

# The value of the MBA

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The value of an MBA degree has been widely criticised by scholars and business practitioners. Criticism includes assertions that business schools are too academic, meaning somehow that they fail to provide what the business world needs, or that they fail to impart useful skills or to prepare leaders. Some assert that an MBA does not lead graduates to good corporate jobs.

However, personal experience in the domain of the MBA, from both a student and institutional perspective, has convinced me that the MBA adds unquestionable value to the individual as well as provides for organisational growth. To take it a level further, it is my view that the collective output of MBAs from business schools in a country benefits the nation. There are definite positive results from creating learning environments that promote growth-producing experiences for students.

## An MBA involves the complete being

In most cases, students are the principal players in the teaching-learning transaction. Having an understanding that modern management requires the practical implementation of skills learned has seen the emphasis in MBA education shifting more towards perception, creative thinking and learning. In other words, an MBA now involves the complete being and engages the student cognitively, emotionally and physically. The impact of the three modes stimulated together shifts an MBA student's perspective in a way that a focus on the cognitive part alone cannot. An MBA simulates an environment in which students perform as closely as possible to the manner in which it would happen in a business reality by immersing them in the milieu, requiring practice of the skills and receiving constructive feedback from an expert.

The MBA discourages the separation of thinking (formulation) from acting (implementation), because the world does not stand still while the formulation process takes place. MBA education recognises the complexity of the environment and that learning takes place through only a partly controlled, creative conscious thought process. In creating a learning environment, MBA educators provide for conversational learning, acting and reflecting, feeling and thinking, and influencing students to take charge of their own learning.

## Multi-disciplinary skill set needed

The challenges of the post-modern business landscape require leaders/managers to have a multi-disciplinary skill set. The multifaceted nature of the MBA and its orientation towards integrating all parts of the whole is, therefore, the ideal incubator for postmodern leaders.

At Milpark Business School the curriculum is designed to ensure a strong focus on the needs of the South African context and society, and on global events that influence the stability of local business. The MBA comprises two stages, the first of which provides a sound basis in core business management and leadership skills; the second focuses on integrated management, advanced leadership skills and global economics, including developing countries.

## Address real-life problems or opportunities

A significant shift in the student's orientation takes place during the arduous MBA journey. The student's perspective of the world of work and business widens with the achievement of each milestone or module completed. Ultimately, the new paradigm is practically applied when the journey culminates in the production of a dissertation, using appropriate academic register and business-aligned skills to demonstrate the ability to do independent research and to address real-life problems or opportunities within the context of the industry from which the student comes.

In the final analysis, feedback from MBA alumni and private and public industry stakeholders is overwhelmingly positive in terms of the value that the MBA programme has added to the individuals and the organisations they serve. Recently published media surveys support this and any doubts to the value of the MBA should diminish when reading the articles. Not acknowledging and recognising the value of the MBA, and the outstanding work that so many business schools have done and continue to do in empowering and equipping MBAs, will be short-sighted in my view.

## **Applications for 2012 are open**

Applications for the MBA in 2012 are now open at Milpark Business School and close on 31 January, 2012. All applicants have to achieve an acceptable rating in the compulsory admission test. The first sittings at Milpark's Melville Campus will take place on 23 November and 3 December, 2011.

The Milpark MBA is available part-time through contact learning in the evenings and over weekends at the Melville Campus or through distance learning. For more information, contact Lerato Mothiba on +27 (0)11 718 4000, Suzanne Bester and Christelle Pauw on +27 (0)21 673 9100 or Sue Boule on +27 (0)31 266 0444 or email [enquiries@milpark.ac.za](mailto:enquiries@milpark.ac.za).

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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