2746**

**2747** C7    For me I think it would be the ability of the MBA students to be able to
**2748** practically apply what they have learned in real life situations. I think there'll be a mix
**2749** there in terms of the knowledge that they acquire, their understanding of business, and
**2750** business practices and processes. But also practice during the MBA to actually apply
**2751** that in case, you know, in a kind of practical way. So putting together some work that
**2752** they do, I suppose, in assimilation format or working on a real case together.

**2753**

2754 And then thirdly I think also understanding themselves, getting to understand
2755 themselves better as a person who would be integrating into a leadership environment,
2756 sorry, into a work environment, and what their impact would be of teams, and just
2757 better self-awareness.  So it's the knowledge that they gain, practical experience that
2758 they gain, and then their self-awareness as well.

2759

2760 RN    Now it's interesting that you mention practical experience, right.  A lot of the
2761 people that I've interviewed said that MBAs tend to fair too much on the academic side
2762 rather than the practical side.  What are your views on that?

2763

2764 C7    Well I can't say from experience that I have worked with enough MBA people or
2765 managed teams of MBA people to be able to compare their outlook.  So I can't speak
2766 from experience there, but just generally in learning and development I think it's really
2767 important in a business environment for learning to be able to be made practical.  And,
2768 yes, academia is not going to, you know, it's a good foundation, but I think if the MBA
2769 students can try their hand at practicing some skills, I think it would do them well.

2770

2771 RN    I think we'll pick up on that later on when we come to my other questions, right.
2772 What do you think are the failings or shortcomings of MBAs?

2773

2774 C7    Well just what you've said, I think it could be, again I'm not referring to the Gibs
2775 one, or any, but I think if an MBA was too academic, or if it had too much of a specific
2776 focus, not looking at all the general areas that the people have to cover, I think that
2777 could be, that could be a failing.  Or not keeping pace, I think a very difficult thing must
2778 be keeping pace with the changes in business.  I mean, I think… I was at university a
2779 very long time ago, but you know, the business world is changing so quickly, I think it
2780 needs to be that the academic institutions need to be very closely aligned with what's
2781 happening in the business world to keep everything fresh, especially with changes in
2782 technology.

2783

2784    RN    How would you… on that point, right, keeping things fresh, there's trends, and
2785    then there's fads.  And how would you suggest a business school distinguish between
2786    a trend and a fad?

2787

2788    C7    I would expect the heads of the departments to be sort of knowledgeable
2789    enough and have enough experience looking at the history of things to be able to
2790    identify trends versus fads.   But some of these things are just really difficult for
2791    anybody.  I think again referring to technology, which is… that we're very familiar here
2792    at C7.

2793

2794    A college of mine shared an email from a leading IT CTO a number of years ago
2795    talking about email which was this new thing, and saying exactly that this would be a
2796    fad, and that people should not try and think… you know, try and keep it out of the
2797    workplace because it will distract people.  And similarly this has happened where
2798    things like various social media tools, companies closed their… down their firewalls
2799    and said, don't use these social media tools, Facebook for example, in the company,
2800    it's just going to take you away from business.  And they had no understanding of that
2801    point of the business application of that thing, and it isn't actually a fad.   Then even
2802    some of the top people get things wrong, and think things will be a long lasting new
2803    trend, and it is a fad.

2804

2805    So I think it's a difficult thing for anybody to get right, but I think if the business school
2806    is… the leaders of each of their departments are doing their research and looking at
2807    what's been, you know, what's happened at the past, and applying what they know to
2808    whatever new things they see, they will just have to make a judgement call.

2809

2810    RN    In making that judgement call, what role would business have?

2811

2812    C7    I think the closer the business school is to its business partners and clients, the
2813    closer, the better information the business can share with what they fitting into their

2814  strategy, or what they would be looking to take on.  And at that… I think sometimes
2815  there maybe cases where in the business school you may find that the lecturers or
2816  heads of, you know, of various areas, may have more time to be looking at research
2817  and finding out what's going on in the world.  I think that's not necessarily the business
2818  people are always going to have the right answers.  I think it depends who you're
2819  talking to, and I know in this business sometimes we're so engaged in, you know,
2820  specific teams maybe so engaged in projects, they might not be being able to spend
2821  the time doing the research and seeing new things coming.  And it takes certain people
2822  in the business to be saying, come on everyone, look where this is going, and leading
2823  the business forward at different times.

2824

2825  But that can be happening in a business school where you've got people who are full
2826  time looking at the world, and studying, and you've got assignments that you can set
2827  for students.  They can also be picking up things and sharing them back into their
2828  business clients.

2829

2830  RN    Just in general then, you don't have enough insight into the MBA itself, but how
2831  are you achieving benefits, because I'm sure that you've been involved in developing
2832  programmes with business schools for C7.  How would you ensure that there's
2833  benefits, or how have you been supported through the process?  Actually, let me
2834  rephrase that.  How have you ensured that there's benefits for all three parties in
2835  developing your programmes?

2836

2837  C7    All three parties being the students, the company, and the business school?

2838

2839  RN    Yes, absolutely.

2840

2841  C7    Well the programme that I've been involved in here is as I said is an executive
2842  level development programme.  And so we've been looking at the benefits for the
2843  executives and obviously those flow through to benefits for the company.  In terms of

benefits that would come back to Gibs, or the business school, I can't see how the programme might have been designed, except to give them work, you know, to employ them to do that.

So, yes, it was, the programme was designed to bring the executives together to provide them with knowledge, similarly around what I was speaking about earlier. And designed to expose them outside of C7 to some other business thinkers. We had other leaders and CEOs come in to expose them more to our own CEOs, and our own group executives, sorry, to challenge them with real life strategic project that they had to work on. And that's where I'm talking about the practical things as well.

So they had things that they were learning but practical things to work on. And not only did that then make them apply what they were learning to a challenge, it helped the business because they came with outcomes at the end of the week, they come with their outcomes to say this is what we propose for the business. But while they're working in teams on that project, it also gives the facilitators an opportunity to teach them some self-awareness about how they work in teams, and help them take some learning back into the business about their role in teams, and how teams work well together, and that sort of thing.

And in addition, they had… in our group development programme, each individual gets one to one self-awareness assessment and coaching with site psychologists and action learning experts.

RN    Where would the, or where do you get these, who are these action learning experts and psychologists?

C7    Well it's… our group leadership development programme involves a consortium, so it's usually ourselves, Gibs, the designer is actually sort of a, what do

2873    you call it, like a fellow of Gibs, and works on a number of programmes with us, so she

2874    knows our company very well.

2875

2876    Then we bring in a guy called Brian… and her name is Laura Milan. Then we bring in

2877    Brian Jacobson, who's an action learning expert in South Africa, and he has a team of

2878    action learning facilitators. And then we also bring in an assessment team, what do we

2879    call them? We've used in the past, Joint Prosperity, also through Laura Milan, who

2880    then have a speciality in delivering assessments, which I understand Gibs doesn't

2881    have. And they're all trained psychologists and they review the assessments, and then

2882    they provide psychologists to sit and give the one to one feedback. So it's this big

2883    consortium of people involved.

2884

2885    But Gibs brings not only their own lecturers, and their own cadre of knowledge input,

2886    but they also use international fellows, and in particular in the past we've used Marshall

2887    Goldsmith on leadership, who is usually VC'd in from the States, or some other

2888    international. Because it's a very international group of executives who come together,

2889    we want to include… extend the scope beyond just South African lecturers, although

2890    they are of exceptional quality, we like to bring in some overseas people as well.

2891

2892    RN    At what stage would the assessments be done?

2893

2894    C7    Before hand.

2895

2896    RN    So before the programme?

2897

2898    C7    Yes. So the assessments are done beforehand as a prerequisite and they have

2899    to be completed at least 10 days before the start to give the team of psychologists time

2900    to review, to analyse, to produce the reports, and prepare. And then each psychologist

2901     takes about five people that they know that they're going to be working with one to one
2902     during the week.

2903

2904     RN      And how does, how do you support the students through this process, the
2905     executives who attend the course?

2906

2907     C7      How do we support them?  So to prepare… yes?

2908

2909     RN      What sort of… when I say support obviously you've got the psychologist giving
2910     their feedback, and who they are, in terms of implementing some of the ideas or action
2911     learning project that come back, in terms of supporting their growth and their learning.
2912     Just a general feel in terms of what, if I was an executive attending one of these
2913     courses, what support and progress would I see during the course, and after the
2914     course?

2915

2916     C7      Well that's a good question because ideally what we'd like with the action
2917     learning is for that to be… extend long beyond the course, and for us to get everybody
2918     together again and continue the action.  I think that is the ideal model.  However given
2919     the costs, opportunity cost of getting these guys out of their senior, senior positions,
2920     and the physical cost of flying them all together again in the world, we don't get them
2921     together again.  So this week is literally just a week, and we close it off at the end of the
2922     week.

2923

2924     However, what happens once they've presented their projects to the group exec, and
2925     our group executive takes this programme incredibly seriously.  Every team has two
2926     executive sponsors who meet with the team, they help prepare the challenge for that
2927     team, so there are five teams.  They help prepare the challenge, they meet with the
2928     team twice during that week.  Again they are physically dispersed, so for those who
2929     can't be here, we will VC those executives in from wherever they are in the world, so

2930    that they meet with them.  And then they're available for any questions they have

2931    during the week.

2932

2933    Then the entire group executive gets together for the last morning for the

2934    presentations.  So everyone, overseas being VC'd in to one room.  And all the five

2935    presentations are given and then the COO and CEO, the group COO and CEO, then

2936    make a decision there and then.  The whole executive can question, the whole panel

2937    can question the team, and then a decision is made there and then what will happen

2938    with that proposal from that strategic challenge.  And it might be that nothing needs to

2939    happen, and that has happened in the case where they say, actually what you've done

2940    is just verified some thinking we've had in the group exec.  Or they might say, you've

2941    made certain recommendations that are for implementation and we'd like to select

2942    these particular recommendations and implement, and you will implement them.  We

2943    would like you to, or we'd like you to go away and select a team and then hand over to

2944    a team to implement this.

2945

2946    So there will be some involvement with the teams ongoing.  And what we have set up

2947    then is there's a sort of a six-week feedback point, and then maybe another three

2948    month feedback point, and then maybe a feedback point at the end of the year, to say

2949    where each of the teams are, and what has happened with that project, even if the

2950    project is signed off, nothing's going forward, then we say what's going on.

2951

2952    But in our future programmes we'd like to make that process even more robust,

2953    because people have said they felt it's been an incredible week, so far we've run four of

2954    these, only so far, but we've had excellent feedback where we've felt that we've been

2955    able to improve on them each year.  And from the feedback, but the one thing that

2956    they've said is it's been… they've been on such a high and it's been such an amazing

2957    week, but how do they… how do we carry that forward.  And so we have started to use

2958    the alumni of previous courses, bringing them back, and use those alumni as buddies

2959    into the teams, helping the teams prepare for the presentations that they give to the

2960    group executives, or just being involved.  And in our next course that we'd like to do is

2961 have all of previous alumni over all the years get together for a drink one night as part

2962 of the course, or something similar.

2963

2964 So, yes, so our support of them I suppose really has just been providing them with lots

2965 of info about what's going to be happening, why they've been selected for the

2966 programme. During the programme they've a facilitator that takes through every single

2967 step, explains why, what all the pieces of this multi-faceted programme are, and what

2968 they're going to be doing. They get their one on one coaching, and then after that they

2969 have these few touch points. And one of the touch points we introduced in the last

2970 programme was that their action learning coach actually gets together with them at

2971 some point. In fact, sorry, I think we designed that for the next programme, so of the

2972 feedback that's come out from the last one, we've said we want to get that action

2973 learning coach back together with the team to say how's your project gone since

2974 we've… since you've carried on?

2975

2976 RN    So taking what you've just said back to the MBA, right. If I took exactly the

2977 same principle, so if the CEO or executive of a bank, or a business, or a company,

2978 were to… so they fund five to 10 students a year, right. If they were to determine that

2979 these are strategic projects, or have the students present what the strategic project is

2980 before the MBA or during the MBA. They were to be involved and ask those students

2981 to effectively implement action learning activities based on what they've learned on the

2982 MBA, right. Do you think that would work? What's your views on that?

2983

2984 C7    So if I'm understanding, so there are, is it typical for there to be a specific

2985 company sponsoring the person through their MBA, is that typical? Because it would

2986 be a big, it would really impact where that person is headed, and how involved they are

2987 with the company.

2988

2989 RN    So let's not limit it to someone being funded. So you've got a student,

2990 irrespective of whether they funded it or not, and where they're going. Like how many

2991 will make an investment to the extent that they're going to afford this person time off at

2992   some stage, they're going to be invested, or vested, in this person's growth.  Because I

2993   think that's the overriding principle that I'm talking from, or the point that I'm talking from

2994   is the company is interested in this person's growth.  So if someone who wants to do

2995   an MBA for personal reasons, and has funded it on their own and what not, I'm not

2996   really looking at that at this point, I'm looking more at, yes, we've funded it, or we've

2997   given you time off, or we've had some input…

2998

2999   C7      Into the fact that you're doing this MBA.

3000

3001   RN      Exactly, yes.  And we see you as the current or a future leader.

3002

3003   C7      Why I think that's important is because the strategic project may involved

3004   confidential information and access in the business that if the MBA could be set up that

3005   every single student is connected to a company and has a project in that specific

3006   company for a reason, then that would be great.  But I would imagine there might be

3007   students who know.  I'm not sure how that would work.  But another difference, big

3008   difference, is the level, the level of entrenchment in the company.  These leaders and

3009   this executive programme of ours know the company incredibly well, and over a long

3010   time, understand implicitly, so we don't just start off at a base, they understand a whole

3011   lot of things.  And it's more about getting them to think cross functionally or getting

3012   leaders who really only focus on a region to think about the whole global organisation,

3013   and mixing up regions and functions together to tackle business issues.

3014

3015   However, I still think there are ways, okay, so at MBA level you might not be asking the

3016   student to tackle your toughest strategic issue.  There might just be some smaller

3017   issue, or something that the student would be able to manage with the understanding

3018   that they have, that they could give them a bit of information that they need, and get

3019   them to work on it.

3020

3021    I think that would be incredibly, incredibly valuable. I don't think we can ever
3022    underestimate the value of that research of the people that they meet during that
3023    research. I have a cousin who did a leadership development programme at SAB Miller
3024    , where they also did this action learning, and he is in finance but in his action learning
3025    team had a person from marketing, a person from HR, a person from… head of a
3026    bottling plant, whatever, who he'd never have to directly deal with. And even just
3027    making these relationships with these people, hearing their views on their different
3028    departments, and how decisions that he made affected their department, was so eye-
3029    opening to him that for ever after whenever he needed to work with this specific area,
3030    he had a much better understanding plus now he also had these contacts that he could
3031    just pick up the phone and talk to them and say, look I've got this specific issue, who in
3032    your department can help me?

3033

3034    So at an MBA level I think for the student to be able to be exposed in a real life
3035    situation, to the real life issues, and having to deal with people, and having to see what
3036    it's like on the ground, I just think you can't put a price on that.

3037

3038    RN    That's really valuable feedback actually. And then further on your other point,
3039    you guys used alumni to basically support your current students, right?

3040

3041    C7    Yes.

3042

3043    RN    What would you think of MBA alumni supporting, mentoring, coaching?

3044

3045    C7    Absolutely.

3046

3047    RN    The current students?

3048

3049    C7    Absolutely.  Again invaluable.  I would say every MBA student should have an
3050    alumni buddy, because that person has been through the process, and they can save
3051    them so much time and pain by saying, by just these small tips that they have.  And
3052    even silly things like one of the things our buddies helped our guys with is that actual
3053    physical presentation that they have to do is in a specific boardroom that we have that
3054    is not ideally big enough for the number of people who have to go in at this particular
3055    issue.  But it's the best set up for the VCs, and it's able to have the right sound, and the
3056    camera, and people VC-ing in from Australia, and America at the same time.  And able
3057    to be filmed, because we were filing them initially.

3058

3059    And the first guys who presented in that set up rally struggled with the practicalities of
3060    where they stood and how the sound worked, and how to address the people on the
3061    VC as well as the people in the room.  And in fact the very first team I think got marked
3062    down, and had a lot more stress about it than the others.

3063

3064    So in the second year when we did that similar format, the buddies helped the guys
3065    and said, look this is what you need practically, and remember how you present it, and
3066    you know… there were just so many things that really helped them that our exec
3067    couldn't believe there difference in quality for them as the exec panel in the second
3068    year.  Whereas I don't think the guys were… it wasn't all males, the candidates, the
3069    participants, weren't necessarily a lot cleverer or much higher cadre but they just had
3070    been so much better prepared that the execs were much more impressed with their
3071    findings and their proposals.

3072

3073    Also in the content of what they came back with.  There was this idea of don't let the
3074    execs be leaving saying so what, it has to be, be brave, be punchy, get your ideas out
3075    there, try and be different, understand that these execs would have thought of a lot of
3076    these things before, push the boundaries, and they helped them really grasp those
3077    things.  Which, yes, it's good for the learner to learn that the first time round, but if
3078    there's more that they can learn, why not have a buddy come and help them get over
3079    those initial obstacles, and go even further.

3080

3081    RN    Absolutely, absolutely. I guess the next question is how did the business
3082    school support you through this process?

3083

3084    C7    The business school, well I mean they just designed the whole programme. I
3085    guess Laura at the helm designed the whole programme and put it together in a really
3086    fantastic way. So it was, yes, it was the business school's design, and we worked in
3087    tandem.

3088

3089    RN    Sorry, how did they, on that point, I think you were getting to it.

3090

3091    C7    So in every area that we worked in it was a partnership. So where we looked at
3092    the strategic issues, the business school came and said, these are the strategic issues,
3093    sorry, our executives came and said, this is what's keeping us awake at night, and then
3094    the partner of the business school, being Brian Isakson on the action learning side
3095    said, right, this is how you frame the action learning best. These are the kind of
3096    questions you need to put to your team, this is how you guide your team. And they
3097    helped us to help our executives be the best sponsors that they could be.

3098

3099    When we looked at assessments, we come and said, well this is the outcome we want
3100    to get from the assessments, Laura helped us in partnership then, the psychologists,
3101    they said okay, well these are the assessments that are going to work. And that's what
3102    you need to do. Similarly with the knowledge pieces, we said this is the kind of
3103    outcomes we want out of our whole programme, and they said what are you… what's
3104    the business focus. And then the lecturers were selected by Laura and then each
3105    lecturer had opportunity to discuss with our group execs to say this is what I'm
3106    presenting on, but I need to drill down more about specific issues in your company, am
3107    I pitching this at the right level, how much detail must I go into. Not so much Nick
3108    Binedell, I think he has his own, you know, I think the way he looks at the past and the
3109    future and bringing them together, and then he has that whole sort of world view, he
3110    sort of sets the context. I think that's over and above the company. But he still bring it

3111    into the company context.  But some of the other lecturers really went into a lot of detail

3112    and tailored their pieces very much for our business.

3113

3114    RN    In terms of that, could a number of major businesses get together, would they

3115    be open to getting together and you as C7 would be you be open to inputting into the

3116    MBA?  In terms of current, so not specifically giving away a strategic advantages or

3117    what not, but in terms of general business needs.  I'm sure there's a bunch of generic

3118    things, would you be keen to do that, would that make any difference to the quality of

3119    MBAs that we're producing?

3120

3121    C7    You know what would be interesting for me to see is I could talk to my

3122    colleagues about how many MBAs we bring into the business.  And then have a look

3123    there, I think our business would always, we're always thin on resource, so maybe say,

3124    okay, well how much if you're going to say we'd need someone to commit all these

3125    hours, reviewing material, providing feedback, we're always so thin on resources.  I

3126    know our business, you know, what we'll want to see, okay, what are the benefits for

3127    us, are we bringing MBAs out of these business group ourselves.  But certainly if it's

3128    something where there are business benefits for us, we would like to give input to it.

3129

3130    RN    It sounds great.  And finally I think what do you think business schools,

3131    organisations, and students can do better to improve that learning process?

3132

3133    C7    I think going back to what I was saying before, I think practical, you know,

3134    exercises are a real way of embedding the learning process.  I think also passing on

3135    the knowledge to be able to know something well enough to teach it to somebody else,

3136    I think is knowing it the best.  So if business schools, if students in business schools

3137    somehow were able to incorporate teaching back what they've learned to other people

3138    in the business school, or people outside the business school, I think that would really

3139    help them embed their learning, and make it very real.

3140

3141    RN    Excellent.  Well is there anything else from your side, C7?

3142

3143    C7    No, I think that's it.

3144

3145    RN    Thank you so much for your time, I appreciate it.

3146

3147    C7    Okay, thanks, Ravi.

3148 **APPENDIX I: TRANSCRIPTS OF COMPANY 8 (C8)**

3149 **Speaker key**

3150

3151 RN    Ravindran Naicker

3152 C8    Company 8

3153

3154  RN   Hi C8, its Ravi Naicker calling. How are you?

3155

3156 C8    Hi Ravi. I'm all right and yourself?

3157

3158 RN    I'm good thanks. I just called your office and I just saw your email so...

3159

3160 C8    Yes, I actually meant to send it with a new number this morning but I forgot
3161 because I was busy on a call.

3162

3163 RN    No, no problem. Let me introduce myself, so I'm in my second year of MBA and
3164 doing my thesis and I'm conducting research which will explore the different ways in
3165 which collaborative learning can achieve maximum output from an MBA program for
3166 business school students and organisations involved in the program. The interview will,
3167 is expected to last about 30 minutes and will help us understand how business school
3168 students and organisations can work together to ensure that all parties maximise their
3169 respective benefits from the MBA, right? Your participation is totally voluntary and you
3170 can withdraw at any time without penalty. All the data will be kept confidential and if
3171 you have any concerns you can contact myself or VVVV who's my supervisor. So that's
3172 basically a content statement. Are you comfortable to proceed with the interview?

3173

3174 C8    No, that's fine.

3175    RN    Okay, great.

3176

3177    C8    I don't know if you're aware, I did make VVVV aware and I've got the email trail
3178    I sent to you as well that at C8 we haven't been that involved in sponsoring, financially
3179    sponsoring MBA studies by employees. They tend to do it on their own so I've
3180    obviously got limited responses that I can give from an organisation perspective but I'll
3181    see what I can do.

3182

3183    RN    And I think that's one of the key aspects that I'm looking at as well is that I'm
3184    looking at organisations that not only sponsor but those that don't and try to unpack
3185    whether there's any value for you at all or not and if so, what is that value and whether
3186    there are things that could be done by either the business school or business or by the
3187    students themselves which actually adds value to your business. Now I understand, I
3188    saw the email and I understand you've, what, you've only sponsored two out of, two
3189    MBAs in the past three or four years so I agree...

3190

3191    C8    Yes, we've basically sponsored one person who completed their MBA over
3192    three years. He completed that at the end of last year and we've just sponsored the
3193    second person now who's going to be starting next year for the next three years as
3194    well.

3195

3196    RN    And I think then maybe there is some value in that so let's try and unpack that
3197    and see because it seems like your business is sponsoring even if it's one person or
3198    two people at a time. I suppose you'd want to get some value out of it, right?

3199

3200    C8    Yes, it's a particular business unit within the organisation that's sponsoring
3201    based on, you know, requests and then of course part of the retention plan specifically
3202    for that particular person that they identify for the period, yes.

3203

3204     RN     Okay, so let's start off generally, C8. What do you think are the successes of an

3205     MBA?

3206

3207     C8     Look, I mean there's no doubt and I'd like to think most people, when they

3208     decide to study an MBA because... it's quite time consuming and it needs considerable

3209     commitment. I know people who have studied who had to put their social lives on hold

3210     to focus and finish it on time and then redirect their energies back to their work/life

3211     balance, so it's a serious commitment. A lot of people that I know who've studied or

3212     made that commitment and that decision to pursue it, it's because it gives them a

3213     broader perspective on things. I mean, it addresses so many different aspects of an

3214     organisation from strategy, leadership, marketing, HR etc that it does really give people

3215     a broad understanding of how a business is run from different perspectives. So there's

3216     no doubt that there's a lot of value in terms of that. Those who have come out of it have

3217     come out a lot more confident, with that broader knowledge, able to see exactly where

3218     they want to take their career next. And of course it's typically used in terms of the

3219     labour market to leverage for much better opportunities as well because of what the

3220     candidate or delegate, the value that they get out of that two or three year process,

3221     especially I think with the international models, to travel to one or two countries

3222     overseas and to look at best practices and benchmarking as well. You know, that's

3223     really valuable. I can't see how a person would gain that type of knowledge and

3224     exposure in any other way.

3225

3226     RN     Yes. Is there anything else that you think an MBA gives either an organisation

3227     or a student?

3228

3229     C8     Look, I'm not sure about what it gives to the organisation to be honest. Like I

3230     said, I haven't seen the benefits of it because unfortunately there's a person that we did

3231     sponsor last year who completed last year and has since left. So the benefits I've seen

3232     have been for the individual, their career, their knowledge, their exposure. They come

3233     out a completely... well, not completely but they come out a different person to a large

3234     extent out of that experience. Where an organisation benefits I think, and it benefits a

3235     lot if it sponsors the MBA and that's why I'm reluctant to comment coming from an

3236    organisation that doesn't really sponsor a lot of MBA studies, but where an organisation
3237    does sponsor and sponsors a few, I think there's a twofold benefit to it. On the one
3238    hand the organisation gets more involved because there's a financial investment. They
3239    get more involved with the student or the employee's progress, they get involved in
3240    terms of trying to influence and get involved as much as possible to ensure the success
3241    of that particular student or number of students that they've sponsored. While at the
3242    same time what I've seen in previous companies where we've done this is that the
3243    students or the employee's loyalty goes a long way as well because there is no doubt
3244    that an employee who has their company or their organisation investing financially in
3245    their MBA, because it's known to be a very expensive investment, will have, to a very
3246    large extent, will have loyalty towards that organisation. I think there isn't a stronger
3247    message that you could possibly send when you want to retain what you consider to be
3248    talent than investing in something like an MBA study for them. It really sends a strong
3249    message and a very clear message that they are key talent within the organisation and
3250    the organisation takes great pride in helping them leverage their learning and taking
3251    their career to the next level so to speak.

3252

3253    And it's not always about also keeping the employee within the organisation in terms of
3254    the next step; it's sometimes just helping them be more marketable outside.  I know it
3255    sounds odd because you would want to get the investment back but what we've
3256    realised, especially in the IT  industry, is that sometimes letting some of our key talent
3257    go out there into the industry, working with other companies, even our competitors,
3258    they tend to be able to compare obviously C8 to the other companies, what they get
3259    better at C8 compared to other organisations they join and more often than not we
3260    actually have, two or three  years down line, employees wanting to come back and
3261    rejoin C8. That's interesting. It's not like other industries I've worked in. I think it could
3262    be quite unique to the IT industry but there's a lot of people that I've found in the two
3263    years I've been at C8 who are wanting to come back after leaving for a couple of years.

3264

3265    RN     So you make a really interesting point, right? Just sponsoring the MBA isn't
3266    enough to create that loyalty, like you've just seen with this person that's left. So the
3267    more a company's involved and vested in that individual's progress, the more likely that

3268    they will see benefits and create some sort of loyalty in that individual. Am I reading
3269    that correctly?

3270

3271    C8      Yes. I mean, it's not a guarantee of course but yes, it's likely that there would be
3272    the loyalty aspect. And the loyalty is long term as well so even if the person doesn't
3273    stay straightaway, because they become more marketable and of course they get
3274    targeted by other organisations, there is that, I suppose they'll always realise that C8
3275    as an organisation invested so much that even though they weren't able to give them
3276    what they were looking for immediately after completing their MBA, either better
3277    opportunities or better salary package, whatever they might be looking for, they will still
3278    remember that investment to the extent that they would want to come back at some
3279    stage. And that's obviously a value add when you get somebody coming back after two
3280    or three years of exposure in a similar type of market and the same industry. They
3281    bring back even better knowledge than if they'd stayed with you for two or three years
3282    anyway.

3283

3284    RN      C8, there's this one thing that I didn't touch on just at the beginning; your career
3285    history or your current title?

3286

3287    C8      I'm in HR so I'm the Country HR Director for C8 for South Africa.

3288

3289    RN      And then your academic background?

3290

3291    C8      Mostly HR so I've got a BA in Industrial Psychology, I've got a Masters Diploma
3292    in HR Management equivalent to Honours and I've got an exam I haven't completed
3293    yet, so still one last module outstanding, a Diploma in Company Direction which is
3294    mainly for directors with the Institute of Directors.

3295

3296　RN　Okay, great. Thank you for that. Okay, so I mean, you've touched on briefly as

3297　well, so we've talked about the successes and you've elaborated a bit. Tell me more

3298　about the failings of an MBA and... I mean you've touched on briefly that someone that

3299　you've just sponsored has left recently. Tell me, what do you think are the failings of an

3300　MBA?

3301

3302　C8　Look, I think there's a lot of hype around an MBA and I think to a certain extent

3303　it does give a bit of false expectation of an employee. You know, it just gives a false

3304　sense of if you get an MBA the world is your oyster, so to speak. An MBA doesn't

3305　necessarily guarantee that you're going to get onto that next level in your career that

3306　you've been struggling to achieve for example or that your career suddenly is going to

3307　be accelerated to a point that you are successful over a shorter period than you would

3308　have been without the MBA. So it does, I find that it creates a certain sense of

3309　expectation, very high expectation for the individual and certainly for the organisation

3310　that's involved; it puts them under pressure to do something almost as a miracle for

3311　that MBA graduate once they've completed. I think it's very important that the

3312　organisation and the individual, and to a certain extent the business school can take

3313　part in this as well, to say it's a growth, personal growth that needs to be focused on by

3314　the individual but definitely not to expect miracles to happen because  now you

3315　suddenly have this MBA qualification. It's not meant to be that now suddenly there's a

3316　magic wand that just gives you your every wish as far as your career is concerned.

3317

3318　RN　That makes sense. That definitely makes sense and you've also addressed

3319　how we think. So at what stage of this MBA relationship, I'm going to call it, would the

3320　expectations need to be addressed and how would it need to be addressed in your

3321　view?

3322

3323　C8　I think they need to address it upfront. I think even before a person decides to

3324　go ahead and pursue their MBA they need to understand that yes, it's going to be a

3325　great opportunity, yes they need to sacrifice some things because it's a serious

3326　commitment but it could be that they make this commitment on their social life and their

3327　personal life etc for two, three years and there's also that additional challenge of

finishing your thesis that some people don't even get, you know, they get through the first three years and they don't finish their thesis. I've seen many people with incomplete MBAs because of that aspect as well so they need to be aware of the challenge of being able to do that because that largely is probably the most difficult in doing an MBA. As a whole it's difficult. So knowing all of that and also knowing that you could be committing and making sacrifices and going through all these difficulties over a period of two or three years and there's no guarantee that it is actually going to make a big difference to your career, although it will make a big difference to your personal growth if nothing else. So if that is, the pros and cons are weighed up upfront before the decision is made then the person knows what they're getting themselves into and that there aren't any false expectations and there's a more realistic understanding of the outcomes after that process as well.

RN    So in terms of what you just said, the MBA should be positioned as more a personal growth experience than a career transition experience or a money experience where you're going to get paid a lot more or where you're going to become an executive or something like that, but rather positioned as you're going to get personal growth through this experience.

C8    Yes. I think that is more realistic because if you do get the career transition and the acceleration to a better position, if you happen to get to another level at that point etc, that's the cherry on top. That's not a guarantee. Some people manage to get that and some people don't unfortunately.

RN    And what, who would take responsibility or what role would each of the three... Okay, let's think about it, right; so there are three parties here. There's the business school, what role would the business school play, what role would the organisation play and what role would the student play in terms of managing this expectation or doing this upfront, sort of getting an upfront understanding of what the MBA is about?

3358   C8   Yes, I think the business school plays a role at the later point. The upfront discussion would be between the student and the organisation because there would be an expectation from the student that, you know, once I get this MBA the organisation will offer me that dream career, so to speak, or another miracle within a shorter period of time than it would have. And the organisation, knowing its own limitations, and I have to emphasise particularly with multinationals, at a local level we don't have much of an influence over that as well because some of the roles report into other country managers. So even as a country management team locally, we might put a succession plan in place, we might look at career paths, start tracking certain individuals where there's talent or previously disadvantaged individuals into BEE and transformation etc, so we might have all these wonderful plans and this particular individual who's going to study an MBA knows that they're part of that talent pool and that we've got plans for him but if they don't, especially if they don't report into an in-country manager but they report to an out of country manager who stays in another country out there, that in itself could have a different outcome in terms of the way it will play out.

3373

3374   And then secondly, because a lot of these decisions are taken by corporate and it flows down to the country, some things might change, and we've experienced that with C8 recently. That came to mind quickly now. Some things flow down that we just need to implement it, decisions that we just need to implement and you can't influence much and that has an impact on trends. So the organisation and the employee needs to have a very clear discussion around, even if plans are in place, there would be certain things or there might be certain decisions that are taken that influence those plans and change those plans to an extent that what is promised at the beginning, even if there is some promise of a career opportunity, might change as well over time, especially because an MBA takes two to three years. The cycle in IT changes very, very quickly. So that's the initial discussion between organisation and the employee.

3385

3386   The business school then needs to partner with the organisation in understanding that message also upfront and just reiterating part of that message at appropriate times throughout the period of study as well, and of course trying to assist the employee as much as possible in terms of taking what their expectations are and making them a bit more realistic throughout the study as well.

3391    RN      So when you say it the other way, and that leads to my next question, right; how
3392    do business schools interact and support organisations and students through achieving
3393    their objectives? So the students and the organisation have had their upfront
3394    discussion in terms of the contracting, you know, this is what we're likely to achieve,
3395    this is what we can give you, this is what you can expect. Students say this is the kind
3396    of support I'd like, the organisation gives back whatever. How does the business school
3397    then actually make that practical and support the organisation and the student through
3398    that?

3399

3400    C8      So it can't be just a relationship between the business school and the student,
3401    okay, and the organisation has a hands-off approach. So the business school also
3402    needs to have a relationship with the organisation. So the business school understands
3403    the student's expectations and what it is that he can offer to the student in relation to
3404    these expectations but the business school also needs to partner with the organisation
3405    and understand what it is that the organisation can offer to the student and the
3406    limitations of what we can offer to the student so that that also gets incorporated into
3407    the reality of what they deliver in the learning for the student as well. So the business
3408    school almost needs to have a relationship with the student and with the organisation
3409    because the relationships are slightly different in terms of expectations. Because even
3410    the student and the organisation might have that upfront discussion; it doesn't take
3411    away the fact that there will still be that expectation gap between the student and the
3412    organisation and the business school needs to be the third party that understands that
3413    and tries to help facilitate closing that gap between the organisation and the student in
3414    the reality of delivering the material during the period of study.

3415

3416    RN      And then in terms of then supporting those expectations, once the expectations
3417    have been established, how would the business school ensure that what is being
3418    taught is relevant and how would the organisation ensure that what has been taught
3419    gets implemented back through to the organisation?

3420

3421    C8      I think that's a challenge the business school will have because they're not
3422    dealing with just one organisation. They're dealing with many organisations and there

3423   would be the challenge that the different organisations might have different aims. So
3424   they would need to find the common factor across the various organisations that they
3425   can deliver on and then they have the challenge of, for those organisations that have
3426   unique differences in what they want for their students or their employees, to get out of
3427   it how they would then incorporate it in such a way that each individual still gets
3428   individual expectations that are met as well. So there's a lot of flexibility that the
3429   business schools would need to practice then because there will be things that are
3430   relevant for certain students in relation to the organisation and others that might not be.
3431   But then it still comes back to the student having the responsibility to get what is
3432   relevant to them and not expect that everything will be relevant because it addresses
3433   different perspectives from that point on. Is that making sense to you?

3434

3435   RN     Yes, it definitely makes sense. I think it definitely makes sense in that ultimately
3436   the responsibility still lies with the students but there could be several factors which are
3437   common across organisations. And I think to a large extent if the curriculum of the MBA
3438   was to cater for those factors, and then for a select few, if there were specific items,
3439   those could be catered for separately. But if a student got something that's common, I
3440   suppose the business school would be a lot relevant to a lot more companies that it
3441   may be at present.

3442

3443   C8     Yes, certainly. And I know there is more of a trend now to partnerships that
3444   organisations and business schools enter into one on one for taking a group of
3445   employees, which is similar to what we did with Wits [?] for our talent program – that's
3446   how I got to meet VVVV as well – where we take a group of employees that we'd like to
3447   invest in at a certain level within the organisation, at a certain level of learning
3448   intervention, approach a business school to say right, we know you've got an MBA, we
3449   know you've got an MBP, you know, whatever the formal training courses that you
3450   have; however, as C8 we've identified this particular gap that those formal learning
3451   interventions don't address and we'd like to design something with you guys, partner
3452   with you, customise it specifically for C8 for this talent group of employees, let's see
3453   how it works out. So those unique needs can be addressed that way as well, at least
3454   that's how we've done it so far.

3455

3456   RN    Through that program how have you ensured that there are benefits for all three

3457         parties?

3458

3459   C8    Are you talking about now the customised program?

3460

3461   RN    Yes.

3462

3463   C8    Well, we obviously would have known the individuals over a period of time, we

3464         know their performance, we know their career plans, we know we have them in our

3465         succession plans and we know, because we know them well enough, we know what

3466         the gaps are for them to get to the level of leadership because it's multi-leadership

3467         focused, the level of leadership that we want them to get to. And they're on a different

3468         level within the leadership hierarchy within the organisation. So it's a question of saying

3469         okay, for this level or this group of employees who are at this level within the

3470         organisation, to get to this next leadership level this is what they need and this is what

3471         they're missing. So we make that one module on the program for example and so on

3472         because it just so happens that we've got middle managers, junior managers as well as

3473         potential managers, so people who are not even managers but potentially can be such

3474         that they're managers at junior or middle management very quickly over a short period

3475         of time. So it's having an understanding of the target audience, an understanding of the

3476         gaps and understanding of what the jobs that we're trying to track them into require in

3477         relation to the gaps they have and then customising the different modules and the

3478         program over a period of time to cater for closing those gaps as well.

3479

3480   RN    How did the benefits of that program feed back into C8?

3481

3482   C8    Well, part of that program is that, it's actually split into three quarters, three

3483         months for a block that they need to attend as lectures. It's three or four days in a three

3484         quarter cycle or period. So it's a program with three blocks of three to four days each

3485         per quarter that they need to attend. Between those blocks that they attend, block

3486 studies, then they've got assignments and those assignment topics are directly related
3487 to the business gaps that we've identified within C8. So it has to be, even if it's a
3488 syndicate group, and they divide them into syndicate groups as well, so it's about 35
3489 people at one point in time so they're divided into syndicate groups of about, I think it's
3490 six groups of six each. And basically if they want to, because the country management
3491 team decide on topics upfront that ideally they'd like the syndicate groups to address.
3492 However, if they want to change or don't want to take any of the topics that are
3493 recommended and come up with a new one, which has also happened with one or two
3494 groups, it has to be relevant and it has to be something that they can come up with a
3495 solution that can be implemented back into the business operationally. So the
3496 assignment topic has to be relevant, they need to come up with and it has to be a
3497 problem that we're experiencing because the aim is for them to come up with a solution
3498 to that problem, but something that's practical enough that once they present it at their
3499 graduation ceremony, you know, each group will present the solutions based on
3500 whatever problems they've identified, the intention is the problem must be practical
3501 enough that the country management team listening to the presentation can pick  one
3502 or two of those solutions and actually implement them back into the day to day
3503 operation of the organisation as well.

3504

3505 RN      Excellent. So, I mean, in this way the student learns and the organisation gets a
3506 benefit. What about the business school, what benefit do they get from this process?

3507

3508 C8      Well, I suppose depending on how good the solutions are they can always use
3509 some of these as case studies, especially if we implement the solutions and they
3510 actually work, you know. They can use them as case studies for further, similar types of
3511 programs that they have with other organisations as well who might be experiencing
3512 similar types of challenges.

3513

3514 RN      And then finally, what can business schools, organisations and students do to
3515 improve the impact of the MBA?

3516

3517 C8      You know that's a tough one because I was just thinking about it. We've had
3518 meetings around this whole issue around job creation etc because at the end of the
3519 day I think it needs to contribute towards the whole government initiative around job
3520 creation. We found not so long ago that there weren't too many women sitting on
3521 executive boards in this day and age or not as many as there could be. How do we
3522 address that gap, how does an MBA possibly contribute to more female students being
3523 prepared for that in the reality of the situation? How many, if you look at BEE or
3524 employment equity etc, you know, how many disabled people could also be fast
3525 tracked to some of those positions? But to look at some of the unique talent that we
3526 have within the productive context and look at what has been developed in job
3527 creation, there's BEE, there's representation of women, disabled people etc, etc and
3528 look at how do we then close that gap, if an MBA supports that and how to fast track
3529 people to become more ready for certain positions.  And we know we're missing certain
3530 representation at that level so how does the business school then increase their ratio of
3531 intake of those particular individuals, targeting them, even PDI, previously
3532 disadvantaged individuals on a broader scale? How do they then increase the intake
3533 and target specifically those students that can fulfil or close that gap at a country level
3534 and partner with the business to understand what their specific gaps are and their
3535 targets are, but the business school can then help them achieve as well? I don't think
3536 there has been too much of a slant towards that.

3537

3538 RN      That's a very interesting view. I haven't heard that before and it certainly does
3539 provide quite a lot of opportunities. Is there anything else that you think the three can
3540 do together to ensure that this program is a better program?

3541

3542 C8      Look, I mean, I think it still comes back to the reality of what it is that a student
3543 can do with that MBA once they've got it because I think the worst that could happen,
3544 and that could be one of the failings that you asked about earlier, is for students to feel
3545 like it was a waste of time to have spent two or three years trying to get this
3546 qualification and they're not going anywhere with it. As much as you might have had
3547 the discussion to say, look, let's focus on your personal growth and learning, I know
3548 that's a bit of a naive approach as well because human beings are such that if they're
3549 going to invest so much time, energy and effort into something, it's really that they still

3550      want to get something worthwhile out of it and personal growth just won't be enough.

3551      So there will still need to be that collaboration between the three parties as to how a

3552      student can still get what they want from the organisation based on what is the content

3553      of the curriculum that we're referring to that the business school offers.

3554

3555      And there, I think it's not so much the organisation giving feedback to the business

3556      schools as to what it is that they can offer but possibly the business school giving the

3557      organisation some guidance, some ideas as to what it is that they can do to improve

3558      and better cater for the students' expectations as well. Because business schools deal

3559      with so many different organisations and of course some organisations do this better

3560      than others, those that are struggling, I think the business school can provide guidance

3561      based on the learning or the information they get from the better performing

3562      organisations that are doing, you know, closing the gaps better. And I know some

3563      organisations might see that as competitive input because it helps them to retain and to

3564      acquire talent from other organisations better than some but there needs to be

3565      collaboration that the business schools are allowed by these organisations to just share

3566      a bit of this knowledge. Because at the end of the day, as I said, it will be just creating

3567      more opportunities for more people around, you know, transformation, around job

3568      creation etc. At the end of the day it can't be organisations being too internally focused

3569      on the competitive advantage aspect but what is it that the country needs as well at the

3570      end of the day.

3571

3572      RN      Would, going back to the expectations thing quickly; would alumni of an MBA

3573      taking on current students as mentors help with the expectations and help manage the

3574      expectations?

3575

3576      C8      I would be very careful about that. You know, the whole mentor/mentee

3577      matching is never easy because you're dealing with dynamic human beings as well

3578      who are constantly changing in terms of what it is they want etc. And of course the

3579      mentors are always a bit of a challenge to try and keep interested and keep committed

3580      to the whole program. Even a 12 month mentorship program is always a challenge.

3581      The mentees are usually the ones who are more available than mentors as well. But if I

3582 was to use that, and just thinking of it from an HR perspective within an organisation, if
3583 I was to look at something like that, my approach would be firstly screening the
3584 mentors quite closely as a first stage because remember that some people don't
3585 complete their MBA. So I know by the nature of alumni, typically it's to be somebody
3586 who's graduated but, you know, I don't know what the criteria would be for something
3587 like that. But I would make sure that the mentors are, for example, people who have
3588 completed, people who have taken out huge learnings out of that process and people
3589 who have seen the benefits, even after it's completed, the benefits of having gone
3590 through that process and completing. So I would screen out people who haven't
3591 completed in terms of their thesis, people who have completed but they think it was a
3592 waste of time and are a bit disillusioned, because there's a lot of that as well, a bit
3593 disillusioned after the process and so on so that there is the right influence from a
3594 mentor to a mentee in that matching exercise as well.

3595

3596 RN    Great. Well, thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it. I think
3597 you've given me some really valuable insights, C8.

3598

3599 C8    Yes, I hope it was useful because, like I said, you know, I haven't, with C8 for
3600 the past two years at least, haven't really been that involved with MBA students as
3601 such, just maybe one or two recently.

## 3602 APPENDIX J: TRANSCRIPTS OF COMPANY 9 (C9)

3603 **Speaker key**

3604

3605 RN    Ravindran Naicker

3606 C9    C9

3607

3608 C9    Hello?

3609

3610 RN    Hi C9, this is Ravi, how are you?

3611

3612 C9    How's it, Ravi.  Sorry, I could hear you but I don't think you could hear me?

3613

3614 RN    No, I couldn't, actually.

3615

3616 C9    Good, at last.

3617

3618 RN    Great, let me...just before we begin, I need to read you a consent statement, so
3619 just to get your approval, before we begin.  So, basically I'm conducting research which
3620 will explore the different ways in which collaborative learning can achieve the maximum
3621 output from an MBA programme, for business schools, students and organisations
3622 involved in the MBA.  Our interview is expected to last about 30 minutes, and will help
3623 us better understand how business schools, students and organisations can work
3624 together to ensure that all parties maximise their respective benefits, from the MBA.
3625 Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.  All
3626 the data will be kept confidential and no names will be disclosed or anything of that
3627 sort.  And, if you have any concerns, you can just contact me or my supervisor, VVVV,
3628 who you obviously know, so are you good with that?

3629    C9    Yes, no problem at all.

3630

3631    RN    I'm going to be recording the conversation, because it will go into my
3632    transcripts, but your name and stuff won't be disclosed, in terms of the interview itself.

3633

3634    C9    That's fine, no problem.

3635

3636    RN    Great.  So, where shall we begin?  Let me just introduce myself.  I'm a final year
3637    MBA student at Gibs, and I've just explained to you, in terms of what my study is about,
3638    because I think...

3639

3640    C9    Are you full time, Ravi, or part time?

3641

3642    RN    I'm part time.  And, basically I'm just going through the data collecting process,
3643    where I'm interviewing people or practitioners who are in business, who can add value
3644    to the research, to try and close the gap between business and business schools,
3645    because what you find is people normally leave.  Students normally leave within the
3646    first or second year of doing their MBA programme, so I want to help companies
3647    harness that power better, and then I want students to obviously benefit from it, and the
3648    business school.

3649

3650    So, just a quick view, C9, your title is?

3651

3652    C9    Group Human Resources Director.

3653

3654    RN    HR Director, and you're at C9, right?

3655    C9    C9, yes.

3656

3657    RN    And, your academic qualifications?

3658

3659    C9    There's a few, Masters Degree in psychology, and I have a Harvard
3660    qualification, the Senior Executive Programme, and then I have a degree in clinical
3661    organisational psychology from INSEAD in France, and plus a few other programmes,
3662    but they're probably not important.

3663

3664    RN    C9, tell me, what do you believe are the successes of the MBA?

3665

3666    C9    Of the MBA?  Well, let me talk from an HR Director view, because we hire
3667    MBAs and we interview a lot of MBAs, and I think the value is it really is relative to
3668    where the person is in their career.  We get MBAs who are very young, without
3669    experience, and we find they're useless to us.  They just don't have the frame of
3670    reference in which to apply the skills that they've learned on the MBA, they're still
3671    caught in a very theoretical model.

3672

3673    And, so in the interviews, you ask them, what do you want to be?  And, they say, I want
3674    to do strategy and I want to...they clearly don't understand what strategy is or haven't
3675    had the experience of putting strategies together, as opposed to the person who has
3676    business experience, and has worked with real problems, and had to solve problems,
3677    and we find that the MBA becomes more a facilitative tool, as it were, for solving what
3678    problems they have encountered in experience, so that person is much more valuable
3679    to us, because then the MBA has truly been put to use.

3680

3681    Of course, the downside of that is they come very expensive.  You get a very
3682    expensive personal experience and MBA together, and in a business like ours, we

3683 don't actually recruit a lot of MBAs at senior levels, because of that. They're just too

3684 out the market.

3685

3686 RN    In terms of your business, what value have those MBAs who've had the

3687 relevant experience and stuff, what value have they added to your business?

3688

3689 C9    Very good research capabilities, we find, you know. I think, we're retailers, so

3690 retail is a very practical, hands on exercise. It's very commercial. We trade every

3691 single day. We can adapt and change our business in very short periods of time. Daily

3692 or weekly, if something doesn't work in a store, we can change it tomorrow, whereas

3693 the MBA tends to promote more longer term problem solving, and we find that MBAs

3694 don't naturally get into the very rapid working world that easily. We find that they're

3695 almost over qualified at times, they're looking for things that don't exist.

3696

3697 I mean, retail, you buy something and you sell it, and if you don't make a profit, you

3698 don't try and keep selling it. It's that simple. You don't need a strategy behind it or

3699 whatever, so what we do find, where the MBAs can add value, is on the business

3700 model as a whole. If we're looking to maybe get into new territories, or just think about

3701 our business, I think the research capability that they bring is always very good,

3702 because they've developed that judgmental capability, the ability to research something

3703 that differentiates between what's good, what's bad, what works, what doesn't work,

3704 and so we use them in those capacities, as more project and research based work,

3705 which a lot of people, which a lot of MBAs seem to want to call strategy.

3706

3707 But, it's definitely not strategy. Strategy is something completely...strategy is day to

3708 day, it's not doing long term feasibilities and those kinds of things, so that, those

3709 exercises inform strategy and they will inform strategic decisions, but it's not actually

3710 strategies. So, interesting.

3711

3712 RN    And then, in terms of mental maturity, how does that come into it?

3713    C9      Mental maturity.

3714

3715    RN      Can you talk to that, perhaps?

3716

3717    C9      I think an MBA does move a person along quite quickly.  It brings them, it brings
3718    a different context to their thinking and teaches them skills that you wouldn't
3719    necessarily derive elsewhere.   That ability to research something and make a
3720    judgement call, and just apply logic.  This thing of making, being able to apply logic in
3721    support of a decision.  I think that's what it brings, so mentally, your MBAs, you're
3722    actually more mature than somebody who hasn't gone through that experience, but
3723    that said, it's not necessarily more valuable.  They are mentally a lot more mature,
3724    that's not necessarily that they're a lot more valuable.

3725

3726    In a business like ours, the retailer, who knows how to run a store, is probably more
3727    valuable than an MBA, but if we're wanting to test the new model of business, or do a
3728    feasibility on moving to China or Brazil, then I think they would be very useful to us, that
3729    mental maturity is important.

3730

3731    RN      In terms of the shortcomings, you said one of the shortcomings is that people
3732    may not be in the right, or they may be basically too theoretic, what else do you think is
3733    a shortcoming of the MBA?

3734

3735    C9      That point, being a little bit too theoretical, sometimes being a bit fanciful, or the
3736    other thing I find at times with MBAs, is they tend to believe there's more to be done
3737    than there's actually to be done.  The great entrepreneurs are the ones who have a
3738    look at the resources at their disposal, and they configure those resources to achieve
3739    an outcome, whereas I find quite often the MBAs are caught up in thinking about the
3740    resources themselves, and about whether they're good resources or bad resources, as
3741    opposed to just putting them to use, so yes, and I'm generalising probably quite a lot,
3742    but I find that it comes back to what I was saying earlier about experience.

3743 The person who has got a very deep experience, and goes and does an MBA, is
3744 infinitely more valuable than a young person without experience, because then they're
3745 just caught in this total world of overkill and of just too much, but what other
3746 weaknesses?

3747

3748 I don't think there are many weaknesses, far more strengths in the MBA than there are
3749 weaknesses.

3750

3751 RN    That's good to hear.  In terms of the MBA itself, and let's say, business schools
3752 and stuff, I don't know how much you've interacted with business schools and with
3753 students?

3754

3755 C9    A lot, yes.

3756

3757 RN    In terms of C9, so how have you achieved benefits for all three parties?

3758

3759 C9    I'm a mentor at Harvard, on the Harvard MBA Programme, and we recently
3760 brought a Harvard MBA person across to us.  A Chinese lady working in America, and
3761 doing the Harvard MBA current, so she flew across to us.  She spent ten weeks with
3762 us, and yes, she brought fantastic value.  We put her into our furniture business, to
3763 research it and to have a look at how it was doing, and she gave us some outstanding
3764 feedback.  Great, insightful work that she did, so we used that.

3765

3766 I also work a lot with the University of Arkansas.  I'm on the board of their retail and we
3767 just brought two of their MBAs across to us as well, also on a ten week internship.
3768 They worked in supply chain, and again same thing.  We put them onto projects, and
3769 they gave us fantastic value.

3770

3771    And then, we have a programme in C9, called the Future Leaders Programme, and we

3772    have this problem of trying to bring people through from junior levels to senior levels at

3773    quite a rapid rate, and what we found is that it...Ravi, just give me a sec.

3774

3775    RN    Sure.

3776

3777    C9    And, what we found is that we've put something called the Future Leaders

3778    Programme together, and we found that if we can bring an MBA at a relatively middle

3779    to upper level of management, we can move those sort of people far quicker than we

3780    can from junior level, and we bring MBAs on that basis, so we brought an MBA in from

3781    UCT two years ago, and he is now senior executive on one of our divisions, and we've

3782    recently brought in a young lady from Stellenbosch.  She did her MBA at Stellenbosch,

3783    and she's now on our Future Leaders Programme, and she will be getting involved in

3784    some of our international research work, so yes, we mix a lot, I must say.

3785

3786    Something we've just been speaking about recently, is we've got quite a success story

3787    in one of our businesses in KKKK's and when I was at TTTT, many years ago, we used

3788    this MBA class to do case studies on TTTT, on the company.  They actually came in

3789    and wrote case studies, and we're thinking of using Gibs as in fact, approaching Gibs,

3790    to see if they couldn't give us an MBA, to come and write a case study on Milady's,

3791    because there's a great story there that's starting to emerge, so we interact a lot with

3792    business schools, I must say.

3793

3794    RN    And, what sort of feedback, so this is pretty interesting.  You get people out

3795    across from Harvard and Arkansas, but what sort of feedback do you give back to the

3796    universities?

3797

3798    C9    A lot, you know?  It's typically their summer, so a summer school programme,

3799    ten weeks, and we insist that they develop a blog while they're with us, so they write a

3800    blog, and they send in information back to their faculties, and to their colleagues

3801 constantly. We host them well. We literally take them to Cape Town, take them to the
3802 Berg, take them to a game reserve, take them to rugby matches. We really give them
3803 a South African experience.

3804

3805 And, that goes streaming back across to America, and of course we get a great
3806 response back. People want to come, and we've had a number of people through, but
3807 we give a lot of feedback back. We write reports, we give progress reports back to the
3808 universities, to the faculty over there, which they appreciate a lot, and then of course,
3809 there's the final project that they do. The write up. We insist that they write up their
3810 project, and they present it to the senior execs, and there's that as feedback, that goes
3811 back as well.

3812

3813 So, we haven't failed in one yet. We've only had serious successes, it's great, it's been
3814 really good both ways, so Arkansas, both Arkansas and Harvard are very happy to
3815 send us people, and we're very happy to host them, so it's a great relationship, and we
3816 of course, at the same time, are getting straight from the MBA classes, we're getting
3817 the latest in research and the latest research tools and methodologies and things that
3818 they're learning, we're getting access to, so you know, it's a great win win all around.

3819

3820 RN    That sounds brilliant, actually. And, are these students full time MBAs?

3821

3822 C9    Yes, in fact, all the students we've had so far have been full time MBAs. I think
3823 the Harvard is a two year, and Jenny is in her first year, and the Arkansas one is
3824 definitely also full time.

3825

3826 RN    Excellent, and then obviously that's benefited C9 tremendously, and as you've
3827 said, in terms of the research and the information that you get out?

3828

3829    C9    Very much, they're too young to give us any major insights, or opinions, but what they really are good at, is as I said earlier, researching stuff, and you know, generating models for us to look at, and doing feasibilities and those kinds of things.

3832

3833    RN    That's excellent.

3834

3835    C9    And, in that sense, yes, they have been good, have given us a lot, really a lot.

3836

3837    RN    And then, moving onto the next question then, how do the business schools interact and support you, as the organisation and the students through this internship programme?

3840

3841    C9    Well, if I start at University of Arkansas, the agreement was that I would go onto their board. It's the University of Arkansas, and they have something called the Sam Walton College of Business, so that would be like Gibs, for example. It's the Sam Walton College of Business, and what's in that, there's a department called the Centre for Retailing Excellence, and so I sit on the board of the Centre for Retailing Excellence, with about 50 other companies, American companies, so we get that direct input into their programme, and we also get a lot of feedback from them, which helps us.

3849

3850    And we, as part of the relationship is we allow their MBAs to come across, to do these ten week programmes, so there's a very high interactivity there.

3852

3853    We in turn, are now sending some of our senior executives across to Arkansas to be trained there, in supply chain, so there's a very good interaction.

3855

3856    We have a strong relationship with Gibs. We work with your business school all the

3857    time, and with Harvard, it's a bit more remote. Harvard, I think, are a big institution,

3858    we're a small company in their eyes, but even that, just participating, being a Harvard

3859    Alumni and participating on their Crimson Compass programme, their MBA and student

3860    mentor programme, I think we have a good interaction, you know?

3861

3862    RN     Can you tell me a bit more about that programme?

3863

3864    C9     Which is that, the Crimson Compass?

3865

3866    RN     Yes, Crimson Compass?

3867

3868    C9     Crimson Compass is the Harvard mentor programme, Crimson is the colour of

3869    Harvard, you know, and Compass is future career direction, and basically then they just

3870    look to alumni around the world, to participate, so for example, they sent, Harvard sent

3871    90 of their MBAs to Cape Town last year, and seven of us, as South African Harvard

3872    mentors went and met with the students in Cape Town. They get offered work

3873    experience here, and so on, so we will, as C9, next year, when they come across

3874    again, we'll offer a Harvard MBA work experience here, and it gives me an opportunity

3875    just to keep in touch with that, and if any of them want to ask me questions or be in

3876    touch, they do that, so now I get phone calls from numerous people all around the

3877    world, but more recently from Johannesburg, just wanting to talk about their progress,

3878    their careers, and just generally give advice, so it's a great programme, I must say.

3879

3880    RN     That sounds very interesting. I think it will be very useful for my research.

3881

3882    C9     Yes.

3883

3884    RN    It's very different, so alumni mentorship programme, very interesting.

3885

3886    C9    It's alumni mentorship, yes, go onto the Harvard website, it's called the Crimson
3887    Compass.  I don't know if you'll be able to get onto the actual thing, but you can read
3888    about it.

3889

3890    RN    I'll do that, thanks for that.  What do you think, when I did my research and
3891    when I listen to the corridor talk and stuff like that, to a large extent, a lot of those
3892    people who haven't done an MBA, view the MBA very negatively, and it's not without
3893    reason, and it's basically stemming, my research tells me, it's stemming from exactly
3894    what you said, in that where people are just not at the right career level to be doing an
3895    MBA, to add any value to them or their business.

3896

3897    What can, and then sometimes the business schools, they're teaching students the
3898    latest fads, which is unpractical, like you said, in terms of implementing on a day to day
3899    basis, what can the business schools, organisations and students do to improve the
3900    impact of an MBA?  What are the key things that you think they should be doing better?

3901

3902    C9    There is this thing that MBAs are a bit pretentious and they come out with these
3903    high expectations, and so on, but I must be quick to say, you get very good MBAs, and
3904    you get very bad MBAs.  You know, you can probably do an MBA online these days,
3905    but since...unless you've got a good quality business school, like UCT or like Harvard,
3906    or NSEAD or Gibs and so on, you know, and as long as they're maintaining a certain
3907    standard, I think you're going to get a good quality MBA.

3908

3909    The worst is when somebody comes to visit you and ask you for a job, and they've got
3910    an MBA from Cardiff Online, or Henley, or whatever, and they haven't really been
3911    taught.  In fact, they've been self taught, and this principle of self teaching, when you
3912    get on and you do this online study, or you do this like UNISA, is that you're working
3913    within your own limitations.  So, you're testing ideas with yourself, and you're writing

3914    within your own research capability, and so on, so you don't really, kind of, break out of

3915    yourself, if you know what I mean?

3916

3917    You're kind of stuck in this closed entity, and then you get an MBA.   Now, really

3918    it's...and a lot of people assume because they've got an MBA, they've accomplished

3919    something, as opposed to you go through a rigorous process at a Gibs or a UCT, and

3920    you're drilled, you're interacting with people.   There's a strong network, etc, and that's

3921    completely different, so what was your question?  What could be done better?

3922

3923    RN    What could they do better to improve the impact?  So, a student goes away to a

3924    Gibs or a Wits, and I concede the point that not everyone is equal.

3925

3926    C9    Yes.

3927

3928    RN    But, they go away, and what can we do better, to actually pull these three

3929    people together , so what can they do better to improve the impact, not only for the

3930    business school, but for the student in terms of learning, and then for the organisation

3931    in terms of actually practical.

3932

3933    C9    It comes back to what I said earlier, this thing of experience. If a business

3934    school, the business schools have to insist on experience. What those Arkansas

3935    students are getting when they come to us, is they're going to a different country, into a

3936    different kind of company, and they're seriously getting a different out there experience.

3937    They go back with emerging market experience. We give them projects to research in

3938    emerging markets, etc.

3939

3940    I think that experience gives them a reality check of what it's like.  If you're just

3941    contained in an academic and theoretical world, then you're finished. You're not going

3942    to succeed in business, because business is not a theoretical exercise, it's a very
3943    practical thing.

3944

3945    So, the thing of practical exercises and getting your students out to do practical work, I
3946    can't emphasise that enough.  I think part of that reality checking is also getting realistic
3947    metaphors, people who can say, listen, that doesn't work, this doesn't work, forget that,
3948    and so I think there's the first thing, experience.

3949

3950    The other thing, and I think from a corporate point of view, is how to integrate an MBA
3951    into your business, and if the business schools could give guidelines on that, or
3952    somehow there could be a symbiotic relationship between, and I guess our relationship
3953    with Arkansas is a very good example, is that they send their students to us, we give
3954    those students a rigorous time, make no mistake.  We don't give them MBA stuff.  We
3955    give them practical, retail stuff, and they go back and they apply that in the MBAs, and
3956    the classes there learn a lot.

3957

3958    I think that's quite good, but we've learned how to bring MBAs in, and I think corporates
3959    don't know how to do it. They see MBAs as these very clever young people who you've
3960    got to put into very clever roles, whereas and mostly those are corporate roles, or
3961    strategic roles, whereas I think the MBAs thrive best in a practical environment,
3962    because they've developed decision making skills, they've developed judgement, and
3963    you don't get that sitting in offices, making corporate decisions. You just don't get it.

3964

3965    If I was an MBA, I'd say your first job must be straight into frontline operational
3966    management.  Go and run a stall, go and run a DC, go and do something, because
3967    that's where you're going to apply your MBA skills. The gap is this thing, in fact, for too
3968    many people, MBA equals strategy.

3969

3970    When you've worked in business, there is no such thing as strategy, there's a strategic
3971    process that you go through, which is essentially a decision making process, but once

3972 the decisions are made, there is no strategy, it's just implementation of decisions, you

3973 know?  But, the MBAs want to, somehow they come out thinking they've got to get into

3974 this thing called strategy, which a lot of time, equates to sitting in a corporate office,

3975 thinking about where to go in the world, and I think that is history.  I really do.

3976

3977 So, what could the MBA School do better?  You know, yes, integrate to the practical

3978 world, I think is very important.  Yes, what else?

3979

3980 RN     How would you bring a programme like the one you've got with Arkansas back

3981 to a South African context, so let's take a Gibs or a Wits or UCT, and you've got a part

3982 time student, so he is fully employed somewhere else, maybe not a competitor or

3983 whatever, but he's employed, so how would you take that back, and where would you

3984 take that back?

3985

3986 C9     So, provided that we could get some value out of the students that come to us,

3987 that would be fantastic.  The reason we get so much value out of the Arkansas people

3988 is because they are on Wal-Mart's doorstep, they're saturated in supply chain thinking,

3989 so when they come to us, they bring us good value.

3990

3991 When you get a Harvard student coming into your business, and they've just been

3992 lectured by the kind of people, they bring in good tools, good analytics into your

3993 business, so you're getting serious value there.

3994

3995 You know, if you're getting somebody out of Gibs, or UCT are you getting the same

3996 value?  You know, possibly...maybe we're not looking hard enough or maybe we're not

3997 bringing people in, but for local people, we have what I described as our Future

3998 Leaders programme, and that's where we bring local MBAs in, but there's a rule to that.

3999 Is that they must be interested in retail, and they must want to be retailers.

4000

4001 You know, there's nothing in our business that we can teach them, around grand
4002 business schemes and things.  We're practical, and the problem in South Africa is that
4003 we don't have enough MBAs wanting to be retailers.  Whereas if you study in Arkansas
4004 on the back doorstep of Wal-Mart and Tyson Foods and so on, you've probably already
4005 made that decision, that you want to be in retail.

4006

4007 If you're studying in Harvard, and you've been through various, Nike, Adidas, etc, you
4008 probably want to be in sports clothing, which suits our business, C9 Sport.  In South
4009 Africa, we just don't find enough MBAs wanting to be retailers.  Maybe it's just not a
4010 sexy industry.  Our industry is Investec and the management companies.

4011

4012 RN    That's an interesting point.

4013

4014 C9    In other words, if the business schools could create more retailers for us, we'd
4015 be in with them like a flash.

4016

4017 RN    How would you...let's say a business school could create or define or could give
4018 you a bunch of students who are halfway through their MBA, who obviously work
4019 somewhere else, but would like to get some experience, in terms of retail. They're
4020 interested in retail, and then they're offered to you, for let's say, a period of three
4021 months part time?

4022

4023 C9    Well, we would take them, probably on a shorter, probably a ten week.  Our
4024 internship programme, we find ten weeks a very good period of time.  It's enough time
4025 for them to get involved, but it's not too long that you're starting to wonder what to do
4026 with them next.  It's a good project period, ten weeks, and we've got...we want to go to
4027 Brazil, to China, we're up in Africa, and we're confronting problems all the time.  We've
4028 got to think about an ERP system for our business, and so on, so there's no shortage
4029 of work.

4030 And, yes, we would go with it, but to send them our way and I think we'd work out a

4031 programme, because we do value the mindset of a good, experienced MBA person,

4032 and they can add tremendous value.

4033

4034 RN    That's great. Is there anything else you want to add, in terms of making this

4035 process better?

4036

4037 C9    No, look, I think... yes, probably the biggest thing I'd say, and I've spoken to

4038 many MBA classes, and the one thing I say to them is that the MBA doesn't guarantee

4039 you an automatic right to step into a position in corporate, at a certain level, because it

4040 gives you an absolutely fantastic bunch of skills, but the trick is to get in at a very active

4041 level, so that you are applying those skills. You don't want to come to corporate, and

4042 never really apply your thinking, for the sake of a good salary and a nice job. You will

4043 move far, far quicker if you come into a practical job, get practical application of your

4044 MBA, you'll move up through a system much quicker, than coming in at a senior level,

4045 where you're going to sit for three, four, five years, and probably end up getting into

4046 project roles, and going nowhere.

4047

4048 I think business schools must understand that, they must not produce prima donnas

4049 and pretentious people for the market. They must produce people who really want to

4050 come in and work, and there's nothing more valuable than an entrepreneur who has

4051 grown a business, been very successful and then decides, I really need to top up my

4052 skills, and he or she goes and does an MBA.

4053

4054 That person is hot property here, definitely, so I guess, that if anything, that would be

4055 the biggest thing for me, but we value MBAs big time. We are just very fussy about

4056 who we bring in, and very fussy about how we use them. With the Harvard and

4057 Arkansas MBAs, and even our Future Leaders coming into our business, the first thing

4058 they do, they go to our DC. They go into the warehouses, and they work in packing

4059 lines, they work on the floor, they interact with people there, they are given DC

4060 projects.

4061 The next thing they do is they go to our stores, so they see in the DC how we receive
4062 stock and how stock gets moved to stores. The next thing we do is we put them into
4063 stores, we make them work as packers. They work as store managers, maybe as an
4064 area manager, they have to do that. From there, we will bring them across into the
4065 buying process, the planning process, and then we start giving them their projects.

4066

4067 So, by the time they get to the project, they've got this very deep insight of our retail
4068 process, as opposed to what many companies do, they bring the MBA in, and they put
4069 them straight onto the project, give them an office, a computer and a project, and they
4070 spend their first four, five weeks trying to work out what they're doing, and work out the
4071 retail process, so practicality, practical skills plus MBA equals high value.

4072

4073 RN    Practical skills plus MBA, I'm going to quote you on that one.

4074

4075 C9    Very high value. MBA with no practical skills, useless. Practical skills without
4076 MBA, very useful indeed. Practical skills plus MBA, very high value.

4077

4078 RN    That's fantastic.

4079

4080 C9    All right, Ravi.

4081

4082 RN    Thank you so much for your time, C9, I really appreciate your time.

4083

4084 C9    I hope that's helped.

4085

4086 RN    I'll basically type this up. What I'm going to do is, when I'm done with my
4087 research, I will forward you a copy of it, for your reference.

4088    C9      That would be great.

4089

4090    RN      And, we'll be in touch, thank you so much for your time, go well.

4091

4092    C9      Good luck, Ravi, how far are you with your MBA, by the way?

4093

4094    RN      I'm pretty much done, it's just the thesis to do now.

4095

4096    C9      Keep C9 in mind, hey?

4097

4098    RN      Thank you so much and go well.

4099

4100    C9      Cheers, bye.

4101

4102    RN      Bye.

## APPENDIX K: TRANSCRIPTS OF COMPANY 10 (C10)

**Speaker key**

RN      Ravi Naicker

C10     Company 10

RN      So C10, I'm Ravi Naicker  and I'm in my final year of MBA.

C10     With Gibs, hey?

RN      With Gibs, yes.  So basically my thesis is around how collaboration can make the... or can improve the impact of the MBA.  And I'm talking collaboration between business schools, organisations and students.  And so I'd like to understand, from your perspective, what your involvement has been, how the experience has been and then try and unpack what we can do better as a business school, as an organisation and as students, to improve the impact of this programme.

C10     Of the MBA programme?

RN      Yes, but I'd like to draw your knowledge off your wider programmes, your executive learning programmes and what not, just to get a feel for whether there's certain principles that aren't being applied in the MBA.  We'll get to it as we work through some of the questions.  So let's kick off; I mean, just in terms of your career history, I mean, your current role...

C10     I'm the head of Learning and Talent Management for the corporate centre and I'm also head of Group Leadership for C10.

4130    RN     And your academic qualifications?

4131

4132    C10    I have a PhD in Adult Education and Leadership.

4133

4134    RN     Okay, great.  So let's start off; what do you think are the successes of an MBA?

4135

4136    C10    I think that one of the critical things in a country like South Africa, where we
4137    need a new set of leaders who are much more diverse, to get into management
4138    positions.  And MBA is very successful in teaching people the fundamentals of how to
4139    run, manage and grow a business, and I think it teaches them the fundamentals.
4140    Whether it truly enables them to do that, I don't know, but that management capability
4141    is such a critical skill that I think that's the pre-eminent success.

4142

4143    RN     What else do you think?

4144

4145    C10    I think the idea that candidates, especially on the Gibs MBA, get to do that
4146    overseas leg, which broadens their experience to beyond their own borders and their
4147    own boundaries, I think is also a very powerful experience because it exposes them to
4148    other economies, other industries and the markets or the countries that are typically
4149    chosen for travel are unlike ours, you know.  So I particularly favour the trips that go to
4150    Japan, the trips that have gone to China, Singapore.  I don't how much more we can
4151    learn from the UK and the US, the ones that have gone to India.  So those emerging
4152    economies that are similar and dissimilar to ours, I think those are firm... something
4153    quite refreshing.

4154

4155    Yes, I think those are the successes and, you know, there are other things about the
4156    MBA that is successful, and I'm talking here...  I've never done an MBA; I'm trying very,
4157    very hard not to do an MBA, but a very good friend of mine did hers with Gibs, and she
4158    talks at length about how it helped her manage her time because she was in a very

4159 senior position in government; she's very involved in her church work. She's not
4160 married but the demands that the MBA placed on her time, she still managed to not
4161 give up anything at work, not give up anything at church because she knew she had to
4162 just fit more into her day. And also what it teaches in terms of managing pressure and
4163 managing competing demands, and I think those... you know, and I suppose the thing
4164 that comes out of that is the resilience. I think it teaches the candidates the resilience.
4165 So I think those three are the important ones.

4166

4167 RN      And then, from your experiences, what do you believe are the failures of an
4168 MBA or the shortcomings of an MBA? I mean you mentioned something about you
4169 don't know if it enables someone to...

4170

4171 C10     Yes. Look, I... it's quite a good question and I don't have any personal
4172 experience of whether an MBA has failed or not, but I can intuit, based on what I have
4173 heard that, because of the intensity of the programme, candidates don't get the
4174 opportunity to delve in depth.

4175

4176 RN      Okay.

4177

4178 C10     So that then may limit – and I'm saying may quite gently – may limit the ability to
4179 apply. But I think that business schools know that and so their teaching methodology is
4180 not just theoretical. That's why they use case studies as much as they do. So, really,
4181 it's... for me, I don't think the MBA is particular to any other university degree. The key
4182 thing is when you have taught people the concepts, how quickly are you teaching them
4183 the skills? So, for instance, in your case, when you complete your MBA or whilst you
4184 are doing your MBA, do you already have the ability to apply what you've learnt in
4185 finance back at work immediately? Do you have the opportunity immediately to apply
4186 back at work what you've learnt about marketing and about financial management and
4187 about strategy and all of the concepts that you learnt? And I think that the failure, I can
4188 imagine, comes with the perception that the distance between what is taught in class
4189 and the application back at work, that distance is too large.

4190 RN Okay, that's an interesting point. How would... and we'll... if you can think about

4191 and park it right for a later question, but how would we actually then with that, yes, and

4192 we can park that for now, right. I'm sure you've dealt with the... with various business

4193 schools; how have you achieved benefits for all three parties; that's the business

4194 schools, yourself as business, and your students?

4195

4196 C10 By being very explicit about the strategic imperative that causes us to approach

4197 a business school. So we never go to a business school unless we can – I'll have to

4198 call you back; bye; apologies.

4199

4200 RN No problem.

4201

4202 C10 How do I sign this off?

4203

4204 RN I think you just put it down? That will be same thing .

4205

4206 C10 So we need to be very clear what our strategic objectives are; we need to be

4207 explicit with the business schools to say, this is the problem that we want to solve; we

4208 think that it can be solved in this way, and then start to partner quite intimately with

4209 business schools so that business schools don't do for us what they did for another

4210 organisation, copy, paste what they've done, but to really meet us where we are, and

4211 answer specific questions and the problems we're facing. And that's not a quick

4212 conversation; it requires quite a lot of engagement with senior executives typically, with

4213 proposed students typically, to make sure that the programme will deliver the results

4214 that we want.

4215

4216 Another way that we ensure success is in building in early upfront metrics according to

4217 which we will measure our success. We look very carefully at the faculty that is

4218 chosen. We want typically not only academics but academics who have industry

4219   experience and who continue to consult organisations to make absolutely sure that we

4220   are not disconnected. And then we look at the methodology; methodology has to be

4221   aligned to the target audience and has to be aligned to the purpose of the intervention.

4222   And typically we favour action learning, we favour on the job learning, we favour case

4223   studies, we favour interactive, we favour project work, and so on.

4224

4225   RN   Yes. Tell me something; in terms of the metrics, typically, what sort of metrics

4226   would you build in?

4227

4228   C10   We want to know what competencies candidates have before; so we want to

4229   know, for instance, if financial management is a key module before the candidates

4230   actually do that. We want to do a pre-assessment to check what the level of

4231   competency is. We'll do the check again after the module is completed; again three

4232   months, six months, nine months after, to see that there has been development. So

4233   that's an example of... to measure the progress.

4234

4235   Another metric is around what kind of impact; so what is it... so if you look at

4236   Kirkpatrick's levels of evaluation, what we're interested in is really level three, which is

4237   about how am I going to apply what I've learnt, and lastly, level four, which is about

4238   what impact am I going to have on the business – how is the business going to be

4239   better for the fact that I went on this intervention?

4240

4241   RN   Yes. And, in terms of the students, what sort of benefit did they get out of this

4242   intervention or these action learning programmes, and...?

4243

4244   C10   So they learn not only the theory, but they improve their critical thinking. They

4245   get the opportunity to actually go and test their ideas. They get to try them out at work,

4246   fail or succeed, come back, reflect on what they've learnt. Even the idea of reflection is

4247   very important. And the other benefit is that they get exposure to the best faculty; they

4248    get access to programmes that have been incredibly well designed.  So their overall

4249    learning experience and the quality of that experience is so much greater.

4250

4251    RN      Now, you say they get to try things and even succeed and fail, right?

4252

4253    C10    Yes.

4254

4255    RN      What level of support do you as business give to your students?

4256

4257    C10    Not enough, not enough; there's a concept that it's either the Centre for

4258    Creative Leadership or the... or CLC; either CCL or CLC, I forget and I apologise.  They

4259    have a concept which they call Manager Led Learning and that's also how you get your

4260    ROI.  If... and this also answers your original question; so, as much as we engage with

4261    the business schools, we need to engage with our line managers who are the sending

4262    managers, who are proving for you to go and study.  So in that interaction there has to

4263    be a contract between you and your line manager or you and your mentor, or whoever,

4264    to say, Ravi's going to go and do this MBA.  These are the critical concepts that he's

4265    going to be learning.  Manager, are you prepared to contract with him that he will come

4266    and bounce off ideas?  You will create opportunities for him back at work to apply those

4267    concepts.  You will coach him, you will mentor him, you will guide him, you will allow

4268    him to shadow you.  And that's what the concept of manager led learning is.

4269

4270    So what it does is it makes the idea that you went to this MBA worth more.  So you can

4271    start to see that it costs much more than what we paid Gibs because now the manager

4272    has to give of his or her time to help you consolidate and embed what you've learnt.

4273

4274    RN      Yes, absolutely.

4275

4276    C10    So the organisation gets the assurance that, yes, Ravi's really learning good
4277    stuff, and I as the manager, I'm actually learning from what he's learning because he's
4278    now got more recent data.  But we are very... we're not there yet.  We don't do that well
4279    enough; we still find too often the distance between the employees on this fabulous
4280    intervention is so far from what the manager knows even, you know, and it typically
4281    ends with him or her signing off your leave, paying the bill and hope to god that you are
4282    actually going to learn something.

4283

4284    And the other way that both the student and the organisation and other employees
4285    learn is if you come back and say, guys, I've just been away at a study block; these
4286    were the major concepts, here are copies of my notes, here are the websites, here's
4287    the content that I learnt.  Let me put together a one and a half hour brown bag lunch.
4288    Let me share with you guys what I learnt when I was away at my study block.

4289

4290    What are you doing when you do that?  You are consolidating what you learnt; you're
4291    embedding it because now you become a teacher; you are sharing with people who
4292    may never get the opportunity to learn what you learnt and you're sharing the material
4293    with them; you're sharing your insights with them.  You are inviting the people who
4294    come to your brown bag lunch to think about how can they apply what you've learnt to
4295    what they are going to do.  You might then offer to be a mentor to teach people the
4296    things that you know you're particular...  So now you're moving the learning from an
4297    individual basis, which is you, and you're bringing it to your team.  And that... those
4298    team members go into other parts of the organisation and they can transfer that.  And
4299    that's how you start to get this group team organisational learning dynamic.

4300

4301    RN    Absolutely, that's sounds great.  However, the business school, what... how
4302    would they benefit from this process?

4303

4304    C10    The business schools only benefit if they deal with clients who are smarter than
4305    they are.

4306    RN    Okay.

4307

4308    C10    If a client, an organisation, goes to a business school and says do it for us, the
4309    benefit... the business school benefits nothing.  They only benefit from a client who
4310    knows more, as much as the faculty member does, who can ask the right questions,
4311    who can push, who can review material and say, actually, this was lazy work.  There's
4312    this professor at Harvard who does X, Y, Z; go and look at what he does.  There's this
4313    new case study that has come up, why don't you explore that?  Actually, what we've
4314    proposed, what we've done two years ago, three years ago, why don't you do... you
4315    know.

4316

4317    So that challenge... because the minute a business school or an organisation says, oh,
4318    the business school is the expert and it ends there, then you've limited your own.  And
4319    if you don't monitor what the business schools do, you will find that they will copy and
4320    pastes stuff.  They will do for us what they do for JJJJ, what they've done for YYYY,
4321    because all those banks are their clients.  And isn't it easy to just copy, paste?

4322

4323    RN    Yes, absolutely.

4324

4325    C10    And to do what you did five years ago?  And if we are asleep at the job, then
4326    the business schools will get away with it.  So the business schools benefit from our
4327    active involvement, and that raises the bar for them.  So we challenge them and we
4328    say we've come to you because we recognise your expertise; we recognise the
4329    network of faculty that you've got, and that's why we've come to you.  And so we
4330    expect nothing less than your best effort.

4331

4332    RN    Yes, that's actually great.  Active involvement – I think that's an important point.
4333    So, in terms of the business school, right, how did they interact and support you as the
4334    organisation, and students?

4335 C10 By making sure they choose the good faculty, that they have excellent design,
4336 that the content is relevant and up to date, that they expose us to concepts globally,
4337 that they use their exposure to so many industries, so many companies, to teach the
4338 most up to date – that's how they help us benefit.

4339

4340 RN In terms of the relationship?

4341

4342 C10 What about it?

4343

4344 RN How does the relationship work and under what circumstances do you get the
4345 most out of the business school?

4346

4347 C10 The business school, for me, how I measure how good a relationship is, is
4348 when the business school knows my business inside out.  They know the leadership,
4349 they know our strategy, they know our business, they know our problems even before
4350 we know them; when they're not just about making the sale, when they're genuinely
4351 committed in helping us develop a core of leaders that can really be ready to take the
4352 organisation to the next level; when it's an ongoing partnership.  In fact, that work
4353 partnership is quite important because, really, there's nothing that irritates me as much
4354 as any supplier who just wants to make the sale.

4355

4356 RN Yes, definitely.  Okay, great; well then the next question I've got is, in terms of
4357 the action learning projects that you talked about, right; so you've talked about the
4358 manager led learning; can you tell me a bit more about how successful or unsuccessful
4359 action learning projects have been in your organisation?

4360

4361 C10 So I've not had the opportunity... well, no, let me restate that.  We have, in the
4362 corporate centre, two flagship leadership development programmes.  They're not part
4363 of an MBA but they are our flagship leadership programmes for new managers and for

4364    middle managers, and both of those are provided by other universities; one is UCT...

4365    no, one is USB-ED and the other one is Gibs.  And what we do in these programmes is

4366    we have action learning projects and USB-ED is particularly good because what they

4367    do is they have a coach who works with each of the action learning sets and guides the

4368    group from the conceptualisation of the concept, from testing if it's a good topic, from

4369    making sure that it's a real business challenge, to making sure that the quality of the

4370    research is good, that the findings are credible, to making sure that the executive will

4371    support this project.  Those are the things that make for good action learning projects.

4372    Now, I think USB has been better than Gibs in making sure of the quality of it.

4373

4374    So... and, you know, the concept of action learning is quite a difficult concept because

4375    everybody thinks that they're good at it.  But action learning as a methodology's very,

4376    very particular.  And I happen to be a purist; I know what a good... what makes for

4377    good action learning.  And it's interesting that now, in our new financial year, we are

4378    working with USB-ED to make their practice even better because that, if that action

4379    learning project is any worth, you will get an answer to a very difficult question that the

4380    business has been struggling with for a very long time.  You will be able to show the

4381    return on investment that was made.  You will be able to show this is what we did to

4382    solve the problem.  This is what we tried; we know this works, we know that works; we

4383    know that doesn't work, and therefore, going forward, this is what we're going to do,

4384    because, based on actual research, we've proven now that this is the way to do it.

4385

4386    RN      Yes.  Now, in terms of this, right, and if we pull it back to the MBA, what level of

4387    involvement do you current MBA students that are funded or not funded through your

4388    organisation, involved in action learning projects or involved in projects which bring

4389    back their learning to the organisation?

4390

4391    C10     Not close enough because I, as head of learning and head of leadership

4392    development, have never been approached by any of our candidates who have

4393    received funding to say this is what I'm doing, this is what I want the executive to pay

4394    attention to.  And I'm not close enough to know, to see what the topics are.  And I think,

4395    you know, I have confidence that students choose to do what's convenient, and one of

the things that is convenient is to look at their own organisation; so to do topics that are within their organisations because that's better than you going to do a study at YYYY or at SAB because that's just that much more effort for you. But if you interview people within the organisation, you... you know. So that's a way that you can then contribute back to the organisation.

But I think that it's a lovely question because it challenges us, all of us, who are involved in making the decisions to make sure the students that we fund are doing topics that have benefit to the organisation. So, for instance, I know that BBBB, the CEO of the corporate centre, has some fabulous ideas for... of stuff that he wants masters students to study, you know, but we haven't done anything to say, okay, cool, the next set of applicants, we're going to ask them to do these. For instance, we don't know whether the candidates who get funding from the BANKSETA to do their masters. We know that the BANKSETA compels that is has to be a banking related topic so that the industry again will benefit.

But I think it's about living consciously and it's about making these decisions consciously so that it's not just about saying yes, Ravi, of course you can have permission, and of course we'll give you leave and of course we will pay the bill, but it's about Ravi; let's you and us negotiate a topic that is pertinent for XXX right now. And your acceptance of the funding is conditional on you doing this topic that is going to be mutually beneficial. We're not there, unless you can contradict me.

RN      Not at all, no.

C10     Okay. So there's still a lot of work to be done there.

RN      And I mean... so I mean, definitely I think there's a lot of work to be done there. Finally, in terms of the business school's organisations and students, right, is there that you can add? So we've covered quite some interesting concepts in terms of the

4426     manager led, vis-a-vis in terms of the partnering, in terms of the action learning
4427     project, is there anything else that you can think of that can make the impact of the
4428     MBA – so all those students that you funded or being funded by BANKSETA, is there
4429     anything else that the three parties can get together and do that will improve the impact
4430     of the MBA, or they should be doing that they're not doing at the present?

4431

4432     C10    I think it's that last point about that true collaboration, you know, and it's really
4433     about defining what the collaboration means. So for me, the collaboration would be
4434     yes, person applies, panel meets. An executive panel meets to consider all the
4435     applications. The panel challenges the candidates to look in the organisation and see
4436     what are the problems that the organisation is facing, that they wish to fix through the
4437     study of this MBA; to contract with line managers, to partner in the mentoring, the
4438     coaching, the support, not just signing the leave form, but really to partner in the
4439     education and the teaching and learning; for the candidate to come back and share
4440     with others what they've learnt through these brown bag sessions, through
4441     presentations, through doing poster sessions, making posters of what they're learning
4442     and inviting people to come have a look; having clear metrics, monitoring and
4443     evaluating on a frequent basis – what are you learning, is it working, what are we going
4444     to do differently as a result of what you've learnt, and to keep that conversation going.

4445

4446     RN    Why doesn't it happen?

4447

4448     C10    I think we're too busy; everybody... you just want to get your assignments done
4449     and you're just busy trying to manage your deliverables at the office with your
4450     commitments to the programme. Your line manager is busy managing the work of
4451     others, leading the team, making sales. Everybody is just too busy. But this is too
4452     important to be too busy with to not attend to it, and I don't think it will take a long time
4453     for your learning division or your talent team to just sit down, even write this up as a set
4454     of guidelines, a one pager, to say, guys, I would propose that when you evaluate future
4455     applications, you make sure that these things are built into the letter of undertaking or
4456     the contract, because I don't think it's that hard, I don't think it's that complicated. I

4457    think it's because we haven't thought about it and I think it's because we think that it's

4458    too complicated, and it's not.

4459

4460    RN    Yes.  Great.  Well, is there anything else from your side, C10?

4461

4462    C10    No.

4463

4464    RN    Thank you for that.

4465

4466    C10    You're welcome.

4467

4468     RN    You've given me some really valuable insights.

4469

4470    C10    Oh, I'm glad.  How many people have... are you trying

# APPENDIX L: TRANSCRIPTS OF BUSINESS SCHOOL 1 (BS1)

4471

**Speaker key**

4472

4473

4474    RN      Ravindran Naicker

4475    BS1     Business school 1

4476

4477    RN     Hi BS1. Basically, my name is Ravi Naicker, and I'm conducting research into
4478   how collaboration can better help business schools, students and organisations to
4479   improve the impact of the MBA. And, I think that a starting point would be just to
4480   understand, what do you think the success of...in fact, before we move onto that, your
4481   current role?

4482

4483    BS1    I'm the Academic Director.

4484

4485    RN     And, your academic background?

4486

4487    BS1    I've got an MBL, and a DBA, and I was a full professor, and I was an academic
4488   for 20 years.

4489

4490    RN     Great, so what do you think are the successes of the MBA?

4491

4492    BS1    In terms of the curriculum or the course?

4493

4494    RN     I think, holistically, the course and what does it give students? What does it
4495   give business?

4496    BS1    I think it teaches integrative management and in the old days, it was called
4497    general management, but if you have any CEO has to be able to integrate all aspects
4498    of business, so it actually gives them the theoretical knowledge of probably all the
4499    aspects of business, from governance to finance, to operations, so I think that is  an
4500    integrated way of thinking.  The systems way of thinking.

4501

4502    RN    What else would you say are the benefits of the MBA?

4503

4504    BS1    Depending where you do it, it's probably the, it's a well known qualification. It's
4505    had a long history, from the Harvard Business School up to date, so it goes back to
4506    where you do it, how well it's accredited, whether it's a global MBA, but it's a well
4507    recognised brand.

4508

4509    RN    In terms of that point then, you're basically differentiating, or you suggest that
4510    there's a differentiation between a good MBA and not such a good MBA.  What would...

4511

4512    BS1    Yes, I think that the accreditation of the MBA by country or by a system like the
4513    Amber or in America, the Association of Business School, yes, the American
4514    equivalent.  Here, they credit the MBA, some are not accredited.

4515

4516    RN    And, what would differentiate a good MBA versus a poor MBA, i.e. one that's
4517    accredited and one that's not?

4518

4519    BS1    Usually the quality of the academics, that are teaching it.  That's one of the
4520    things.  Obviously, how long you've been in the business, you know, in the sense,
4521    Harvard's been since 1909, Harvard Business School, so you know, it's a combination
4522    of that, the location you're in, say, a London Business School, the partners you have,
4523    yes, but I think first and foremost, the quality of the academics and what they are doing
4524    has got to be one of your, probably your most important.

4525    RN      And, I mean, in terms of any other success, in terms of successes and moving
4526    onto failures, what do you think are the challenges that the MBA faces these days?

4527

4528    BS1    Well, I think MBAs are always faced with having to look at the environment
4529    they're in, and make sure that their curriculums are up to date and relevant to the
4530    environment.  For instance, ten years ago, there was nothing on the bricks in your
4531    MBA. Now, if you didn't have it, you would be out of date, so I'm saying, but I think that
4532    most good schools review their MBAs every three to five years.

4533

4534    As I said, part of the international accreditation would be looking at international trends,
4535    yes, so yes, all of that.

4536

4537    RN      What are the key failings currently?

4538

4539    BS1    In terms of the MBA?

4540

4541    RN      Yes.

4542

4543    BS1    Well, I think there's a couple.  I think there's a lot of people who are running
4544    MBAs in the world, not accredited, that people, there's a fly by night.  We don't have
4545    that here, because they don't allow it, but I think if you go to some of the countries in
4546    the world that's not as strict as accreditation.  I think, I would think keeping up to
4547    technology would be a weakness that has to be addressed continuously, because
4548    technology moves very fast in education, and maybe some places are not as up to date
4549    as they could be.

4550

4551    Is that what you want?  But, I think it goes back to exactly that.  Maybe teaching, yes,
4552    not teaching your local component as well.  You can be in Russia, and you can teach

4553   an MBA and it could be the same as Singapore, or it could be whatever, but you've

4554   always got to have a local component in it.  As I said, you've got to look at the

4555   environment that the business school is in, and say, are we producing relevant people

4556   for that part of the world?

4557

4558   RN      You touched on an interesting point, you said that the MBA gives you theoretic

4559   knowledge?

4560

4561   BS1    Yes, but I think it's, when I say it, it's not only...well, it's mainly theoretical,

4562   because it's a Master's degree, although you do obviously touch on people doing

4563   practical projects, and stuff like that, but I'm saying, essentially it is still just a

4564   qualification to let you into a corporation.  And, then you have to spend the 20 years of

4565   getting your experience, to get to the top, but I'm saying, it at least might let you in.

4566

4567   RN      In terms of, and I'll touch on the experience part of it, the business practitioners

4568   that I have met, one of their big criticisms of the MBA is that it tends to be too theoretic,

4569   and so the students coming out don't offer them enough practical involvement.

4570

4571   BS1    That possibly is true as well, and maybe the MBA could be more practical, but I

4572   think on the other hand, the MBA is meant for people who will be strategic, conceptual

4573   thinkers, so you know, if they're looking at direct, practical stuff, it depends what level

4574   you're talking about.  I mean, as I said, you can get that from an undergraduate degree,

4575   from a polytechnic, from whatever, if you're wanting just skills.

4576

4577   I'm saying, an MBA is trying to teach a person to think critically and conceptually, so

4578   because that's what's needed at the higher levels of management.  Now, they might

4579   not be quite ready for that.  They might get too much from the theory, and then they've

4580   got to do their 20 years, or their 10 years or their 15 years.  They might not realise that,

4581   and companies might think, oh God, they've got too many ideas, but at least they have

4582   that as a basis.  They have some frameworks that they can draw on, because they

4583 have...I was saying the other day, for a lot of people who complain and say, I've got to
4584 do a research project for my MBA. I just want to go and run my business or whatever.

4585

4586 But, the point is, organisations are immensely complex these days, and everybody
4587 needs to be able to read quite sophisticated research, so if you're studying a Masters
4588 and you do some research, it gives you a much better learning curve, to realise what is
4589 good research and what is bad research. If you hear what I'm saying?

4590

4591 RN    Definitely.

4592

4593 BS1   As a CEO, or if I'm on a board, I get presented a lot of research, and I need to
4594 be able to look at it critically.

4595

4596 RN    Yes, in terms of the experience, how much does the experience of the student
4597 add to the value of their learning on the programme?

4598

4599 BS1   I think it will always add. That's what I'm saying, because business is about
4600 experience, you know, as well. That's what I'm trying to say, is you can't teach
4601 somebody to become the CEO, only they can do that, so I'm saying, you can point
4602 them in the right direction, and give them the research that's available, or give them
4603 strategic ideas, but they are the people, so it goes back to how much experience
4604 somebody has.

4605

4606 RN    Then, in terms of the MBA programme that you've currently got, how have you
4607 achieved the benefits for all three parties, being the business school, the student and
4608 the organisations who actually invest in the MBA, either through sponsorship, or
4609 allowing students to come through to your MBA.

4610

4611    BS1    I forget the order, but for instance, the students have a lot of opportunities to
4612    study here in Johannesburg, or to go internationally, because we've got alliance with
4613    other international universities, so they get some global experience.  We also have a
4614    trip to something like India or Brazil, or something.  They don't all have to go, but they
4615    have that opportunity.

4616

4617    We don't have a direct trip this year, but we will have to Africa, to look at some of the
4618    things, so I'm saying, there's an opportunity to look at different environments, apart
4619    from Johannesburg.

4620

4621    For the company, it's hard to say, I don't know what, but I think it's that our students are
4622    fairly up to date.  What I'm saying is we try and make sure that they do practical
4623    projects, in finance or yes, as I said, I don't...you know, I mean, that's a hard one,
4624    because depending what background they come from, you know?  I mean, I had a
4625    medical doctor on Saturday saying he wants to do the Helen Joseph, become a
4626    manager, because he's a doctor, and he wants to be a manager of the Helen Joseph
4627    thing, so his kind of background would be different from somebody else, so we allow
4628    the degree a fair amount of selection.  We got the call, but we allow people to select
4629    from quite a lot of electives, so they can customise their own careers, for their own
4630    industry, because it would be different per industry.

4631

4632    Yes, we have a careers unit here as well, which gives advice to the student on careers,
4633    and industries, and things like that.  Yes, I can't think of...

4634

4635    RN    What interaction does your alumni have with the school?

4636

4637    BS1    We've got an Alumni Society and we have certainly some events with the
4638    alumni, so the students can use the alumni. We have events, but they can access to
4639    them if they want to.  That's what I'm saying, in fact, we've got some function at the end
4640    of the year now, where we are going to...have a pub evening where everybody can

4641 meet all our alumni, and that type of thing, but they certainly, if somebody came and
4642 said, I want to work at X, and we would know that there were BS1 people there, we
4643 would put them in contact with them.

4644

4645 I'm sure every business school will.

4646

4647 RN    How does the business school itself support the, I know you've spoken about
4648 some of the working, so how does the business school actually support business
4649 directly, and the students?  What sort of interactional relationship do you have with
4650 business?

4651

4652 BS1   I'm probably the wrong person to ask, because I'm in the academic office, so
4653 I'm in the back office of the place, so the people to ask are the marketing and we had a
4654 whole careers fair with Deloitte and McKinsey and all sorts of other people, and I'm
4655 fairly new here, so I can't give you all those details, but there's certainly are career
4656 days with business in this area, yes, the director keeps contacts with all the companies.
4657 What I'm saying is, I'm not the person, we have open days, where the students come
4658 more.  I'm not completely involved with the company side, so I can't give you too much
4659 detail on that.

4660

4661 I can give you people's names, if you want to go and speak to them?

4662

4663 RN    That's great for now, that's fine. We'll get that later.  I just want to understand,
4664 so I'm going to bounce a couple of ideas that came out of my previous interviews with
4665 business.  Let me get your views on that.

4666

4667 Some of them have suggested that alumni could potentially be used as, one of the big
4668 failings of the MBA, and I think you touched on it here, is the expectations part.  Where
4669 students who do an MBA expect...

4670    BS1    To be top management.

4671

4672    RN    Absolutely.

4673

4674    BS1    And, they haven't done their dues, yes.

4675

4676    RN    To be the CEO of a company within the next year.  You know, to climb the
4677    ladder very quickly, and to get this huge salary package.  And, business feels that as
4678    well.  How would we manage that, those student's expectations?

4679

4680    BS1    That's very hard, because some do actually achieve very well.  What I'm trying
4681    to say is, there are some that...depending on their age and where they are from their
4682    own experience, can do very well very quickly, but I think as a general thing, as you
4683    were saying, maybe there should be more contact with business.

4684

4685    I was actually...I think also something the other way around, I do actually think that
4686    business could also accommodate MBAs better, because you find a lot of the MBAs
4687    leaving the place they worked at, and going somewhere else, because often a
4688    company hasn't...when I say challenging enough, or they haven't said, look, here's
4689    somebody who is ambitious, who actually has now done something, and then in a way,
4690    used their knowledge while they were there, and then promoted them when they did.

4691

4692    I know that, for instance, I did an executive programme for Vodacom, where they did
4693    that quite well at one stage.  You know, they actually put people on a programme and
4694    said, you're coming on this.  When you finish, you will be senior management.  I'm just
4695    saying, it was much more designed into the company's belief, and I think it's, I'm not
4696    saying that they can be CEO overnight, but I think you could get better value out of
4697    that, if companies also...that's why the company MBAs work so well for companies that
4698    just do their own MBAs, and do their own stuff with a business school, is exactly that.

4699 You then design individual careers for everybody on the programme and it's an
4700 advanced thing.

4701

4702 For the students, I think really you could give them alumni and whatever. I think a lot of
4703 that they certainly get in the first six months, or the first year when they're out, when
4704 they realise they haven't, but there are people who should be actually fast tracked
4705 higher, and companies sometimes don't do that.

4706

4707 RN    You make an interesting point there, so in terms of managing expectation, my
4708 experience is, through my research, that a lot of people who are sponsored through
4709 companies are high fliers, or people being fast tracked, and the view that you have
4710 given here is companies need to obviously have a forward looking view, and almost
4711 accommodate them in some way, not necessarily upward stretch.

4712

4713 BS1    Exactly, but realise that they are going to go through this process. They will be
4714 changed, and how could you best, how can you best use this, and for instance, I was at
4715 UNISA before, and a lot of the companies used the MBAs to do an industry analysis, or
4716 do a company analysis of their own company.

4717

4718 That's a very useful way, they've got fresh ideas. They can come and do a
4719 presentation to the board. The board doesn't need to have to accept it, but they hear
4720 the latest trends or they hear, something maybe they hadn't, and then everybody, as I
4721 said, what's his name? Vodacom, they took that particular course, they broke it into
4722 four groups and they sent them to four parts of the world, and paid for all of it, for them
4723 to go and do a competitor analysis, and then they presented that back to their top
4724 management team, so I think it's a two way thing.

4725

4726 The value you can get out of the people, you've got free researchers, who are reading
4727 the latest stuff, you know as well.

4728     RN     What involvement would the business school have in this process? If a
4729     company came up with strategic ideas, we've got five or six things that we'd like you to
4730     look at, as a student, give them some support and direction with it, financial, or whether
4731     it's actually direction in terms of giving them the support of more senior, more
4732     experienced people, to go away and do some sort of action learning project. What
4733     involvement would the business school have, and to what extent?

4734

4735     BS1     I can't talk here, I know that we have thought about that, and maybe in future
4736     things, but I certainly know at some of the other places, we would try and direct
4737     projects to companies, and for instance, I was involved with a group that looked at a
4738     wine farm in the Cape, and we strategized for that, and presented.

4739

4740     I'm just saying, it depends, we don't have this clear-cut process here, but I'm sure if
4741     people came and said, we'd like somebody to do a project on this, we would certainly
4742     look at that.

4743

4744     RN     In a perfect world, if you could redesign this process, how would it work?

4745

4746     BS1     A perfect world would be that we used our alumni and all the companies that
4747     we're attached to, and run it more like a consultancy tooling. They do that at Wharton,
4748     so for instance, at Wharton Business School, they have a small business unit that
4749     people work on, and help business with that issue, or they have a unit for bigger
4750     corporations, so that would help them, so they'd say, we have a team of MBAs who are
4751     doing marketing. Have any companies got marketing problems?

4752

4753     They have it much more linked to that. But, a lot of business schools don't do that.

4754

4755     RN     In terms of that model that you've just briefly chatted about, you'd have several
4756     companies in interaction with the business school?

4757    BS1    They would come to the business school and say, look, we've got problems.
4758    Let's say, marketing, and there would be seven ideas for marketing, and then the
4759    school would set up, got all the students in marketing to look at different issues of
4760    whatever the project was, yes.

4761

4762    RN    And then, basically then feedback there, these are the solutions, and that's a
4763    very good idea.  I think that's a very good idea, and then obviously the learning would
4764    then come back to the business school, who would then update their curriculum and it
4765    would work like that?

4766

4767    BS1    Exactly, and yes, and to the business advantage, is they get...when I say a
4768    cheaper service than if they use consultants.  Obviously all the students could be
4769    wrong, but they could get some ideas, they're not going to pay the same for, but yes,
4770    so everybody, it's covering costs.  Usually covering costs, not making profits out of that,
4771    but you cover the cost for that.

4772

4773    RN    You don't necessarily need, the business doesn't necessarily need to
4774    implement the ideas of the student?

4775

4776    BS1    No, they're listening to that, but it allows the student to have a real life problem,
4777    from a company, and then obviously when they go away, they can say, look, I did a
4778    marketing project for Eskom or whatever.  It could be anything, and they can put that
4779    on their CV as well.

4780

4781    RN    Great.

4782

4783    BS1    Or, I did a project on small business, I analysed small businesses for...you
4784    know, and I gave advice on that, so if they then want to apply to be a small business
4785    advisor, or do something else, they actually have a real project as well.

4786 RN    That sounds excellent, I think that's a great idea.  And then, in terms of this
4787 interaction process, you've basically given me some really good advice here.  In terms
4788 of the alumni, getting back to helping students, I've heard or an idea that has come
4789 across is that alumni could potentially be mentors to students, to current students,
4790 firstly in terms of managing their expectations, and then guiding their process, or their
4791 journey through the MB.  What are your thoughts on that?

4792

4793 BS1    They could, and I'm not saying they can't, but a lot of alumni are quite busy, so
4794 it would have to be a voluntary thing.

4795

4796 RN    Yes.

4797

4798 BS1    Because, it's hard enough just getting alumni to work for the school, what I'm
4799 saying is yes, it's usually only when they've got...they're fairly senior and they've got
4800 some time.  It's not like we have hundreds that will come to the school and work with
4801 the school. We have much more students than we have alumni that are prepared to
4802 work for the school.

4803

4804 So, I would think it's a good idea, I just think it might be a little tricky to implement if,
4805 you know, because it would just have to be voluntary.

4806

4807 RN    What else would you say, in terms of the criteria for putting together some of
4808 these things?  How would you address some of the challenges like getting the
4809 commitment or getting the time of the mentors?

4810

4811 BS1    Very hard, that's what I'm trying to say, because they're all...we've got an
4812 alumni office, but I'm saying, I've seen a couple.  It's usually a few very dedicated
4813 people that come in and help.  You don't get huge attendance, because business

4814    people are very busy, and obviously they're also busy doing their own careers, their
4815    own lives.

4816

4817    What I would think of probably more is if you collected maybe companies that were
4818    owned, or people that predominantly had, you might be able to say, this is an alumni
4819    company.  I think obviously BIDVest has done it with the undergraduate thing, but I
4820    would rather that we had more internship programmes.  We have this, but it's not as
4821    popular, that people go and work in a company, for a little...we have it at the lower
4822    levels, but the MBA, it's sometimes quite hard for them as well, so we've got part time
4823    and full time, but the full time, that they actually went and spent three months working
4824    in the company.

4825

4826    Because sometimes they're not as experienced as the part time people, so yes.  I think
4827    it sounds nice, but having dealt with the alumni many times, it's hard enough just to get
4828    the alumni to come here.  I mean, yes.

4829

4830    RN    In terms of the alumni themselves, I assume that the interaction is quite
4831    restrained, or there isn't as much interaction as the business school would like?

4832

4833    BS1    Yes, exactly, but I'm saying, in fact, the people we've got are very good.  They
4834    do a lot, it's just the number wouldn't stretch to all the people.

4835

4836    So, I think they would be good mentors, if there was one for each, or one for a couple
4837    or whatever, but there isn't.  That's one of the areas, and it doesn't mean that it can't
4838    change, but yes, I think that's...how you manage the expectations, I think by telling the
4839    people.  You know, this is only the theory, now you've got to go and do the practice.
4840    They get some practical examples, and yes, it's very hard, because it does depend on
4841    the experience of the person.

4842

4843 If you haven't got a part time class, you might have somebody who is very experienced
4844 but quite young, and somebody who it's the first time they're now doing the MBA, and
4845 it's the first time they're in business, so that's, I'm saying the company route is the best,
4846 because then they are selected by the company as people that should be changing
4847 when they're finished.  They're moving from middle to senior management, or they're
4848 moving from lower to upper management or something like that, but that's what you
4849 don't usually get on the MBA.

4850

4851 RN    I see an interesting trend that's moving or the view in terms of turning this
4852 model, is to move away from the more individualistic, i.e. student driven application, to
4853 more a company view, where...

4854

4855 BS1    That would be nice, if you have the company support it and bring it all in, but I
4856 still think some of the research shows that a lot of people who choose to do an MBA,
4857 choose it for themselves, and it's not paid by the company, because they really don't
4858 want to stay with their company.  They actually want to move, that's why they're doing
4859 the MBA in the first place, but I'm just saying, if companies want to get the benefit, they
4860 should in a way do their own career guidance on people.

4861

4862 RN    Finally, what do you think these three parties can do better?  Do you have any
4863 other thoughts, in terms of making the MBA a better process, so that students don't
4864 leave immediately after getting their MBA that companies can benefit?

4865

4866 BS1    That it's designed into the company, that's my number one thing, because they
4867 will leave.  I think...the students, yes, because they're looking for career advancement,
4868 so unless the company is actually designed, that is the only way they're going to keep
4869 them, because if they actually have that, they've got a much better chance to get jobs.
4870 That's what I'm saying, there's a good brand, so they're going to be exposed to a whole
4871 lot of different ideas, a whole lot of other companies, they're going to have career fairs,
4872 companies present so a good chance is that they use that to do exactly that, to move to

4873 whatever level they want to, or whatever company, so the companies must decide
4874 whether they want to pay or not.  That's the thing.

4875

4876 I think the students, I'm not sure that they don't get a more realistic view.  They might
4877 think they should be at the top, but I think most of them, I can't believe that, if they go
4878 back into working for a while, don't understand that it takes you a while to become the
4879 top.  You're actually teaching them the history of management.  You're teaching them
4880 how long it takes to become the CEO.  You're teaching them all the subjects that they
4881 need to run the company, and most of them will not have all of those subjects, won't
4882 have all of that experience, so I'm saying, they might wish to be, but unless they're
4883 starting something, give them a year or two.

4884

4885 I think they should be surveyed five years after they've left the MBA, because that then
4886 gives a more realistic thing of how they've used it, and what they've done, and this
4887 goes back to the same thing, that it is an individualistically driven degree, so it depends
4888 on the person.

4889

4890 Because, people say, I know somebody got an MBA and they didn't do anything.  Well,
4891 that's true.  Only some people do, but it doesn't mean that they don't have the skills, or
4892 understand.  Is there anything else?

4893

4894 RN    I think that's it from my side.  Is there anything else from your side?

4895

4896 BS1    I think that's fine.  I'd just like to see this because maybe once, I think probably
4897 one of the other things is trying to listen more, what companies want, that's why I'm
4898 saying, that should always be listened to, and we should be focusing the MBA,
4899 delivering at least two thirds of the course with the skills that are required.

4900

4901 But, as I said, it gives a management degree, so it's going to be higher than just skills.

4902    RN     Absolutely.

4903

4904    BS1    That's why I'm saying, you have to actually ask the companies what they are

4905    wanting, because they might be asking the wrong person, if they're asking the MBA for

4906    certain things.

4907

4908    RN     Absolutely, I think the purpose is tantamount to this whole process.

4909

4910    Thank you so much for your time, I really appreciate your time, and as mentioned, by

4911    CCC, as soon as I'm done with the research, I'll give you a copy of the research and

4912    you can have a look at it.

4913

4914    BS1    Yes, on that, maybe if we're in a region, we should look at sharing something

4915    like companies and things like that as well.  I know we've got major players in this

4916    region, that could be another thing, you know?

## 4917 APPENDIX M: TRANSCRIPTS OF BUSINESS SCHOOL 2 (BS2)

4918 **Speaker key**

4919

4920 RN      Ravindran Naicker

4921 SE      BS2

4922

4923 RN      How's it, BS2, its Ravi. How are you?

4924

4925 BS2    Yes, hi Ravi.

4926

4927 RN      So basically I'm a second year student at, final year student at the Gordon
4928 Institute of Business Science. My research is basically looking to how collaboration can
4929 help business schools, organisations and students improve the impact of the MBA, and
4930 it's basically around how we can work together to make this MBA process better. And
4931 just to let you know, your participation in this process is voluntary, you can withdraw at
4932 any time without penalty. I am going to record the conversation but everything will be
4933 kept confidential and no names will be disclosed in the research. So are you
4934 comfortable with moving ahead then?

4935

4936 BS2    Yes, sure. Sorry, can you just explain you're doing this particular project in
4937 fulfilment of a course requirement or...?  Sorry, just clarify that for me.

4938

4939 RN      Sure. It's basically with regard to my research, my thesis for the MBA.  It's the
4940 last part basically.

4941

4942 BS2    Okay, sure.

4943

4944    RN    Okay, so before we get going, your background, BS2?

4945

4946    BS2    Yes, it's rather varied. I was becoming a chartered accountant and in my last

4947    year I gave it up, went over to the US and had an opportunity to study so I did

4948    Economic Development and Industrial Labour Relations focusing on South East Asian

4949    tiger economies. This was just around the time or just after our first democratic

4950    elections so I was looking at ways in which I could come back with models to benefit

4951    the country. But there were other things, I guess, in store for me and I didn't come back

4952    as soon... the first chunk of time in the US turned out to be ten years. And then I started

4953    managing intellectual property for US institutions during that particular time, came

4954    back, did an MBA here at BS2 and then took off back to the US and continued to work

4955    for an institution, educational institution in the US managing again intellectual property

4956    and then started off this position, I started off at BS2 in 2009. That's when I returned

4957    back home.

4958

4959    RN    Okay, great. And then you, basically your qualification is Economic

4960    Development and Industrial Relations?

4961

4962    BS2    Yes, Economic Development and Industrial Relations but, you know, I did the

4963    MBA and my concentration on the MBA was a combination of leadership and finance.

4964    So I think if you had to ask me quite frankly which particular area, I can't really pinpoint

4965    it because I have interest in both economic development and I would say political

4966    economy.

4967

4968    RN    That's great. So let's get into the questions. For you, what are the successes of

4969    the MBA?

4970

4971    BS2    From a student point of view or from now directing the program point of view?

4972

4973    RN    I think if you can put on sort of a dual cap, so I mean in reality you'll have a view

4974    in terms of as a student, what's worked for you and then as a business school, or a

4975    program director, what actually works.

4976

4977    BS2    Sure. So from a student point of view, and here again I'm speaking from a BS2

4978    perspective, it is... when I did mine it was on a full time basis so it was not even a one

4979    year program but an 11 month program. It's a couple of different things. One is

4980    exposure to 80 different, very, very different diverse individuals in terms of their

4981    thinking, their work experience, their background, engaging, learning from them, the

4982    stress and the pressure of the program, assessment after assessment, so managing

4983    that. I came from a very stressful background but to manage academic stress in that

4984    particular way is very different. The ability to write, to research and to research

4985    something very, very quickly, to be able to make sense out of the information that is

4986    constantly coming at you so basically separating the chaff from the real nuggets itself.

4987    To construct a report, to make the pitch or in the context of the classroom to be able to

4988    convince others, to be able to hold my own in terms of the positions that I took, so

4989    again, very kind of critical skills that were developed. And so yes, that's from a student

4990    point of view. And I think, you know, it was backed up in terms of the recognition. For

4991    me I went back to the States so it was not a problem in terms of the recognition that I

4992    got for the studies itself.

4993

4994    And then from a director's point of view, I think just the evolution of the MBA since I did

4995    it to what it is and just, given the macroeconomic crisis that we all see and we're

4996    confronted with and questions that civil society is asking about the relevance of

4997    especially the MBA program but more so the so-called involvement of MBA graduates

4998    to kind of being agents of the crisis itself or somehow perpetuating it. And by that I

4999    basically mean if you remember the Enron case, Jeffery Skilling and Kenneth Lay, and

5000    particularly Jeffery Skilling, he was brought before the Commission in the US and he's

5001    your classical Harvard graduate and he was asked, you know, did you not, for

5002    example, perceive the downside of the decisions that you guys made? And he was

5003    quite arrogant in terms of his response which of course didn't go down well. So for me,

5004    from a program director's perspective, it is the changes, rather the changes that have

5005    been made to our MBA program, the greater infusion of critical thinking, the greater

5006 awareness of the impacts of decisions that individuals make to community, to
5007 shareholders, to the environment, especially in the context of South Africa as an
5008 emerging market country and the relevance of us, of students creating value in the
5009 market place in terms of job opportunities, just understanding the huge divide that we
5010 see that confronts us as South Africans on a daily basis.

5011

5012 RN     Okay, and I mean, that basically then leads on, I think you've touched on it a bit,
5013 right, what do you think are the failings of an MBA?

5014

5015 BS2    Well, the failings, yes, I think the traditional one has just been where we
5016 perpetuate the siloed way of thinking – here's finance, here's marketing, here's
5017 economics and we don't necessarily show the linkage, you know, between all three
5018 areas and more. So I think that's been the classical kind of failing because we tend to
5019 wear our finance hat in terms of looking at the return on investment, internal rate of
5020 return, are we using, you know, our cash in the way that it's supposed to be etc. So
5021 sometimes we are, we kind of, I guess the decisions that we are forced to make brings
5022 us into kind of conflict with longer term kind of thinking or sustainable thinking. But
5023 slowly and gradually I think, you know, many business schools have changed their
5024 thinking around this one over here. They've said, you know, don't, post MBA don't play
5025 to the tune of the Wall Street analyst or the analyst that is looking at every quarter
5026 reporting. Rather, you know, dig in and say, you know what, I'm a manager who comes
5027 with a very different view; as much as there's tremendous pressure from shareholders,
5028 part of my responsibility is to educate the shareholders and to say that we should really
5029 be doing things for a more sustainable kind of term or period.

5030

5031 RN     So in terms of how, so we understand what some of the successes are, some
5032 of the failings are, right. How have you, as BS2, ensured that there are benefits through
5033 your program for all three parties?

5034

5035 BS2    Yes, sure. So from, so let me say firstly from the institution point of view we
5036 have, just in keeping with the theme of change of the curriculum, we've also introduced

5037    a stream on the MBA called Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship. We've
5038    deliberately recruited faculty members in that particular area. Allan Gray, for example,
5039    through the Orbis Foundation have given us an endowment to set up their values
5040    based leadership centre here together with the Bertha Foundation so we're making
5041    tremendous inroads in terms of closing the gap between society and the business
5042    school and playing a bigger role, as we should be, as an educational institution in terms
5043    of either thought leadership, skilled individuals, taking on, to the extent that we can,
5044    some of the challenges that society might be facing either through governmental
5045    organisations, non-governmental organisations and for profit entities. That's one. The
5046    other is we've recruited many more faculty members in the last two and a half years.
5047    Our faculty count has gone up from 22 to 38 so it's almost a 100% jump in faculty.
5048    We've gone for AMBA accreditation, we're going for AACSB accreditation, so from an
5049    institution point of view we are making certain claims and the best way to kind of verify
5050    those claims is to put oneself through an audit and we're really happy with that.

5051

5052    From a student point of view, you know, because we're much more clearer about the
5053    institution we are, we're attracting the individuals that come with a very different way of
5054    engaging and recognise that their contributions to society, post MBA, need to be done
5055    rather differently. And what's, I guess, really assuring then in terms of the third leg, if I
5056    understood, you know, what you meant by the third leg, from an employer perspective,
5057    employers... Just yesterday or the day before yesterday we ran our first management
5058    consulting conference, a student run initiative which was open to all institutions, which
5059    you may know of, which is coming to GGGG. And you know, I don't know whether your
5060    institution, whether your class is going to be participating in that but I had the good
5061    fortune of engaging with Delta Partners, a global management consulting company.
5062    And I engaged with this one particular partner and he reassured me of just the calibre
5063    of the student that's coming out of BS2 from the BS2, that that fits in with that particular
5064    entity. So, and we had a Women in Business conference about a month and a half ago,
5065    I had the same kind of feedback from Deloittes as well as from [unclear]. So our
5066    graduates are being recognised for their quality, for the way they think, for their ability
5067    to contribute to institutions and add value to those institutions so we are particularly
5068    happy with that.

5069

5070    RN    And how did you do that? So basically you, from what you tell me, business'
5071    needs are being met by the quality of your students and obviously by the quality of your
5072    curriculum. How did you know what you should be teaching and what was relevant?

5073

5074    BS2    So we consult all the time with our alumni who are in industry. We've got an
5075    active board. We consult with the board of directors, especially for some of the bigger
5076    changes that we have made like introducing the Social Innovation laboratory or the
5077    stream, the values based leadership centre. So you know, these are practitioners in the
5078    field, they are sitting on the boards of quite important companies so that engagement is
5079    incredibly important for us in terms of the steps that we want to take. But I think it's
5080    also, you know MBA programs the world over; they all tend to have the same kind of
5081    blueprint. You've got your accounting; you've got your economics, the classical kind of
5082    thematic ways in which the program is taught. We still maintain the same thing.
5083    However, we're looking for greater ability to link all of them together. So as an example
5084    we also introduced a very different course on the program called Research Methods,
5085    Evidence Based Practice and the idea here is to use that as a link point into all of the
5086    other courses. So that's how we know. We engage with our alumni, we engage with
5087    industry, we engage with the board, we put out what we are wanting to do to these
5088    individuals and we get the feedback etc.

5089

5090    RN    Tell me more about your engagement with your alumni. How active are they?
5091    How actively do you engage them?

5092

5093    BS2    Well, I think one of the challenges for South African based institutions is kind of
5094    creating a greater alumni involvement and presence, you know, with the institutions.
5095    Unlike in the US where alumni, they've certainly had a longer period of time where
5096    they've been able to kind of get this to where it is, alumni absolutely contribute in terms
5097    of their own time, contribute financially and they're really passionate about their
5098    institutions. So one is to create that passion, create that greater link. So we, you know,
5099    every year we have major alumni events. In October is another one where alumni
5100    come onto campus and, you know, from the director to faculty members to others
5101    involved with the school, we all are involved with that particular event where alumni are

constantly told about what's happening at the school. We share where we're going to with them, we also call upon them and now we strategise around where our ask and where our needs are and we then, you know, in engaging with the alumni and by ensuring that they're constantly aware of where the institution is going, it doesn't come as a surprise. And when you start talking about this is what we want to do, this is the vision, this is where we're going to, alumni are more than willing to kind of help and to give. It also works in our favour when, you know, when employers are saying really good things about the school. We are ranked; the rankings are talking about the institution itself. So when you have strong leadership that is clear about where they want to take the institution and the reasons for taking it in that particular direction, alumni are very eager to engage.

RN    Just on that alumni point, a lot of the business practitioners that I chatted to were rather keen on a mentorship program for their current students and I just wanted to get your views on alumni acting or fulfilling that role as mentors for current students. What are your views on that?

BS2    I think it's a very important one. Firstly, it depends on the kind of mentorship because the idea, while a very good one, requires a great deal of energy and effort and it requires commitment. And oftentimes what we find is while people are very eager and gung-ho to commit, when it comes to the actual commitment itself, it's not necessarily there because life is complicated, issues come up and you find that the promises that individuals made just can't be fulfilled. So I think there has to be a very deliberate kind of plan when it comes to that kind of engagement where alumni are told firstly, you know, it's going to take ten, 20 hours spread out over, say, two or three months or six months, this is what it's going to look like, so there are no surprises, you know, when it comes to that mentorship. So in principle I absolutely agree.

The way we've been able to kind of do it, and we get to do it on an ad hoc basis, and because we're dealing with 160 students, you know, full time plus the modular, each student comes with a very different, unique set of needs so we kind of say it needs to be much more student driven. So through our career services for example, through our

315

5134     alumni office we will certainly support this particular initiative. But through clubs on
5135     campus and we've gone, you know, rather a big way over the last two years about just
5136     starting and then just exploding this whole concept of having clubs on campus, student
5137     run clubs in particular areas. That then becomes the entry point for alumni to get
5138     involved because students then, through their networking activities, the various
5139     networking activities, they kind of... again this is part and parcel of the ethos of the
5140     school where students have to take responsibility for their development, they recognise
5141     which areas they require work in and then they approach individuals and say hey, you
5142     know, this is where I'm coming from, firstly I'm thinking about this particular career, do
5143     you think that this makes sense? So it starts off with a very simple question like that
5144     there and it then gets much more, you know, involved.

5145

5146     RN     That's through your clubs on campus initiative?

5147

5148     BS2     That's right.

5149

5150     RN     How would you otherwise incentivise alumni to be more involved with the
5151     school?

5152

5153     BS2     Oh, I think it goes with that ethos of just giving back. So on the front end, you
5154     know, students need to be told the engagement or the relationship with the institution
5155     doesn't stop in ten months, 11 months of 24 months. It's a longer kind of term
5156     engagement. So by clarifying upfront that, you know, the institution will always call on
5157     those individuals, and again just reiterating some very simple things, that the strength
5158     of the institution is only as strong – if I can say it in that kind of way – by the kind of
5159     students you attract but then also by the alumni and of course the faculty. I mean,
5160     that's a key component in terms of talking about the strength of an institution because
5161     students will become graduates and alumni, really the ambassadors of that school. And
5162     you know, if you take a class of 80, if you conservatively say okay, only 10% of those
5163     would be real mentors, you've got eight or 16. That's quite a nice number to start off
5164     with. I think what also needs to kind of happen in terms of just fostering this over here,

5165     if you can highlight the individuals that have given back, it tends to inspire others and

5166     motivate others. That's what it's about.

5167

5168     RN     Excellent. I mean, what criteria would apply to selecting mentors?

5169

5170     BS2     I think individuals that have a greater awareness of themselves, individuals that

5171     are very mature, individuals that can, you know, provide advice to individuals that, or to

5172     students that can be meaningful, that can be impactful. You know, just as an individual

5173     might take a career step or advancement within the organisation, where that particular

5174     individual is being looked at not only to be able to manage and lead a group of

5175     individuals, based on this recognition that he or she has the functional expertise and

5176     the skills, but there has to be a mind shift of that individual when they move up one,

5177     move up I guess in the organisation itself. So just as there's an expectation that there

5178     will be a mind shift in that individual with taking this career advancement, and it has to

5179     happen in that particular way otherwise that individual's not adding any value to that

5180     particular team, so too the alumni that's going to be involved in the mentorship

5181     program, we need to recognise that, you know, it is not only around perhaps giving

5182     advice around the functional things, whether his career makes sense, it's also to play

5183     that leadership inspirational role to individuals.

5184

5185     RN     Great. While we're on the point of expectations, a lot of the business

5186     practitioners again mention, and this is across the board, that the expectations of MBA

5187     students and graduates are way too high. And so people finish an MBA or during the

5188     MBA they expect to be, you know I'm exaggerating in saying they expect to be the

5189     CEO in the next year or two, you know. So how would we, what's your view on

5190     students' expectations in terms of your business school and how would we manage

5191     those expectations into the future?

5192

5193     BS2     Yes, I think it's a very real expectation and I guess one has to ask oneself the

5194     question, where does this expectation come from? Has it been started off with and

5195     perpetuated by the institution? Is it out there in the industry or is it out there in the

5196    dialogues and conversations that happen around MBAs the world over? So I think the

5197    first question is, ask the question where has this come from? The second one is to

5198    absolutely set the record straight from the time of recruitment and from the time of

5199    clarifying upfront what the MBA is going to be doing. So we have this, you know, very

5200    rigorous application process here, I'm sure it's similar to other institutions, and in so

5201    doing we try to understand where the individual's coming from, we try to  understand

5202    where the individual wants to go post MBA and then in the interview itself, you know, it

5203    is further reiterated that individuals must not have this expectation post MBA that the

5204    red carpet is going to be rolled out for them and they're going to have an open

5205    chequebook and they kind of fill in the details.

5206

5207    So I for one, in the recruitment that they do, we run a GMAT course over here and the

5208    individuals that come along to the GMAT preparation, you know, I get questions asked

5209    of me and I kind of shoot very clearly and very directly around this particular issue and I

5210    say, you know, don't have any expectation that your salary's going to be doubled the

5211    first year after your MBA. That's certainly not the candidate that we are recruiting for at

5212    the business school. The whole ethos is to do with managers and leaders and with that

5213    of course comes, with that comes a higher awareness of oneself. So one needs to be

5214    authentic and one needs to be realistic about these kinds of expectations. And again,

5215    the MBA is used as an entry point so we reiterate that as well. It's an entry point into a

5216    management position. It no way endorses the capability of the individual. The individual

5217    has to show that he or she is capable once he or she gets into an organisation.

5218

5219    RN    And I think finally, I mean thanks for that input. I think finally, what are your

5220    views or what can universities or business schools, students and organisations do

5221    better together to actually improve the MBA itself and the outputs from the MBA?

5222

5223    BS2    I think one of the things that I struggle with which keeps coming back home is

5224    that we don't do enough collaboration. You know, we're very separate education

5225    institutions. Collaboration doesn't take place to the extent that I was used to in the US.

5226    So I think it needs to start off with collaborations where we can have open, honest

5227    conversations. Educational institutions are there for a particular purpose and it's to

provide opportunities for individuals to be taught certain skills. And South Africa is a large country and the continent is incredibly large so we shouldn't necessarily see it as we're in competition with each other for students. I think we all have offerings and these offerings are sometimes similar but different because of the nature of the institution and we will, you know, attract students that kind of align their thinking with the offerings that we have, so collaboration, definitely so, much more openness.

And then being able to kind of, I think we have like the South African Business Schools Association meetings, SABSA forum, but just to kind of use that in a much more dynamic way to allow us to kind of share some of the issues that we are facing and to jointly host things where we can be seen from, you know, by the public as coming together as educational institutions to address... Take our own country; the high unemployment, the high inequality that we see in society, I don't believe that we as business schools have ever come together and said okay, we're going to be running some kind of colloquium or we're running some kind of conference around this particular issue. So we need to kind of, you know, create common agenda items and speak to those kinds of issues.

Also, you know, at this particular level over here, program directors need to be able to kind of share more information about their programs and see how we can learn, what kind of innovations we're talking about on our programs, does it make sense? Perhaps have, you know, students come up to your institution, any other incitation and spend some time. I mean, we're talking about the economic hub of the continent in Johannesburg. How can we leverage that? We have a very different kind of industry sector based here in the VVVV, you know, how can folks up in the north benefit from this? So just be much more creative but it starts off with I think signing up to being much more collaborative.

RN     In terms of collaboration, right, you mentioned that in the US they're a lot more collaborative in terms of the business schools and business themselves. Can you tell me a bit more about that collaborative effort or what efforts do they go through to actually ensure that there's collaboration?

5260   BS2   Yes, so I think, one, they firstly, I mean the body that I was associated with was

5261   called The National Council for University Research Administrators and every year, I

5262   mean we used to come together for an annual conference in Washington DC and the

5263   numbers every year used to grow. When I left I think it had gone up to like 2,000

5264   members coming together for about four, five days of activities relating to educational

5265   institutions. So one is to create a common kind of conference where we can all kind of

5266   come together because we are all facing similar kinds of issues, so create a platform

5267   where we come and talk about those issues but not only talk for the sake of talking but

5268   then look at ways in which we can then work together with one voice and articulate that

5269   particular position to government in terms of helping shape and inform government

5270   strategy around education.

5271

5272   I'm not in any way suggesting that this happens overnight. In the US it had its humble

5273   beginnings in the 60s and it was also fraught with a great deal of, I guess, missteps

5274   and obstacles etc but they kept at it. And there were certain individuals that believed in

5275   this and believed in the power of just collaboration and coming together and true

5276   enough, they did that in spite of the obstacles and were able to sow the seeds of a very

5277   powerful dynamic body that began to speak on behalf of educational institutions in the

5278   US not only to the federal government in terms of positions and influence, especially

5279   intellectual property ownership etc, but also as far as it came to kind of negotiating with

5280   private industry.

5281

5282   RN   Okay, great. Well, is there anything else that you can tell me that we can do

5283   better in concluding?

5284

5285   BS2   I think we need to do a better job in terms of ensuring that South Africa is really

5286   represented in our classrooms and there are high degrees of diversity, diverse thought,

5287   bringing individuals that... So we need to also create opportunities, and by

5288   opportunities I mean scholarships for individuals to be able to kind of lessen their

5289   financial burden and to recognise what apartheid has done to people of colour in this

5290   country, you know, from an access point of view. We're still dealing with the legacies of

5291   that there. Yes, it's incredibly important. We talk about emerging markets but we need

5292    to ask who's really speaking on behalf of emerging markets. A case in point, one year I
5293    was running, again we have these recruitment sessions and there was a European
5294    national and he told me quite frankly that he's, you know, he's not wanting to come to a
5295    South African business school to hear European perspectives or developed economy
5296    perspectives. If he wants that then he'll go to a European school. He wanted to hear
5297    perspectives of individuals that kind of come from certain backgrounds, so the more
5298    emerging market. And because our program also tends to attract a lot of foreign
5299    national students, especially Africans north of South Africa, he wanted to kind of hear
5300    from other African students. So I think that we have a rather unique opportunity in
5301    South Africa to be able to appeal to more Africans and they can be the catalyst for, I
5302    guess, greater understanding of country specific issues when they engage with either
5303    Europeans, Americans, whatever the case may be.

5304

5305    RN    Okay, great. Well, thanks for your time, BS2. I appreciate it.

5306

5307    BS2    Yes, sure Ravi. All the best with completing your research project and now also
5308    crunching the data to, kind of, go with the research project as well.

5309

5310    RN    Definitely.

5311 **APPENDIX N: TRANSCRIPTS OF BUSINESS SCHOOL 3 (BS3)**

5312 **Speaker key**

5313

5314 RN    Ravindran Naicker

5315 BS3   Business school 3

5316

5317 RN    Okay, so I'm going to be recording the conversation, right; everything will be
5318 confidential.

5319

5320 BS3   Yes, it better be.

5321

5322 RN    It will be. Okay, so BS3, thanks for your time. I appreciate it. And basically my
5323 research topic is understanding how collaboration can make the MBA a better process
5324 and it's collaboration between business schools, students and organisations. I've met;
5325 it's probably going to take about 30 minutes. I've met with a couple of the other
5326 business schools.

5327

5328 BS3   Yes, I know. I gave KKK all those names for you.

5329

5330 RN    Yes, and I've done quite a few. I've met with quite a few of the businesses as
5331 well. So I think let's kick off. I mean, let's start off at a high level in terms of what do you
5332 believe the successes of the MBA are?

5333

5334 BS3   That's a broad question so what are you, what specifically, when you say
5335 success, how do you define it?

5336

5337    RN    Look, I think...

5338

5339    BS3   Given that we've got 30 minutes, I'd prefer if you just ask me very pointed...

5340    because success is very broad so what do you mean? Are you talking completion, are

5341    you talking impact?

5342

5343    RN    I think impact, very much impact in terms of...

5344

5345    BS3   I just want to make sure this is on silent, right? Give me a second otherwise it

5346    will record. Okay, so in terms of, let's just, I'll take a step back and then I'll come to the

5347    question. Remember the whole idea of the MBA program or any good MBA program in

5348    this country or around the world is to make sure that we create the management and

5349    leadership pipeline. So if I use that as the background, it's about imparting knowledge,

5350    skills, relationship, exposing students to relationships and experiences that teach them

5351    how to deal with complexity because that's the lay of the land, right? So the

5352    environment of business is complex, it's constantly shifting, it's not just a local playing

5353    field, it's a global playing field now.

5354

5355    So if you ask me what is the impact of our curriculum on students who come through

5356    these doors and graduate in what they do, and I can give you specific examples

5357    because we conduct research and focus groups with alumni. In fact we did an in-depth

5358    one a couple of months ago where we looked at their success in their business and

5359    their impact in their business. So it's all very well for an MBA or schools offering MBAs

5360    to say, you know, we have a great pass rate, we offer great curriculum, blah-blah-blah,

5361    but the proof of the pudding is what you will go and do when you're back in the work

5362    and how down the line we would have created that kind of momentum for you to grow

5363    in your career and fine tune decision making. And so we do, so if you ask me based on

5364    our very empirical evidence, I would say the impact is profound because the BS3 MBA

5365    has been designed in such a way to teach you how to operate and make management

5366    decisions under pressure, how to view it through a multiple lens, not just a siloed kind

5367    of marketing or a finance lens, so you see it in a broader scope. And also we're

5368 bringing complexity into the two year program because you have to juggle multiple
5369 things. You know, like why do we make your life so difficult, why do we make your
5370 deliverables so... It's about teaching you those skills so that you can operate like that in
5371 the real world.

5372

5373 So, looking at the success of our alumni, because we track success of our alumni and
5374 we track success in two ways. One is, maybe the first one I should mention is their
5375 positions and career development. And with career development in most cases comes
5376 the remuneration for, you know, of how success in their cases is determined. So I
5377 would be, I mean I can categorically say that 80% of our alumni grow into a general
5378 management role because that's what we're a school for, general management,
5379 running business units and... And you know, when you graduate initially, it's still taking
5380 time to unpack what you've learnt, you know, and not just keep like job-hopping,
5381 because we look at that as well because you think oh, I've got this MBA now and the
5382 world's my oyster, everybody wants me. It's not necessarily the case. So it's about
5383 unpacking what you've learnt, adding value in your current business or business unit
5384 and then using that to grow.

5385

5386 RN    And then in terms of the, I don't know if it's your research or your experience,
5387 the shortcomings of doing an MBA?

5388

5389 BS3    So now you're asking me a very difficult question because, I mean I'm a big, big
5390 supporter of an MBA program so you're obviously going to get maybe a kind of
5391 biased... So the shortcomings would firstly be the choice of the wrong MBA program
5392 because there are MBA programs and there are MBA programs. So, that would be a
5393 shortcoming because if you want a quick and dirty and easy method or to just have the
5394 MBA, the letters MBA after your name, then that would be a shortcoming. And I think in
5395 terms of the rigorous MBA programs in this country, and I did my MBA through AAA,
5396 the IIII, I can tell you if you go through a rigorous program like that and the BS3 MBA
5397 program, against some other programs that you may have, they're chalk and cheese.

5398

5399    RN      What differentiates a rigorous program versus a normal program that you find?

5400

5401    BS3    So it's about the face to face, it's about who's in the room, it's who's in the room

5402    in terms of the calibre of students in the room and the calibre of the person standing in

5403    front of that room. It's about the way the program is designed to unfold and integrate.

5404    It's the way you take what you've learnt and apply it immediately so the learning

5405    becomes immediate, impactful and it becomes part of your mindset. It's about giving

5406    you local and global best practice.  It's about the methodology that's used to create that

5407    impact that I'm talking about. So there's a host of things. I think some of those are the

5408    key... But one of the big things is, that is why we always say to applicants, when we

5409    admit you to the program, we want you to choose us and we'll choose you because we

5410    always have far more applicants than we have places. We want, because we know

5411    this, it's about what you say about yourself, what others say about you, our interviews

5412    with you or our panel sessions with you before you come onto the program. They are

5413    very, very good indicators of calibre of person we admit into the program.  So in my

5414    view that's the rigor I'm talking about.

5415

5416    RN      So  let me ask you, in terms of those two questions, business are telling me that

5417    expectations of students are too grandiose so a student expects that I'm going to go on

5418    this MBA and thereafter the world's my oyster. How do you manage that?

5419

5420    BS3    How would we manage that, how would BS3 or as a business school manage

5421    that?

5422

5423    RN      Well, collectively.

5424

5425    BS3    So there's two things. One, that used to be the lay of the land but when the

5426    economic climate changed, so you also have to remember the environment of business

5427    in which we operate, so there's always been, and this is, research will show you this,

5428    the MBA has always been seen as a premium program because who goes on these

5429    programs? People have been identified for career progression, people, especially in

5430    South Africa where 70 to 80% of the applicants are sponsored by their companies. So

5431    it's very well for business to say to you students have grandiose... How do they

5432    manage it? Because if they're saying, jeez Ravi, I think you're great, go on the BS3

5433    MBA program, we're paying for you because... I mean why would they pay 200,000 to

5434    send you on this program? So the managing of expectations is not just the business

5435    school's responsibility. In fact, to a large extent its management between the business

5436    and the individuals they nominate because it's part of the talent pipeline. So, and I think

5437    as you heard me say right from the beginning, as a business school we say don't get,

5438    you know, don't get the sense of arrogance that you are going to go out and change

5439    the world the moment you have an MBA. You will be smarter, you will have more

5440    knowledge, experiences and relationships but the world doesn't suddenly owe you

5441    because you've got an MBA program. You have to work just as hard as everyone to

5442    say, I mean five MBA applicants, who're they going to take? You're going to have to,

5443    again you have to be distinct or extinct, right?

5444

5445    So how do we manage expectations? I think it's about, within the HR spectrum of the

5446    organisations themselves, business themselves, they've got to have that tough

5447    discussion with individuals who come onto the program and say we're saying this to

5448    you because we believe in you, because we think you can... but we want you to be

5449    realistic. So it's about being realistic about the expectations. So one of the things we

5450    do, as you heard me say earlier, is we track salaries post graduation and, because

5451    that's one of the things graduates expect instantly. Historically it was the case. You

5452    know, I could, in fact I've been here for almost 11 years so I can tell you historically

5453    there were 60 to 70% increase in salary. There is still a significant increase in salary for

5454    most graduates but that's normal because, you know, if you come from a small

5455    company or you're a self employed individual, because you have different kinds of

5456    people in the room, so the management of expectations has to happen on all fronts. In

5457    addition to which there's an interesting gender – because that's the area I researched

5458    so I have to bring that in – women still expect to earn far less than their male

5459    counterparts. And there's empirical evidence, like Magnet Communications does an

5460    MBA survey, you may have participated in it last year or this year, I don't know. We

5461    usually ask our current students, and this is a worldwide survey. And women still

5462    expect to earn, I think the number was 20% lower than their male counterparts. So

5463    there's a lot of dynamics at play, right? It's not just a linear answer that because we

5464    think the MBA... you know.

5465

5466    And of course I think the market place is also discerning in the sense of who they want

5467    and how much they'll pay to acquire that talent or skill set and knowledge base so they

5468    also play a game. Within a sector, within an industry, you know, if you, I don't know,

5469    what sector do you come from?

5470

5471    RN    Finance.

5472

5473    BS3    Right, so in the financial services sector, you know, if you're the next big thing

5474    people are going to vie for your position. So that happens in the market as well. So

5475    there are a number of things that create the expectation. In my view the best way to

5476    manage that expectation is... Did your company pay for you?

5477

5478    RN    Yes.

5479

5480    BS3    Did they have this discussion with you?

5481

5482    RN    No.

5483

5484    BS3    Exactly my point. So where does the problem come from? And business is

5485    saying yes, but MBAs have... So where does the business, where? Okay. So yes.

5486

5487    RN    So in terms of this process, I mean you've made some really valid points in

5488    terms of some of the lackings, right, in terms of this process. How have you achieved

5489    benefits for all three parties, so that's business schools, students and organisations?

5490    BS3    So how short do you want my answer to be or how long because this one, I can

5491    talk till... So the benefits for all three, and this is, if you remember what BS3' mantra is,

5492    we're a business school for business, and I just want you to reflect on what we say is

5493    our mission statement which it's to increase the competitive advantage of individuals,

5494    organisations and the country. Okay, so I'll speak to it in that way. So as individuals

5495    you leave here very different. If you don't then we must give you a refund because if

5496    you tell me that you have not changed from the day you walked in through these doors

5497    then there's either something wrong with us or something wrong with you. So that's the

5498    one. And when you go back into your organisation, into your business, the value, the

5499    return on investment, so that's answering the second part of your question, how does it

5500    impact the three parties, so it's the student, it's BS3... I'll come back to the BS3 side.

5501    How do we get the benefit of it? And the third part, the most important part for us is to

5502    increase our competitiveness as a nation and that is what BS3 is all about.

5503

5504    So our benefit is to say the more success we have in creating management and talent,

5505    leadership pipeline, the more successful business will be, the more successful we will

5506    be because we partner with business, right? We have 75 company partners and your

5507    company may be one of them, business partners. We work with 75 to 80 people. We

5508    run programs for all those 75 companies across 27 countries around the world. So the

5509    benefit to your company is, firstly to you as an individual is that you're getting an

5510    experience that moves the boundaries. The second thing is we teach you how to be a

5511    global best player, not just a local, you know, internal kind of vying for competition, to

5512    be the best in my field, in my company, in my business unit. And the third thing is your

5513    company becomes more competitive in that sector, because that's what it's all about,

5514    your competitive advantage. And if we increase competitiveness, we increase our

5515    chances as a country to improve our competitiveness.

5516

5517    RN    Absolutely. I mean, and then you as a business school, so you touched on the

5518    one point in terms of our country becoming more competitively advantageous, right, but

5519    what else or what benefits do you get out of the relationships?

5520

5521    BS3    Well, we get more students like you, so it's reputation. It's not just about more
5522    students; let me make that very clear because we always have far more applicants
5523    than we have places. But you know, and I go back to the point I made earlier, if our
5524    reputation as the graduates who leave this place, if you're not making an impact, do
5525    you think your company's going to say okay, we'll send five more people to BS3? So
5526    there's a whole, it's a, there's a connectedness and that's... It's almost if you want, I like
5527    to think of it as partnering for progress. So it's not about oh, BS3 will have... I mean we
5528    have full classes; you know that, you've been in a class. I can't take another 20 people
5529    and put them in your class. So it's about, but in building our reputation we have to
5530    make sure that our graduates go out and do what it is we intend for them to do.

5531

5532    RN    Tell me more about this partnering for progress. What involvement would, or
5533    currently exists in terms of business feedback into the MBA and could there be more of
5534    that?

5535

5536    BS3    So we have a lot of that and part of what I've told you about, which you don't
5537    see while you're a student in the class, right, because, how do we... Like at the
5538    beginning of this year, as part of our faculty workshop, we have faculty workshops
5539    because we must develop as faculty of how we're going to, how do we know what
5540    business needs? We need to go talk to business. So I'm giving you a typical example
5541    of what we did is we took all our faculty, we have a two day workshop at the beginning
5542    of every year and we do it a few times in the year but the beginning of this year we said
5543    right, we're going to go and identify these, we identified a few of the companies and we
5544    said we'd send faculty learning teams in and we go ask business what they need. What
5545    are they seeing in terms of graduates, what are they looking for in MBA graduates,
5546    what are they looking for in terms of general management? Where do they see the
5547    gaps, where do they see...? So I'm giving you a practical example of how we did it.

5548

5549    Secondly, for us to be able to make sure that we're covering not just what business
5550    needs but what the country needs, last year, and I'm giving you another practical
5551    example, on the faculty workshop we went on a two day journey outside of BS3. In
5552    other words, it's like what we do with you in QQQ; you can't learn by sitting here in the

5553 ZZZZ. So we did a faculty meander if you like downtown, stayed overnight in Soweto,
5554 came to the JSE, it's what you... So what I'm saying to you is that the way in which we
5555 work, we're not an ivory tower. We don't just sit here and think jeez, I know what
5556 everybody needs because that's how we stay humble at BS3. So we, you don't know
5557 this because you sit in the class, you're seeing the benefit of what we design for you to
5558 go through. Those are two examples.

5559

5560 The third example, we do what is, I spoke to you earlier of focus groups, right? So we
5561 ask our alumni, we do focus groups of our alumni as well and say now you're alumni,
5562 now you're applying back into the workplace what you've learnt and... It's so interesting
5563 because just today I did by company segmentation how many people were sent to us
5564 form these, I think we took ten companies or maybe 15 and how many were sent to us
5565 from each of those companies over the years. And then the second thing I did was look
5566 at their position in their companies. These people have just gone on to shoot the lights
5567 out. So I'm saying, I mean we'll have those few who just, but that's a combination of
5568 reasons they don't make... But then again, you're the master of your own destiny,
5569 right? So we ask alumni.

5570

5571 And the fourth element is we also interview the JSE top 40 companies. We run a focus
5572 group of the JSE listed top 40 companies. And so we do a research focus group with
5573 that and we say okay, tell us what you think the impact of BS3 has been. So we stay
5574 humble by asking, by doing this research. It's not... And the last element is, because
5575 we are a world class business school and we're a global business school, we
5576 benchmark against best practice internationally. So how do we do this? By participating
5577 in the FT rankings, going for international accreditation, going to... like I'm off to the US
5578 in two weeks time. Because you have to learn, you have to learn to know whether, I
5579 mean I can sit here and tell you how wonderful we are, right, but if we're not going
5580 through all these kind of QA processes, how do we know that what we're doing is right?
5581 So I've given you all avenues in which we make sure that we're relevant. It's about
5582 relevance also.

5583

5584 RN    So, there are a couple of ideas that have been put forward by some of the
5585 business practitioners and some of your colleagues and I'd like to bounce them off you
5586 and get your views on them, right? So in terms of alumni, and it's pretty good that you
5587 have them involved in terms of the focus groups and getting what's relevant. There's a
5588 thought that    certain alumni could actually be mentors to current students. What's
5589 your view on that?

5590

5591 BS3    We do that anyway. Like we've just done the full time MBA class now; they will
5592 have a learning partner with the alums. We invite, last night we had a master class with
5593 our alumni and we say guys, how can you contribute? Come and do interviews with
5594 people we're admitting into the program. So we do that anyway, like LLLL phones me
5595 to interview potential students for their MBA because I'm based here. So I'm showing
5596 you that there are ways in which this is done. We can invite alumni to be on the
5597 advisory councils in the various areas of the school. We invite alumni to... Yes, you
5598 know those 70 partner companies I talked about as well? A lot of our, like through the
5599 learning and development and HRDs in those companies, a lot of that has been
5600 referrals by our alumni so there's a huge, it's partnership.  You can't, you know... And
5601 the word of mouth reputation is so significant. So again, alumni, mentoring, we... For
5602 example in the entrepreneurship MBA program, do you know how many of our alumni
5603 mentor or teach on that program?

5604

5605 RN    No.

5606

5607 BS3    You see? That's what you don't know. There are other things. I don't know what
5608 other schools are doing but that's what we do. So for example I just hosted a faculty
5609 lunch now for the full time MBA program. Of the ten people sitting around, I had two
5610 sessions last week and this week. Of the eight, nine faculty who were in the session,
5611 four of them are alumni. And we have, so I'm taking your question slightly broader
5612 because it's not just about mentoring. So what we do is at the end of this year you'll
5613 see in your concluding module, we'll say who do you think would make a perfect
5614 teacher for BS3? Nominate them.

5615    RN    And then in terms of the, so another interesting concept in terms of, so a lot of
5616    the people that I spoke to, heads of HR and heads of L&D and whatever, and they
5617    would like to see, and definitely there's a distinction between a consulting role versus a
5618    business school role, they would like to see their students, who they funded, implement
5619    many action learning projects back into business but they'd like input from the business
5620    school to the extent that they guide the students. So let's say we had a leadership
5621    course and there were certain things that they could do, go away in business, do an
5622    assignment, unpack the EDP, right, and then present that to the business schools who
5623    could then provide input. Would you be interested in that?

5624

5625    BS3    So we do this again in multiple ways. So one of the things we do, because we
5626    can't consult with every business because then, firstly we'd never get a syllabus off the
5627    ground and we'd never, and it's true for any business, it's true for those businesses
5628    who've mentioned that to you, but we consult in terms of those ways I demonstrated
5629    and then, because remember our faculty are practitioners and academics so they're
5630    giving you, your assignments are stretch assignments in terms of practical application
5631    into the workplace. So we can't do an assignment that will satisfy every business
5632    requirement but it will, because they so go find what your HIV policy in your company,
5633    blah-blah-blah. So it's practical. I mean you know this. You've done the BS3 MBA
5634    program so you know what I'm talking about. I can't tell you what other schools do but
5635    that's... At the same time, and I know you're specifically saying around the MBA
5636    program but we do, with these 70 partner companies, we talk to their HRDs and their
5637    L&D  people all the time in terms of tell us what your business needs because we co-
5638    design their customised program. And from that, that information serves to say what is
5639    it that we need to do in academic programs. So we host a HRD conference once a year
5640    with all the HR directors of those 70 partner companies so, again we're a business
5641    school for business.

5642

5643    RN    So that's something new I haven't heard before is that yes, you do a lot of
5644    customising and a lot of what you learn there then will feed into your more formal
5645    programs, and I think that's a view that's very interesting. I don't think the other
5646    business schools are doing that.

5647

5648    BS3    Yes, but now you also have to remember the competitive, our competitive

5649    advantage of a lot of what I'm saying.

5650

5651    RN    Yes, no definitely. And then finally, I think, BS3, you've given me a lot of food

5652    for thought. Finally, what can we do to make this process better, so how can...? Given

5653    you've done a lot and, particularly from a business school perspective, we know that

5654    there's some gaps in terms of business, there are definitely some gaps in terms of the

5655    students, how can we make that process better?

5656

5657    BS3    So you must be specific for me because I don't like general kind of questions.

5658    What do you mean, gaps? What gaps do you see and then I can say how we can use

5659    that as a start point to make it better?

5660

5661    RN    So from a business perspective, and I just did an interview now where it's we

5662    pay the money and the student goes off and we expect a return. That's business's view

5663    consistently. From a student perspective, I'm going to go on this MBA, at the end of the

5664    MBA I'd better get a GM job at my role and at my work or I'd better get this huge salary,

5665    right, but I haven't delivered anything through the process. So those are the two gaps

5666    there. From a business school perspective, you've got your partners and you're doing a

5667    lot, particularly in L&D and those customised programs...

5668

5669    BS3    Yes, but remember the customised feeds into...

5670

5671    RN    Feeds into the MBA, right. So you're doing as much as you can in terms of that.

5672    How can we get this process working better?

5673

5674    BS3    So one of the things is, and it's interesting because companies say they want

5675    one thing but, remember for companies, the bottom line is the most important thing,

5676    right? So how much time, when we ask... Let me give you a typical example. So I've

been here for xxx years. For the first couple of years every student had to nominate a company mentor. And let me tell you, why did we stop doing it?

RN      It wasn't very good.

BS3     And we made it you're a learning partner to the student, you are, the success of this journey, this two year journey is your partnering. And so it starts with a flare because it's a cool thing to have and then the kind of momentum dies. So for it to be more successful it needs buy-in from all parties. So I'm not apportioning blame to the business but also the students because the students are, I've got to put my head down, I've got to pass this subject, I'm not interested in mentoring because that's just a side kind of show, it's a soft skill kind of thing, oh, it's... But yet it's such a critical part of this journey. So one of the things I'm doing in the re-design for the MBA program, I'm actually reintroducing, and I'm calling them learning partners; I'm not calling them mentors. And I'm calling syndicates learning teams because it's like how do you have high performance teams? Somebody manages high performance teams so you get an outcome in professional services' speak. So in that way, you know, it's a partnering process.

So what, I do want to reintroduce that but again for it to be successful we need the student to make sure that they commit to bringing a learning partner along and then the learning partner becomes intimately involved because it means giving up, once a month you've got to attend a session with your student, that kind of thing. So we did that. So I can tell you this because it was, you know, we formally appoint... And sometimes the relationships broke because there was no trust or sometimes people moved jobs and then it was... However, the success of having a learning partner is very important because part of that journey is how does that person, I mean the idea around the mentoring was how does that person create not an opportunity, because then that sounds opportunistic, but like in terms of representing, like what you need to do, sometimes you won't be able to get a door open because you need access to some information but the learning partner can help you. So again, who you nominate as your learning partner and a mentoring protégé relationship is not necessarily an easy one.

5709    It's a rough one because you're meant to push each other. And then the benefit for the

5710    mentor is that whatever you learn in the journey, because this person, even if they went

5711    through it, it may, some of it may be very irrelevant do how do you take what's this,

5712    share with that and that becomes best practice, for example, in your financial services

5713    team or whatever the case may be?


5714


5715    So it's not a case of not having done it because that was always the case but it's about,

5716    again, where's the urgency and the commitment and once you start it, you must see it

5717    through, all parties. You know, like we used to host monthly mentor/mentee

5718    relationship cocktail sessions, so we come and you talk, other mentors talk to each

5719    other. We first have a, like a session together in the classroom and then have other

5720    mentors talk to each other and, you know, what are the common things you've seen,

5721    what are the pitfalls, how can I help my students or my mentees who have got this

5722    particular problem? So I think there's a well, there's good intention. It's about the

5723    constraints of time and other deliverables and making sure this all comes together.


5724


5725    RN      So on that idea, let me bounce something quickly off you. On this mentee

5726    relationship, one of the practitioners suggested that almost a learning and development

5727    practitioner, right, be appointed. But because the people that you're sending on an

5728    MBA program are your fast-track, are your top people you want to, you're spending

5729    200,000 on them, you allocate them a senior person but you have a tripartite

5730    agreement between the student, the business school and the mentor/coach, right? And

5731    the role of that person would be to then push this person to apply what they've learnt

5732    into the business, because they understand the relevance of it, to open the doors

5733    where necessary. From a business school perspective you would support that

5734    relationship through your curriculum in terms of what...


5735


5736    BS3     Sorry, maybe I didn't explain myself properly. This was the formal process. It

5737    was exactly that. They had like a whole... And then part of it is your mentor had to write

5738    a report every eight weeks of how this was applied, what kind of constraints... Like you

5739    have great ideas you learn on the program, the curriculum and you want to apply it and

5740    then if you can't, you go to your mentor and say jeez, I'm having... So it was an eight

5741    weekly report from your mentor and it was a formal agreement. You know, we officially

5742    send it out, so it existed.

5743

5744    RN      It's the motivation and the energy around it that's the challenge.

5745

5746    BS3     Yes, it's about the sustainability of that.

5747

5748    RN      Okay, great. That's perfect.

5749

5750    BS3     And we don't do things because we think it must, it's the cool thing to do. We do

5751    it because it must have impact. You'll notice me say that word a lot.

5752

5753    RN      No, that's good. So BS3, is there anything else that you want to add to...

5754

5755    BS3     That's broad again.

5756

5757    RN      In terms of collaboration?

5758

5759    BS3     I think collaboration is always, I mean you heard me say partnering for

5760    progress, right? Because ultimately it's not just about, and I go back to the vision, you

5761    know, BS3' mission statement.  It's about individuals, organisations, the country. And

5762    so collaboration always yields better results. And that's what we call ourselves, a

5763    business school for business. Other schools have other kinds of mantras. Because for

5764    us to increase the competitiveness of yourself as an individual participant, your

5765    company and the country, we have to partner for progress and of course, you know,

5766    people say we pay a lot of money, we get... I mean what you don't know, and I'm

5767    saying this to you but I'm sure other people said to you, I mean what you pay for your

5768     MBA program does not even start to cover what we have to pump in to make this
5769     program the flagship program of this school. You would have read in the Financial Mail
5770     a few months ago about the MBAs not being subsidised at a master's level. It's
5771     subsidised at an honours level and that's a big difference of money.

5772

5773     So again, because we want this to be the best program, we want our graduates to be
5774     the best we invest a lot of time, energy, money into making this work. It is collaboration
5775     and that is why our alumni are so important because you are the best brand
5776     ambassadors. You know, we can spend millions, as some other business schools do,
5777     on advertising their brand but who's our best brand? You guys. You, a student in the
5778     work, as alumni back in the work, what you do and how you do it. And also just, you
5779     know, if there's arrogance attached to an MBA then you've lost the plot. You're not
5780     doing this thing to be, you know... Like the joke, standing joke, how will you know
5781     someone's done an MBA? They'll tell you. You know, it's not about that. It's not about
5782     you having to say... It's what you demonstrate and what you do. And it's not just about
5783     strategy because everybody wants to only be involved in strategy. Without the doing,
5784     without the operationalising, what happens to strategy? Okay, so it's doing.

5785

5786     And the last element, and this is very important, is that we want our alumni to be
5787     authentic and mindful leaders and that brings to the whole conclusion around ethical
5788     business practice and ethics. And we've seen many examples around the world of how
5789     bad ethical, bad ethics has led to major problems. Well, we find ourselves in a financial
5790     crisis and part of that is bad ethics. So, it's about the knowing, the doing and the being;
5791     being your value system. The doing is the operation and the knowing, fantastic; you
5792     know the stuff now go and do it. Okay? So yes, and then it's all about partnering. If we
5793     don't partner...

5794

5795     RN     Absolutely. So thank you so much for your time, BS3. I really appreciate your
5796     time.

5797

5798     BS3     It's a pleasure. Good luck with the last bits of...

5799 **APPENDIX O: TRANSCRIPTS OF BUSINESS SCHOOL 4 (BS4)**

5800 **Speaker key**

5801

5802 RN    Ravindran Naicker

5803 BS4    BS4

5804

5805 RN    So let me just introduce myself. I'm Ravi Naicker, I'm in my final year of MBA
5806 and I'm going to be conducting some research which will explore the different ways in
5807 which collaborative learning can achieve the maximum output from an MBA program
5808 for business schools, students and organisations involved in the MBA program. Our
5809 interview is probably going to be about 30 minutes and will help us understand how
5810 business schools, students and organisations can work together to ensure that all
5811 parties can maximise their respective benefits from the MBA. And I just want to let you
5812 know upfront, in terms of the content, your participation is voluntary and you can
5813 withdraw at any time without penalty. All the data will be kept confidential and if you
5814 have any concerns you can contact myself or VVVV who's my supervisor. Are you
5815 comfortable with that?

5816

5817 BS4    Yes, that's fine.

5818

5819 RN    Okay, great. So yes, there are just a couple of questions that I'm going to run
5820 through in terms of the MBA. I just want to get an idea; your current role at YYY?

5821

5822 BS4    At BS4.

5823

5824 RN    At BS4, sorry, my apologies; yes, your current role at BS4?

5825

5826    BS4    Well, I mean I've been heading up academic programs of the business school

5827    from 1996 onwards. I'm in the process of handing over to colleagues so I'm stepping

5828    down in managing programs. I've done it for 16 years. So the MBA program was, when

5829    I started off in this role I was directly responsible for the MBA program but as we grew

5830    over the years and we added more programs, I was academic head of all the

5831    programs.

5832

5833    RN    And then your academic background or your qualifications?

5834

5835    BS4    Well, I trained as an engineer, I've got a masters in engineering, I've got an

5836    MBA and I've got a PhD in Finance.

5837

5838    RN    Great. Okay, so let's get into the questions, right? In your view, what do you

5839    believe are the successes of the MBA?

5840

5841    BS4    Just repeat that. What are the...?

5842

5843    RN    What are the successes of the MBA for you?

5844

5845    BS4    Well, an MBA is an academic learning program and successes of an MBA

5846    learning program is developing generally a young to middle-aged managers and

5847    budding managers to hopefully manage the rest of their careers. And I think many MBA

5848    programs have been very successful in doing that. There are MBA programs that have

5849    not been successful in doing that at all. So I mean, it's a bit difficult to generalise about

5850    MBAs. I mean, there are some MBAs around the world that are just fly-by-night

5851    schools. They give a piece of paper that says MBA but it's not worth the paper it's

5852    printed on. So it depends on the quality of the program that you engage in, whether you

5853    actually undergo that development that is possible in order to make an individual a

5854    better manager in his particular environment.

5855    RN    So just building on what you've just said, right, so there are successful MBA
5856    programs and there are those ones that are not as successful. What would you feel
5857    would contribute to a successful program? What elements of it?

5858

5859    BS4    Well, I mean a successful program will develop the leadership of a particular
5860    person, not merely teaching leadership but actually develop his leadership skills.
5861    There's a big difference. I think a successful program will develop analytical thinking
5862    abilities of a candidate, they can actually do some sums and actually understand the
5863    difference of measures and be able to implement it. I mean, a successful MBA program
5864    develops a person's social skills so he is well adapted in the world of work and can
5865    lead with empathy. And a successful MBA program develops a candidate that can
5866    formulate his argument, can take an argument apart, can critically argue the case that
5867    he's about or take somebody else's argument apart if he doesn't agree with it. I think
5868    those are some of the critical issues I would think should happen in a good MBA
5869    program.

5870

5871    RN    Now I'm very keen in terms of unpacking your first point. So you said leadership
5872    and not merely teaching it but actually doing it; how would a program get a student to
5873    actually do leadership rather than just teach the concept of leadership?

5874

5875    BS4    I've got experience of what we're doing at our business school. I'm not in the
5876    leadership field so I see the successes that we have in our program so I can reflect on
5877    that. I think part and parcel of what we're doing is actually exposing students to
5878    leadership throughout the whole MBA. It's not just a module that you do for six months
5879    and you're done with it. The leadership program is a continuous process that involves a
5880    fair amount of reflection of students. We expect them to keep a journal, think about the
5881    learning, think about their life experience or their work experience, reflect on that and
5882    then write down how you would act upon similar instances were they to occur again
5883    and of course revisit that because over a longer period of time you can, I mean you
5884    have an incident and you say well, I should do this differently or there's probably a
5885    better way to do it. When something similar happens sometime later then you can start
5886    seeing, have I actually been doing things differently? And these journals that the

students keep, sometimes it's up to 200 pages, are assessed by staff and they have to write effective essays on them and we are seeing a major improvement in terms of what the program participants are saying they're doing in leadership. So we are seeing their engagement with the leadership and developing their leadership through their journal and their reflection.

RN	Journaling and reflection, okay, that sounds excellent. Throughout my research, when I look at the criticism or the failings of the MBA there are quite a number of failings in terms of, and some of which you've touched on in terms of the quality of the school and the quality of the program. Can you elaborate more on what you believe are the failings of an MBA?

BS4	Well, I mean there are a number. If you just teach a student some functional disciplines and you don't get to a point where they actually start thinking about that in business these things are all integrated, where the level of what they learn is far too low, where you teach them and say you can solve a financial problem or this problem by applying certain models and not think about all the other issues involved, if you don't bring that as part of an MBA then you don't know about the risk side or the investor world. So it's really about broadening or raising and understanding the limitations of what one can do in a learning program, that taking a person that thinks he knows a lot and just pat him on the back and tell him that he knows a lot, I mean, that's been the downfall of many programs in the sense that they take high achievement as learning a couple of models and now you can do whatever you want to do.

RN	What else would you say, I mean from what I'm getting, there seems to be an inability of MBAs to practically apply what they've learned. Is that something that you've experienced?

BS4	Well, it's probably criticism against the MBA in general but I think it hails primarily from the States where this criticism was also raised because in the States you do an MBA straight after a bachelor's and then you start seeking employment. We are

5918 strong believers that an MBA should be post experience as well. Hence we have a
5919 three year working experience requirement but our average is seven years of working
5920 experience before a student gets on an MBA program. And then the majority of our
5921 participants are part time MBA modules and part-timers and they have to apply their
5922 learning in the workplace. You learn through doing. You do in various ways. One way
5923 in which we, is to analyse case studies but the other way is actually going and applying
5924 the work in the workplace and come with recommendations for particular businesses
5925 that are part of a syndicate or whatever. So actually candidates can do it in real life. So
5926 yes, if it's all just theoretical, there's very little value added.

5927

5928 RN    In terms of the experience criteria, so you've got an average of seven years?

5929

5930 BS4   Yes, approximately.

5931

5932 RN    And how have you found that to be more beneficial than those students who
5933 obviously have one or two years experience? How has the experience component
5934 added to the learning on the MBA?

5935

5936 BS4   Well, I mean I cannot talk about people with one or two years experience
5937 because we don't have them so I don't know how they would be in class. But I know
5938 from many years ago when we did allow students with very limited work experience
5939 onto the program that they've got no way of contributing to the learning. I mean, part
5940 and parcel of an MBA program is the fact that you must contribute to the learning of the
5941 class as a participant in the program. The lecturer is not the person who has all the
5942 knowledge on a particular subject. He has got a limited knowledge. The participants in
5943 the class bring their own knowledge. So you become a learning facilitator and the
5944 participant must bring in their own experience of particular subject areas. And the more
5945 experience you have, the more experience you also have in the richness of the
5946 learning process.

5947

5948  RN    Now in terms of the learning process or the benefits process, so I understand that the business school contributes a learning facilitator, the experience of the individual themselves contributes to the learning of the class, right?  How have you achieved benefits for all three parties, so the business school, which is yourself, the organisations and students on your learning programs?

5953

5954  BS4   Well, in the majority of those subjects that make up an MBA program, students have to do assignments that are appropriate to the businesses that they work in. So there's learning for the participant in being able to apply it in the real business world. The business that he works for, for who he does the assignment learns because of the work that's being done for him, almost like a consultant on an almost free basis. And all of this feeds back to the business school and becomes part and parcel of the experience that teaching staff have had with the engagement of students and businesses. So this is a rich learning process.

5962

5963  RN    What level of engagement is there between yourselves, being the business school, and business themselves directly?

5965

5966  BS4   Well, it's on many levels. First we have an active advisory board made up of former business leaders and we meet on a regular basis. They advise the business school about matters of, certain matters that we should take note of. Secondly, we have an engagement of our staff in businesses. We allow consulting for our academic staff so they are engaged with business so they know what's happening in business and they reflect it back in their learning. We do assignments within companies and we do, and so we have a facilitator at the school who works with that particular company, they arrange for a particular learning experience in that company. We have company visits for our full time MBAs where they actually go and visit a company and learn about that company and various aspects of the business and how an MBA working relationship with that business is.  So there are many points of contact between the business school and business itself.

5978

343

5979    RN      And then you, as the business school, how do you, just building on that, how do
5980    you support the organisations and students to achieve their objectives? So you've met
5981    with their advisory board or you've interacted with business and obviously you've got a
5982    group of students in your program; how do you support their learning? So what do you
5983    do in class and outside class over and above the company visits and that sort of
5984    exposure?

5985

5986    BS4     I don't know whether I understand the question. What are we doing to assist the
5987    student?

5988

5989    RN      So how have you supported business and the students in achieving their
5990    objectives basically? So what do you do in particular as the business school to create
5991    this environment? I think you've touched on it briefly.

5992

5993    BS4     Ensuring the learning program that we offer and the way it's been presented
5994    develops people on the program to make a relevant contribution to business when they
5995    re-enter business or when they are, the majority of them are in business so I mean
5996    business gets the benefit of a learning program through the candidates who have
5997    undergone the development.

5998

5999    RN      And then in terms of business giving back, right, apart from the advisory board,
6000    does business  interact the other way as well  and support the student's learning and
6001    the business school?

6002

6003    BS4     Well, I mean the majority or a large proportion of our students study on a
6004    modular basis for their MBAs. The majority of them have company support to do that
6005    so certainly yes, businesses support their students actually doing their MBAs because
6006    they've actually hand-picked the candidate that has to go and do an MBA and they
6007    send them to our school. So in that way a business supports students to achieve their
6008    goals as well as the business's goals. Businesses will come and visit the school and

6009 say we have a particular problem, could we have somebody assist us in addressing the
6010 problem, and these can become research topics as part of research reports that
6011 students have to complete or alternatively assignments that the students have to
6012 complete. So it depends on the nature of the problem that needs to be resolved. So
6013 there's an active interaction between business and the school.

6014

6015 RN     What role does your MBA alumni play in your current programs?

6016

6017 BS4     Well, alumni play a role in various guises. I mean some of the alumni are on our
6018 advisory board, some alumni refer students to go and do an MBA and some alumni are
6019 actively involved in screening students for admission to the MBA program. We insist on
6020 having an interview with alumni as part of our application process to the MBA program.
6021 And then alumni themselves have, are organised in regions and within their regions
6022 they organise functions where they also could meet with prospective MBA students and
6023 give them advice about the MBA program. So there's a good interaction between
6024 alumni and prospective students. This of course could always be much, much better.

6025

6026 RN     What would you, so one of my participants mentioned that current students be
6027 paired with an alumni and enter into a mentor/mentee relationship. Do you think that
6028 would work?

6029

6030 BS4     Yes, we have a program like that as well. Some of the alumni volunteer to
6031 become mentors to MBA students and some MBA students request alumni and then
6032 we match them. If, we do not think that this should become compulsory.

6033

6034 RN     And then in your view, in terms of this process, how would you see action
6035 learning as part of improving the learning on the MBA? Do you think action learning
6036 could add to this and how would it add to the learning on the MBA?

6037

BS4     Well, I think various people have various definitions about action learning. I view action learning as applying your knowledge in the real life and we already do that as a major part, a distinguishing part of our MBA program. Students get many assignments that they actually have to go and do and apply the knowledge in the real business world. So action learning I think is an important facet of business education where you not only apply the knowledge that you got through your case study but actually go to a live business and see the real live thing.

RN      So if I'm understanding you correctly, your assignments actually require the students to unpack their current business to make it relevant.

BS4     Well not necessarily their current business. I mean, in many of the subjects that make up the MBA, the students are given assignments that they have to go and do and practice what they've learnt in a real life company and they have to come up with assignments so that to me is an action learning project. And they learn a lot by doing that and realising it's not just a theoretical case but a practical case and many, many more angles to be considered.

RN      So basically an action learning project, right, so some of the business practitioners that I spoke to were quite keen on several ideas and I just want to bounce them off you to get your views on it, right? One of the ideas was that throughout the MBA they would like to set up specific action learning projects within their business, so taking out of basically executive development or leadership development where there were three or four strategic projects that they would like to get implemented. And if they've got a group of MBAs within their business, they would like that group of MBAs to get allocated a couple of projects and they'd like the business school input into these projects. So while the person is doing an MBA, they've got a strategic project, two or three strategic projects over the two or three year period and they're required to implement this and provide feedback and whatnot. Would you or how would you facilitate a learning of this sort or would you be interested in being involved in this sort of action learning project?

6070    BS4    Well, I think it's an interesting case. I mean, the business school's responsibility
6071    is in developing a learning program that develops future business leaders. We are not
6072    a consultant to a business. So I think one must make it very clear the distinction
6073    between where the responsibility should stop and start. If the business wants a
6074    consultant to initiate a particulate process, they must either get a consultant or a
6075    student can do that as part and parcel of their learning. The academic faculty will be
6076    involved in assessing the student whether he's applied business principles correctly in
6077    evaluating the situation and writing up the kind of situation but it would be going a step
6078    too far, as I'm concerned, if business schools have to take responsibility for the work
6079    that students are delivering within a business. Then effectively the business is getting
6080    the benefits of consulting with business school faculty.

6081

6082    RN    Okay, so there's a distinction between consulting versus evaluation of what a
6083    student's done?

6084

6085    BS4    Yes, there's a big distinction.

6086

6087    RN    Okay, great. And effectively a part of the learning, so if, as a student, if I have to
6088    take an example, if I'm a student, I'm learning financials so I'm learning, I'm doing the
6089    basics of financial management and I came up with a concept that I think will work at
6090    work, and if I work in the accounting department and I make a couple of suggestions, I
6091    could then bring it back and you'd evaluate the paper and I could do it as part of an
6092    assignment. You'd evaluate my assignment but you wouldn't actively get involved in
6093    actually managing that action learning project, right?

6094

6095    BS4    Yes, correct. I mean, I don't see that business schools can become involved in
6096    organisational development in implementing these things. They're effectively using
6097    faculty as a consultant to your business.

6098

6099 RN     Sure, okay so that's an important distinction I think. And I think there was
6100 another point in terms of what the guys said. So the business practitioners that I've also
6101 spoken to said that they don't get regular enough feedback on an individual's
6102 performance or development. Now, yes, they get the results but as to whether this
6103 person can apply it and whatnot, they'd like, whether it be a yearly report or a half
6104 yearly report on a student's overall performance, and not necessarily just the result but
6105 in terms of that student's ability to interact... Like you mentioned some important
6106 concepts, you know, social interaction, leadership, those sorts of more strategic items,
6107 they'd like feedback on that. What's your view in terms of how that would work?

6108

6109 BS4     Again, it's a difficult one to answer because effectively the student enrols to a
6110 program, not the business. The business may be a sponsor of a particular student and
6111 as a sponsor you have certain rights but his rights go to the person that he's
6112 sponsoring. So I mean it's a difficult kind of relationship. If the student says, you know, I
6113 need some feedback in terms of my development; of course the student has the right to
6114 certain feedback about his development as he progresses through the program. But
6115 business, being the sponsor of a particular student, will have to ask the student to
6116 actually give him what kind of feedback have you got? If the business school had to
6117 start giving businesses in general or specific sponsoring businesses specific feedback
6118 about the candidates that they are sponsoring, who has to do that? Because effectively
6119 learning is a collective engagement; one lecturer can comment about one subject,
6120 somebody else on another subject but that's kind of collective. If business schools are
6121 required to give that kind of feedback to businesses then we'll have to start up another
6122 department in our business schools.

6123

6124 RN     What if business was willing to pay for that feedback and if... So let's take, now
6125 I'm talking about an organisation with five, ten students who they're willing to sponsor,
6126 willing to pay for the feedback but at the same time they want to move away from the
6127 individualistic internal applications to a block application where we're giving you ten
6128 students a year, we're going to fully fund them but we want progress reports or we
6129 want, well at the end of each module we want to know what the objectives are and
6130 what the students should have been able to apply. Would that be something that would
6131 work?

6132    BS4    I think we'd have to sit down with the business. I mean if that was the case, one
6133    would have to sit down with the business and ask them what kind of feedback would
6134    you be expecting and one must be able to think around a strategy to implement such a
6135    requirement and the cost of it, so if you want that kind of feedback then this is what it's
6136    going to cost you because the business school will have to implement certain
6137    processes to give that feedback to the business. It could work.

6138

6139    RN    So I suppose there'd have to be a business case because that feedback must
6140    then result in certain benefits or certain information that comes through there.

6141

6142    BS4    Sure. I mean investing in such cases that the business school and the business
6143    sits around the table and decides what is fundamental, what is in their mutual benefit
6144    and then come up with a proposal and do a proper costing for the proposal and then
6145    you can get to a point where you say okay this can work or this cannot work.

6146

6147    RN    That sounds good. And then finally, BS4, what can business schools,
6148    organisations and students do collectively to improve the impact of the MBA? I know
6149    it's quite a wide question but...

6150

6151    BS4    No, I mean how can we change the world? That's the kind of question you're
6152    asking.

6153

6154    RN    Very much that, yes.

6155

6156    BS4    You know there are so many facets to it in asking that question. I always tell
6157    people, you know, the best way, probably the best political dispensation for any country
6158    is to have a benevolent dictator. Unfortunately you don't get them.  And the same thing
6159    would go for an MBA.I mean if you get somebody who's not really, who has a certain

6160   leadership attitude and who is leading by example, that would make a major difference

6161   into businesses but I mean those are pie in the sky things.

6162

6163   RN    Yes. I mean some basic stuff, is there anything that you can think of that we can

6164   do better to ensure that the reputation of the business, of the MBA is upheld and that

6165   business gets what they want and organisations get what they need?

6166

6167   BS4    Yes, well I think there are many things. Firstly, it starts with the MBA program. It

6168   must be a solid program and there must be real development. We mustn't pass a

6169   student who shouldn't pass. Some schools create the impression that entry into the

6170   program is an extremely difficult thing and once you've entered you have to apply to

6171   fail. I think that is wrong. I think an MBA journey should be a tough one, it should really

6172   hone the student to be a better decision maker and if all programs were to do that then

6173   it will enhance the quality of the MBA in general. I think MBAs should, or MBA

6174   graduates can certainly be more modest. There's no big achievement in doing an MBA.

6175   Yes, it is an achievement but it is not something that, you know the standard joke, how

6176   do you know somebody's got an MBA? He tells you. You know, that kind of thing, I

6177   mean if you're modest enough about it then you won't get overextended in terms of

6178   expectations that are out there about a student or the alumni of a particular school. I

6179   think the future MBA graduates should be very focused on sustainability, on the

6180   environment. If those issues don't feature strongly in his agenda and it's just about

6181   profit making then it will harm the MBA to a large extent. So these are all issues that

6182   are important.

6183

6184   RN    Just a final question there, on the expectations piece, right, I've got this

6185   tremendously a lot from the business practitioners that students' expectations are

6186   inflated. How can we better manage those expectations?

6187

6188   BS4    I think one must, from a school's point of view one can manage that by saying, I

6189   mean, you all have this idea that you're going to be the world's biggest mover and

6190   shaker but kill that right from the start. Unfortunately it's the schools that create this

6191 kind of impression. You know, if you graduate from our school you're going to be the
6192 biggest mover and shaker. I think that's wrong. And at school level if we are saying
6193 we're going to develop you as a person to be a more effective and more efficient leader
6194 in your organisation then we achieve a lot, but not to create this impression that when
6195 you've got our MBA the sun or whatever, the sun shines out of your face. Modesty is
6196 an incredibly important attribute.

6197

6198 RN      Well, is there anything else that you want to add, BS4?

6199

6200 BS4     No, that's fine.

6201

6202 RN      Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it.

6203

6204 BS4     Good luck with your research.

6205

6206 RN      Thank you so much and as soon as I'm done with it, I think VVVV's given us the
6207 go ahead to give you a copy of the research so I'll forward you a copy of that.

6208

6209 BS4     Okay.

6210

6211 RN      Thank you so much.

6212

6213 BS4     Okay, pleasure. Keep well.

6214

6215 RN      Cheers, bye.

6216   BS4   Bye-bye.