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Raising the Frontiers of Business Education in Africa

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A column by Ogechi Adeola

The writer, an adjunct faculty member at Lagos Business School (LBS) Nigeria, attended the TPM 7 workshop.



The Association of African Business School's (AABS) Prescription: On the crisp winter evening of July 7, 2011, twenty faculty members from institutions across the African continent gathered at the Gordon School of Business Science of the University of Pretoria for the seventh annual "Teaching the Practice of Management" (TPM) workshop. This workshop focused on introducing practice-based teaching and learning simulations utilized by leading international business schools into African management education curricula.

The TPM program began as a project of Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) and the Lagos Business School (LBS), with the support of the Global Business School Network – then a unit of International Finance Corporation. The project design and implementation received considerable input from Harvard Business School and other American and European business schools. It now operates under the aegis of the Association of African Business Schools (AABS).

AABS seeks to help African business schools become competitive with European business schools and acquire international accreditations, which few of them have presently, but stresses that more important is provision of curricula that is appropriate to African conditions. The latter, often is a drawback for international schools' management education programs that miss the nuances of the African business environment. There is a continuing debate in AABS about what it means to be a business school in Africa and how best to meet international standards while responding to local conditions. It appears that the locus of growth in management education, just as in business as a whole, is shifting from North America and Europe to emerging markets, and the Association aspires for African business schools to take their place among, and make a contribution to emerging-market business education.

Jonathan Cook, AABS Chairperson and GIBS Executive Director said,

the world is very competitive and we in Africa need to raise our game quite considerably if our organisations are to take advantage of the incredible opportunities that we will face over the next decade or two. Africa has magnificent natural wealth and a rapidly growing population. What we need now in order to match our resources with the opportunities that are opening up, is a core of really effective managers. I think of no better industry to be in to contribute to the viability of the African economies, than management education!”

By the end of the workshop on July 13, 2011, participants had a thorough grounding in practice-based teaching and the role of African business schools in enhancing management education in the continent. Their workshop experience was reinforced with the modified version of the song, Jambo Bwana, taught by the Kenyan delegates, which translated to

Hello, Welcome All. Africa is indeed beautiful, rich in diversity and ready to take the world if only we can rise up to the challenge.”

AABS is poised to meet this challenge if faculty members from the African continent work together to move Africa forward into the frontiers of business education. Yes, we can!

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