

AFRICA

The Future of
Management Education
Volume 2

*To the Thomas, Lee and Wilson families
who are the foundation of our lives*

AFRICA

The Future of Management Education Volume 2

BY

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FOREWORD: THE JOURNEY CONTINUED

It became clear from the first volume of this book, *Africa: The Management Education Challenge* (2016), that to achieve a deep understanding of Africa as a continent, it was essential to explore and understand the different histories, contexts and cultures of the 54 nation states within it.

Additional visits made more recently to Africa have reinforced this belief, supported by the testimony of many educators, business leaders, government officials and students. Their stories, concerns and viewpoints have been interpreted, as closely as possible, from an African rather than a Western perspective.

Our initial findings were presented at various book launches, including those at Singapore Management University and the EFMD Annual Conference in Rome 2016. They were also presented elsewhere, including at EFMD, AABS and GBSN conferences in Accra, Barcelona, Dar-Es-Salaam, Johannesburg and Lagos. In each case, there was very positive feedback on how the work reflected important African views and perspectives on management education.

We have continued to appreciate the genuine warmth and kindness of all the people – and particularly the younger generation – that we have met. Their obvious energy and enthusiasm derives from a strongly held desire not only to improve their own personal circumstances, but also to grow their own country's economy and prosperity.

Their hopes for a better future can be seen in a number of recent events, including the widespread demonstrations in 2016

about fairness, access and equality in higher education, as part of the ‘Fees Must Fall’ movement in South Africa. And, more recently in early 2017, the strong popular support in the Gambia (and neighboring African countries) for upholding the results of democratic elections, despite the reluctance of a power-grabbing and apparently corrupt, defeated incumbent President to cede power, demonstrates the popular desire for democratic solutions to be enforced and enacted as African countries evolve politically.

As a consequence, enlightened political leaders across the continent are increasingly aware of the relentless pressure for change from a growing younger generation and an urban middle class. Political, economic and social change is inevitable. In these VUCA – volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous — environments, it is crucial to recognise that the past is, therefore, not the future of each country and economic growth is paramount. As economies and countries evolve, the pressure for strong business development and leadership is clear. Therefore the future challenge for management development is also evident. Will management educators build carefully on the exciting future? Will future pathways be innovative and ‘values-led’? Will future strategic options be designed and implemented to improve the quality and value of management education? Will it produce exciting, charismatic and ethical leaders who will lead their companies and countries towards strong economic growth and increasing prosperity across African countries?

These are the issues and questions that are the focus of this volume, which examines future scenarios for change and assesses how, and by what means, important future developments may be facilitated. These insights and ideas can provide the fuel for continued debate about, and improvements in, management education in Africa.

Howard Thomas / Lynne Thomas
March 2017

REFERENCE

Thomas, H., Lee, M., Thomas, L., & Wilson, A. (2016) *Africa: The management education challenge*. Bingley, U.K.: Emerald Group Publishing

NOTES

AABS refers to the African Association of Business School

EFMD refers to the European Foundation for Management Development

GBSN refers to the Global Business School Network

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CHAPTER 1

THE PAST IS NOT THE FUTURE

INTRODUCTION

The first volume of this African study, *Africa: The Management Education Challenge* (Thomas *et al.*, 2016), outlined the unique issues and challenges for management education posed by the African environment. It ended with a discussion of whether there should, or even could, be an African model of management education.

It is a topical and intriguing question.

Interest in the development of business schools throughout the world has grown markedly over the past decade. Books and articles have been written about the evolution, structure and functioning of management education not only in the West but also in Asia and other emerging regions of the world (Augier and March, 2011; Khurana, 2007; Thomas, Lorange, and Sheth, 2013; Thomas, Thomas, and Wilson 2013; Thomas, Lee, Thomas, and Wilson, 2014).

To assess whether any particular models are appropriate or meaningful for African business schools, given the significant differences in context and cultures among the widely diverse countries of the African continent, it is helpful to review the background and some of the key findings and current criticisms arising

from the evolution of alternative approaches and models of management education across the world.

CRITICISMS, BLIND SPOTS, AND KEY FINDINGS

Many of the criticisms of management education arising in the existing literature were summarised in the 2013 and 2014 volumes *Promises Fulfilled and Unfulfilled in Management Education* and *Securing the Future of Management Education* (Thomas *et al.*, 2013, pp 66-68 and Thomas *et al.*, 2014, pp 33-34).

These criticisms are that the business school:

- lacks identity and legitimacy in the modern university and in society generally. It is often characterised as a ‘cash cow’ (Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007) and an academic stepchild (Wilson and Thomas, 2012)
- is essentially a socialisation mechanism (Grey, 2005) – a business school is a necessary rite of passage for senior management and more in the nature of a ‘finishing school’ than an intellectual, liberal-thinking cauldron of research and teaching activity
- overemphasises shareholder capitalism and does not embrace models of stakeholder capitalism and corporate social responsibility (Locke and Spender, 2011; Muff *et al.*, 2013)
- does not provide a clear sense of purpose, morality and ethics with respect to business and managerial roles in society (Colby *et al.*, 2011; Ghoshal, 2005; Millar and Poole, 2010)
- focuses on analytics and scientific rigour at the expense of developing wisdom and interpersonal, leadership and managerial skills (Bennis and O’Toole, 2005; Mintzberg, 2004; Schoemaker, 2008)
- produces self-referential research that is seen as irrelevant by those involved in managerial practice (Hambrick, 1994; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002, 2004)

- overemphasises scientific rigour in the conduct of management research and knowledge development (Schoemaker, 2008; Thomas and Wilson, 2011)
- has pandered too much to business school rankings and has consequently become too responsive to the consumer voice (Khurana, 2007)

Dean Canals of IESE Business School in Spain (2011) added to these criticisms with a series of observations not only about the purposes of the business school but also about the need to address a number of immediate administrative crises (Thomas *et al.*, 2013, pp 15-16). They include:

- a much stronger exploration of the business school's role in providing leadership to handle the ethical and moral lessons to be learned from scandals such as ENRON and the global financial crisis. How can a stronger 'moral and ethical compass' be taught and learned?
- the importance of taking globalisation seriously. Perhaps a wider study of international economics and finance is required here
- the somewhat tense relationships between the business school dean and university authorities and the dean and his or her faculty. Universities often treat business schools as a source of funds for the benefit of the broader academic institution. This can hinder the 'team' development of a business school and increase the faculty's feeling of lack of acceptance, identity, meaning and legitimacy not only in the business school but also in the broader university
- the widely held perception that business school research increasingly lacks relevance. The challenge here is to co-produce knowledge with business and industry, perhaps with interdisciplinary joint research project teams