

UCT to shake up leadership and boost innovation

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Change the way you think, change the world. This is the underlying philosophy of the new Full Colour Thinking positioning of the UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) and the platform for a new short-course launching in September which is designed to shake up leadership in SA, create inspiring leaders and boost innovation.



Walter Baets, Director of the GSB

The course is the brainchild of the GSB Director, Professor Walter Baets, who believes business schools need to teach much more than the fundamentals of business and management.

"Leaders, globally, are today often criticised as being inadequate and we need only look at the recession to see that this argument has merit. The truth is that just teaching the fundamentals is just not enough," he says.

According to Walter Baets, Director of the GSB, the fundamentals are only a small part of the equation these days. The rest, for a business school, is about creating the conditions where students and managers get to shake up their world view and see themselves and others in a whole new light.

And this is exactly what the GSB is embarking on through its new positioning, which will touch the School's core programmes such as the MBA and beyond through short-courses such as Baets' Full Colour Thinking. The short-course is the ideal platform, he said, for managers to get a breath of fresh air in the midst of what has been a troubling 18 months for many economies.

Baets describes his short-course, which is offered by the GSB Executive Education unit, as avant-garde in nature and at the cutting edge of management theory and practice - pushing beyond the status quo and introducing new approaches to leadership.

"The aim is to teach managers to adjust their view so that they see more about themselves, their world, their stakeholders and their challenges. Once they have achieved this, they can use the tools to go on to create more innovative solutions," he explains.

This requires an additional set of skills and attributes, says Baets, from using one's intuition and lateral thinking to resilience and a humility where one does not claim to have all the answers.

"It is about enabling managers to shift to another level - it allows them to become much more humanly fulfilling managers. It is an opportunity to learn from the richness of other scientific fields about organisations, behaviour, innovation and creativity. Ultimately, it is about personal transformation and creating more meaningful leadership."

The Full Colour Thinking philosophy is one that resonates with much of what the School already does, adds Baets. Since the launch of the Executive MBA ten years ago at the GSB, the School has been among a handful of schools internationally that recognised that business programmes need to develop "transformative leaders" - leaders capable of great things through the way they think about the world and the way that they influence positive change.

Baets says it takes a pedagogical shift to advance this, but that what he is suggesting is not about substituting existing programmes' content and theory - students and executives have to be given new material to work with; new ways to look at problems and themselves as managers.

The trick lies in providing enough diversity in the theory and practice so that they start to recognise that no single model or theory is the repository of truth. And in process, they are given a raft of tools to test ideas against. In the context of South Africa, and Africa at large, with a high level of complexity, the ability to think rigorously in this way is invaluable as is the ability to pull on multiple sources to develop ideas.

This, says Baets, is what he will be endeavouring to do over the three-day short-course in September, and that those attending will leave with an action plan to enrich their own leadership and their organisations.

"We are not saying to students and managers 'here are all the answers', but rather 'here's how you can look at your world in new ways and innovate' - it is a process that creates in leaders the ability to be continuously creative, use diversity to their advantage and tap into unlimited potential."

Baets' short-course Full Colour Thinking runs from 1-3 September at the GSB. Email Alison.siebritz@gsb.uct.ac.za or sms 'Colour' and your email address to 31497.

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