

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

***An assessment of the South African MBA Curriculum***

**By**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The MBA programme is a management education qualification that is ideal for people wishing to develop or enhance their skills and knowledge across the entire spectrum of modern management. The MBA which originated in 1908, has been the key qualification for aspirant senior managers. The MBA has for decades been recognised by academia and industry as the same of excellence of a professional manager. However, in the recent past the MBA has come under scrutiny and has been criticised for its massification and churning out managers rather than future leaders. The MBA has also been criticised for becoming too academic and less pragmatic. The primary purpose of this study was to report on the relevance of the South African Masters of Business Administration (MBA) programmes in South Africa with regards to current South African Business requirements. This exploratory study sought to address in particular what the current landscape of the MBA curriculum looked like, and to gauge the relevance of the MBA programmes of South African business schools, based on MBA alumni perceptions. An online questionnaire was designed to examine various aspects of the MBA curriculum as well as the MBA alumni perceptions of the importance of the curriculum. A non-probability purposive sample of 90 MBA alumni was obtained from various South African business schools. The salient findings of this study showed that there was a gap between alumni perceptions of important subjects and those that the business schools gave relevance to. The study found that a general MBA programme with a large research component was needed. However, this programme should give less attention to the traditional functional management subjects and should move from a narrowly focussed MBA to one that reflects a much broader context, and to continually review the curriculum.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
AMBA	Association of MBA's
BBBEE	Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment
CHE	Council for Higher education
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
MBA	Masters in Business Administration
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
SAQA	South African Qualifications Association
SABSA	South African Business Schools Association
SMME	Small Medium and Micro Enterprise
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UK	United Kingdom
UNISA	University of South Africa
US	United States of America

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

The MBA is a highly acclaimed management education programme, which aims to increase managerial knowledge (www.MBA.co.za, 2011). However, this once prestigious qualification is losing some of its glory as criticisms against this programme have increased. The perceived quality of the managers it produces has also decreased as a result of managers with MBA degrees involvement in large corporate scandals such as Enron and Worldcom. It is thus important to determine whether the MBA can still produce successful managers who through their successful organizations will continue to contribute to the prosperity of society. However, as the field of management education is vast, the study will narrowly focus on the needs of the MBA curriculum in meeting the current business requirements from the perspective of MBA alumni. Finally, management education needs to adapt to the changing face of business such as new regulations, rapid economic growth, restructuring of organizations, corporate governance and ethics. This chapter will serve as the basis for the study and will outline the approach that will be taken to solve the research problem.

### 1.2 Motivation for the Study

There are many studies worldwide that examine the relevance of the MBA curriculum in terms of management education. Most of these were conducted by Western higher education institutions or their associated bodies, and it was a concern that very little has been done in this area, from a South African perspective. A second motivation for this study is the renewed focus on the MBA in South Africa, as the Council for Higher Education (CHE) is trying to downgrade the qualification level of the MBA programme

which will have serious consequences for both past and future students, and for the credibility of the South African MBA's. According the CHE's Executive Director, Hay, (as cited in the Financial Mail, 2011) "on some programmes, entry standards are too low, course content is not academically challenging, and research requirements are limited". Managers play an important role in a countries economic development and South Africa seems to be lacking in the skills of management as it has a shortage of qualified people to fulfil these important positions. "Professional skills in engineering, science, finance and management, as well as technical and artisan skills are critically needed as the South African economy moves into higher gear, the government has said." (www.SouthAfrica.info, 2006). It is envisioned in this study that the relevant MBA curriculum could attract more students and thereby begin to address these deficiencies.

### **1.3 Focus of the Study**

The topic of business management education is expansive and many studies discuss the value of MBA programmes with regards to selection of prospective MBA students, teaching methodologies, how the MBA programme is delivered, content of MBA subjects, assessment of the students as well as the much publicised MBA rankings which collectively have an effect on programme content. This study will not attempt to marginalise or replicate these studies, but merely focuses on the MBA curriculum in South Africa due to resource constraints.

#### **1.3.1. Problem Statement and Objectives**

Due to varying reasons, many critics postulate that the MBA is becoming irrelevant (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Khurana, 2007; Mintzberg, 2004; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). Carnell, 1995, suggested that the key requirements in the future will be for relevance, quality, focus on management skills and personal development, and on value added from management education. The purpose of this online study will be to attempt to discover what subjects are offered by MBA programmes in South Africa and whether

these meet current business requirements. The study will start with a narrow focus on the subject matter covered by South African MBA curricula and then move to broader topics, attempting to finally answer the question of its relevance. The following objectives have been identified for the study:

1. To determine what core subjects are being offered by South African business schools.
2. To determine what elective subjects are being offered by South African business schools.
3. To consider how South African business schools should change their content to meet current business requirements.
4. To determine whether the MBA is still relevant in South Africa.

The information from this study will ultimately be of benefit to various stakeholders including recruiters, business school policy makers, the business community, students and alumni.

### **1.3.2. Research Questions**

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the following research questions have been posed to assist in answering the problem stated earlier. The following questions are posed in this regard:

- What core subjects are being offered at most South African Business Schools?
- What core and elective subjects for the MBA programme, are seen as essential to the current South African business environment?
- How often should the MBA curriculum be changed?
- What changes need to be made to existing MBA programme subjects?

An online questionnaire was designed to answer these questions, and link these to the problem statement. Non-probability sampling will be used to obtain a convenient sample from the population of MBA students in South Africa. The answers from this questionnaire will be summarized using tables, graphs and descriptive statistics and then discussed with reference to other studies and reports. The study will be concluded with recommendations for what changes are needed with regards to the MBA curriculum, as well as highlight areas where future research is needed.

### **1.3.3. Limitations of the Study**

Although the study was undertaken in a systematic manner that allowed for a clear understanding of the problem, a review of the literature, a description of the methodology used, presentation of the data, discussion of the data and concluding recommendations, the following limitations were found:

- The desired sample size of approximately 400 students was not achieved due to poor response to the online questionnaire;
- Since the research was found to be based on the perceptions of MBA graduates the results drawn from this study are tentative and thus need to be interpreted with care;
- The scope of this study is a limiting factor as it ignores many important variables related to the relevance of the MBA curriculum;
- Access to the population was problematic as they were widely spread across the country;
- There was a large number of incomplete questionnaires or questionnaires with missing data, that had to be eliminated.

These limitations and the strategies to overcome them will be discussed in Chapter Six.

## **1.8 Summary**

This chapter stresses the importance of managers in society, and how the MBA can be used as a tool to increase their effectiveness. It briefly outlines what is going to unfold in

this study to stress the relevance of MBA curriculum in terms of current business requirements. A systematic approach to the research problem will be taken. The next chapter starts this exploration into the MBA curriculum and looks at existing literature on this topic. The chapter thereafter will explain the research methodology used in this study. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 will present the findings and then discuss these in more detail. Finally Chapter 6 will conclude with recommendations that will have a positive impact for the future development of the MBA programme.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter two examines existing literature around the relevance of the MBA, in order to ascertain what has already been written on this topic and related topics. The literature review starts with an overview of the history of the MBA programme development, the objectives of a MBA programme and then investigates the magnitude of the problem, what changes are proposed and the barriers to change. The review finally gives an overview of the South African MBA landscape.

#### **2.2 History of MBA Programme Development in the U.S**

The definition of an MBA and its purpose can be summarized as the following: “The MBA is an internationally recognized and geographically portable post-graduate, post-experience academic qualification in a number of subjects that together can be said to constitute the science of management” (www.MBA.co.za, 2011). The market it is aimed at consists of “those who work in business and management who seek career advancement, business ownership, or technical skills and business knowledge. The challenges imposed by the 21st Century place a high premium on upgrading skills and qualifications in order to meet the demands set by companies, customers and the environment that managers operate in” (www.MBA.co.za, 2011). The MBA originated around 1908 in the USA as an elite qualification for potential senior managers and leaders, and was seen as mostly being offered by a trade or operationally focused management school, and emphasized improving efficiency through administrative procedures (Kedia and Haveston, 1998). Following the Second



World War, skill shortages forced many without business education into management positions. According to Kleiman and Kass (2007), the original MBA's purpose was to equip these individuals to do a better job by developing a set of core courses covering each of the functional areas of business. In the 1950s, criticisms from the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Council that highlighted the lack of research and academic rigor in the early MBA'S, led to a more stringent scientific model being adapted (Kleiman and Kass 2007). The next catalyst in the MBA programme development came around the 1980's where a more professional and practical approach, akin to the medical school model was advocated which turns students into professional doctors. (Kleiman and Kass, 2007).

Khurana (2007) conducted a detailed investigation into the historical development of the MBA in the United States and its implications on the profession of management. In the introduction to his book, he summarised the following important developments of business schools over the history of the MBA. "The professionalisation project stood at the centre of business schools' agenda during the period from 1881 until America's entry into World War II in 1941, an age in which business schools emerged and diffused throughout America's colleges and universities. The period of reform and subsequent institutionalisation took place from about 1941 to the economic recession of the early 1970s. Part 3 of the book takes us from the 1970s to the present day, a time in which the imperatives of professionalism in business management education were replaced by market imperatives." (Khurana, 2007). In this summary, he highlights that the MBA path has lost its original aim of professionalising business management, and developed instead from the scientific model to the modern day situation where market pressures, such as MBA ranking tables influenced the development of the MBA.

### **2.3 What is the Main Objective of the MBA?**

When the MBA schools were first established their objectives were to establish management as a science, not an art; as well as educate a professional guild of

managers who demanded respect on par with that of doctors and lawyers (Khurana, 2007). Today the MBA still purports to be a superior management qualification which aims to impart business related knowledge and management skills to their graduates ([www.MBA.co.za](http://www.MBA.co.za)). Although it must be noted that each business school in South Africa has its own unique mission, goals and objectives which can be found on their websites. Pfeffer and Fong, (2002, p.92) postulate that “management and managerial skill has been identified as a core competence required for economic prosperity and possibly even economic development. In an increasingly knowledge-based economy, the ability to mobilize and use knowledge is a critical skill. With the privatization of industries and companies all over the world, the ability to manage large-scale private sector organizations effectively is a sine qua non for economic well-being. So, business and business education are increasingly the topic of conversation, and managerial skills are accordingly important for society”. The South African skills shortage is seen as one of the most problematic issue facing businesses today, “Forty-one percent of South Africa's privately held business cites the availability of a skilled workforce as the biggest constraint to business growth, according to consultancy firm Grant Thornton's 2009 International Business Report.” ([www.southafrica.info](http://www.southafrica.info)). It appears that this need for management skills is a worldwide phenomenon. Research in 2004 undertaken by the Council of Higher Education (CHE) in South Africa has shown that: “From the point of view of skills development for the ‘new economy’, this has stressed the need to train managers to operate in global as well as in local markets, increasing the demand for MBA programmes all over the world.” This need for effectively trained managers motivated Dierdorff and Rubin (2007, 2009, 2011) to conduct studies on “Assessing the Alignment of Required Curricula and Required Managerial Competencies”, and showing that the success of this alignment was directly linked to the relevance of the MBA. Thus, a relevant MBA programme is important in fulfilling the demand for managerial skills in South Africa.

## 2.4 Magnitude of the problem

Due to the financial crisis of 2007 to 2010, corporate scandals, privatization and increased global competition further criticisms have continued to date, and left many academics questioning the value and relevance of the MBA programmes (Bennis & O' Toole, 2005; Cullen, Datar and Garvin, 2010; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Khurana, 2007; Mintzberg 2004; Navarro, 2008). "MBA programmes face intense criticism for failing to impart useful skills, failing to prepare leaders, failing to instil norms of ethical behaviour and even failing to lead graduates to good corporate jobs" (Bennis and O'Toole, 2007, p.96). Other areas of concern with regards to the MBA are that, "There are those who question its very existence and assert that MBA programmes are unable to supply employers with the skilled and knowledgeable recruits they need. Others blame the shareholder perspective of MBA programmes for the financial crises, or view MBA programmes as complicit to the financial crises. Finally, there are calls for a major retooling of the contents of MBA programmes to meet the requirements of the rapidly changing business environment." (Thomas and Schlegelmilch, 2011, p.474). These criticisms were central motivation for the necessity of this study.

Bisoux (2005), explains how many business schools are realizing that: "The conventional MBA curriculum may need to be reconsidered and revamped to supply 21st-century business with graduates trained to solve its 21st-century problems" (Bisoux, 2005, p. 27). It is well known that change in the business environment is rapid and widespread, and therefore changes in the transformation of MBA programmes, needs to reflect this environment and be more responsive and in perpetual makeover mode to keep up with the changing times. Poston as cited in Bisoux (2005), states that "There's now a lot of pressure on business to keep their programmes changing, we're always being asked 'when was your last curriculum revision'. We must now mirror the industries we serve, where product life cycles are very short and must be constantly adapting to meet new needs". Many other authors agree with this sentiment. "The workplace is changing rapidly. While ever the MBA

looks at what managers and leaders do in the workplace it will continue to be a reactive model which prepares its graduates for the current workplace rather than leadership into the future workplace” (Blass and Weight, 2005, pg 246).

Blass and Weight (2005) document the following areas of concerns with most traditional MBA programmes:

- The scientific paradigm of MBA programmes are not fulfilling the practical needs of the business environment;
- The bias of the MBA towards its American origins, culture and capitalist mindset, hinders the development of a truly global, as well as culturally specific MBA programmes. “One model does not fit all”(Blass and Weight, 2005, p. 232);
- The proliferation of poor quality e-learning based MBA’s which do not encourage management behavioral competencies;
- The incorrect standards that are used for MBA rankings, that distract MBA schools from their true purpose of developing responsible business managers;
- The call for accreditation is leading to standardization and MBA programmes to develop irrelevant content;
- Many MBA business schools are facing an identity crises, as they fail to articulate their true mission and instead are trying to be “all things to all men”.

There are many that agree with these concerns, especially that the MBA subject offerings are too scientific and theoretical, and are only partially useful to practicing managers (Bennis, & O’Toole, 2005; Bisoux, 2005; Mintzberg, 2004; Navarro, 2008).

According to Porter and Kibben (1988), (as cited in Navarro, 2008) “What universities do with—and to—students is in large measure a function of the curriculum”, Navarro (2008) highlights that the MBA core curriculum lacked intergration of its multidisciplinary areas and experiential components, as well as its lack of emphasis on subjects centering on themes such as “soft skills,” “information technology,” together with “globalization,” and “corporate social responsibility.”

Kleinman and Kass (2007) suggest that MBA programmes need to cater for various student needs to prepare them for professional business positions, such as entry, middle, and upper management; programme administration; business consulting; financial analysis and entrepreneurship, amongst others. However, current, MBA programmes mostly offer a single and similar core set of knowledge, and do not offer unique skill sets that these very different positions require. It is clear that business schools today do, in fact, do offer a variety of MBA programmes, including variations of the traditional MBA programmes and MBA programmes with opportunities for specialization, and even niche company/ sector/ industry customized MBA programmes (Gupta, Smith and Saunders, 2007). However, some authors, seem to think that these programmes are not being purposefully aimed at the correct calibre of student (Kleinman and Kass, 2007; Martin and Moldoveanu, 2008; Mintzberg, 2004; Weight and Blass, 2005). One size does not fit all, and the wrong students are being approached to study the wrong type of MBA for their needs. This is mostly due to a poorly formed and communicated mission statement as well as standardized and outdated MBA programmes. The business schools are not making it clear, who their MBA programmes will benefit the most, and why (Kleinman and Kass, 2007).

One of the biggest critics of management education remains to be the renowned academic, Henry Mintzberg. Mintzberg (2004), suggests that management, is not a science, nor is it a profession and that it is not something someone can learn to do in a business school. It is something one only learns by doing, and through practical experience. He continues on about the irrelevance of the MBA programmes, by saying that MBA programmes are specialized in training the functions of business and not general education in the practice of managing. In the second half of his book, he suggests an alternative management education offering. Pfeffer and Fong (2002, p.84) conclude that “we need to be cognisant of the trade-off between what schools can and do readily teach and what might be required to differentiate oneself and succeed in the world of management. In spite of these long-standing issues about the

curriculum, and lest one be concerned about the age of some of the surveys and studies, there is evidence that curricula have changed little over time.”

In their book, “The Future of the MBA”, Martin and Moleavenu (2008) brings together some of the critiques that support the viewpoint that it is time for the MBA programme to be redesigned. Firstly, the “Competitiveness Critique” supported by Pfeffer and Fong (2002), suggests that the MBA is not a competitive source of human capital for the organizations of the future. The “Radical Structural Flaw Critique” questions whether the the MBA can actually train managers, and is supported by evidence given by Mintzberg, (2004). The “Ivory Tower” Critique questions whether the MBA is relevant? Bennis and O’Toole (2005), studies are used to supplement this critique. “The Vicious Hermeneutic Circle” critique question examines whether the the MBA is “good for business and society” as according to Ghoshal (2005), the MBA is fundamentally “bad for business”. Finally, the book focuses on the “Deprofessionalization” critique asking whether the MBA is a viable institution and support for this argument is found in studies done by Pfeffer and Fong (2004) that highlight certain MBA graduates involved with recent episodes of fraud and corruption. However, change in any institution is not easy as Khurana, 2007, also warns that there is no “silver-bullet” solution.

## **2.5 What changes are needed?**

According to the objectives of the MBA, it seems that the primary intent of an MBA programme is to develop and train future managers and business leaders, or strengthen current managers’ capabilities to become more effective and efficient (Dierdorff and Rubin, 2009, p.210) and to create knowledge through research (Bennis & O’ Toole, 2005, p.98). Answers to questions of relevancy may differ drastically when examined from different perspectives and stakeholders, and it is thus useful to align the relevancy issues to the purpose of the MBA and to its curriculum.

Most authors (Bisoux, 2005; Cullen et al, 2010; Kleiman and Kass, 2007; Mintzberg, 2004) insist that faculty members, as well as many external stakeholders get

involved in curriculum changes as they each will bring important issues and unique perspectives to the forefront. They emphasise that each one has a unique contribution to make with faculty members bringing their expertise in the fields in which they teach whereas alumni will have hands on experience of how useful the subjects taught to them are in their workplace. Finally, business managers will have a good understanding of the types of tasks that graduates perform and need to perform in the business world and skills needed to perform them (Kleinman and Kass, 2007). They also acknowledge the contribution of the various stakeholders in assisting in their studies to get diverse and comprehensive viewpoints on to their subject matter (Cullen et al. 2010). These authors examined the curricula of a number of leading MBA programmes, and compared and contrasted them across dimensions of content, pedagogy, architecture, and purpose; the authors make the following recommendations for change: “The core of our conclusion is that business schools need to do two things: reassess the facts, frameworks, and theories that they teach (the “knowing” component), while at the same time rebalancing their curricula so that more attention is paid to developing the skills, capabilities, and techniques that lie at the heart of the practice of management (the “doing” component) and the values, attitudes, and beliefs that form managers’ world views and professional identities (the “being” component). We believe that shifts in MBA enrolments, changes in recruiting patterns, and a rising chorus of concerns from deans, faculty, executives, students, and the public at large make this rebalancing necessary” (Cullen et al, 2010, p.456). The unmet needs that these authors refer to as needed for “doing” and “being” can be summarised as gaining a global perspective, developing leadership skills, honing integration skills, understanding the role, responsibilities, and purpose of business, recognizing organizational realities and implementation, thinking creatively and innovatively, thinking critically and communicating clearly, understanding the limits of models and markets. Although the authors refer to these enhancements, they do not make reference to what exactly needs to be excluded from the existing MBA curriculum to achieve the necessary rebalancing. Moldoveanu (2008), also stated the growing irrelevance of the “knowing” part of the MBA as it “will decrease in relative value as we go from the Age of Information to the Age of interpretation, where

information is free, knowledge is cheap, and intelligence is not merely a cognitive trait.” Kedia and Harveston, (1998) recommend an emerging model which shows what business schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should look like (Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1 A Comparison of MBA Models**

Traditional MBA'S	Emerging MBA'S
<b>A. Vision</b> The administrator looking for ways to be more efficient	The leader looking for opportunities
<b>B. Values</b> <b>Faculty-centered</b> Hierarchical, specialized academic departments Academic model Tenure system for Faculty	<b>Student-centered</b> Possible elimination of departments Balance of theory, practice, research Long-term contracts for Faculty, clinical faculty
<b>C. Valence</b> Domestic, ethnocentric focus Individualistic Quantitative, financial focus Distance from business	Global perspective Teamwork People skills, analytical focus Alliances with corporations

Source: Ben Kedia, Paula Harveston , (1998), Transformation of MBA programmes: Meeting the challenge of international competition *Journal of World Business*, Volume 33, Issue 2, p.208

According to their viewpoint as shown in Table 2.1, emphasis needs to be placed on soft skills and globalization. When Dierdorff and Rubin (2009) conducted a study of 373 schools, it was found that the majority of business schools curricula adequately covered key managerial competency requirements - managing decision-making processes, managing human capital, managing strategy & innovation, managing the task environment, managing administration & control, managing logistics & technology. Dierdorff and Rubin (2009) study found that overall “real-world” managers indicated that managing decision-making processes and managing human capital are the most salient behavioural competencies needed to fulfilling their managerial roles, whereas managing logistics and technology, while essential, is the least salient. These findings however, are not aligned with what the current MBA programmes accentuate. Their study suggest that business schools are betting that companies will want to hire students who are exposed to a more specialized, integrated, experiential, and sequenced curricula MBA. As such the MBA curriculum



should offer more behavioural management competencies, such as managing decision making processes and managing human capital (Dierdorff and Rubin, 2009)

Kedia and Harveston (1998) suggested that a new MBA should be focused on the “leader looking for opportunities”. Blass and Weight (2005) take this suggestion further, and emphasise that this new focus on the leader, would lead to a totally revamped Masters in Business Leadership, which will be broader than the traditional management focussed MBA programmes. An MBL programme should focus on the person rather than curriculum, and is a personal development journey rather than a functional knowledge-based experience, as there is an assumption that this knowledge base is already there prior to the course being undertaken. Some of the unique attributes of an MBL as proposed by Blass and Weight (2005) include:

- A view of knowledge as fluid and manageable, as opposed to the conventional MBA model that emphasizes knowledge as a commodity that people have
- The Time Frame focus would emphasis hindsight, insight and foresight, as well as analysis, decision making, design and action
- The student outcome would be to “know who they are and what they can do (multiculturally)”. This is in contrast to the conventional MBA where the student outcome is to “know what and can do (culture bound)”.

The commonality in most of the research seems to indicate ethics and corporate social responsibility, soft skills, and globalization need to receive more focus on MBA programmes (Bennis & O’ Toole, 2005; Cullen et al., 2010; Khurana, 2007; Navarro, 2008; Rubin and Dierdorff, 2009). Thomas and Schlegelmilch (2011), summarizes the viewpoints held by many Deans of business schools, into three broad areas where change is needed: soft skills, globalization and ethics and corporate social responsibility. They also suggest that the link to the practicing real world must be strengthened.

Some MBA programmes are giving into market demands, and changing where possible. Mintzberg's (2004) alternative management development programme, the International Masters of Practicing Management (IMPM) programme offers practical learning, modules that are clustered around five mindsets and is spread over participating universities in five countries. His modules include the reflective mindset (managing self); the collaborative mindset (managing relationships), the analytical mindset (managing organizations), the worldly mindset (managing context), and the action mindset (managing change). However, such an expansive programme is not easily achieved by all business schools nor practical. Pfeffer and Fong (2002), suggests schools who are changing for the better do not offer a conventional set of functional courses, but instead recognize the interdisciplinary, interrelated world of modern business and adopt a multidisciplinary programme that reflects this.

## **2.6 Barriers to change**

According to Navarro (2008) the first barrier to change is cost. The shortage of business school faculty is severe and growing. This means that fundamentally altering MBA programmes is that few if any of the current business school faculty are particularly well equipped to support new models of business education that link education to practice. He further states that "Similarly, on the resource allocation front, if a school chooses to increase its emphasis on soft-skill development or information technology or corporate social responsibility, that is likely to negatively affect the number of teaching slots and resources available to other functional disciplines such as finance, marketing, and accounting, and therefore, engender resistance." (Navarro, 2008, p.118). Many full-time faculty have not practiced the profession or craft of management. Kleinman and Kass (2007), mentioned that resistance to change would come mostly from faculty members who want to preserve the status quo, and more importantly their positions, as many existing courses could be modified, condensed or eliminated. They suggest using a structured and proactive process, that is based on a process used by human resource development professionals to find out what the organizations learning needs are. Besides cost and

shortage of faculty members. Pfeffer and Fong (2002) also identified the following barriers to change “The schools who aim and have achieved status through the ranking systems, will be unlikely to change, as it is not in their best interest. Therefore, it is not surprising that much of the innovation in business education and in MBA programmes comes from either new schools or programmes that are not so much in the status mainstream. And finally, the status quo is maintained by the taken-for-granted aspect of so much of business education, the fact that what we do and how we do it has become truly institutionalized. Institutionalization of existing practices and models legitimates them and insulates them from both competition and change (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002).

And change always comes at a price: “To equip a student with all the skills employers desire—proficiency in team-building, communication, and leadership, as well as a solid grasp of general business knowledge and other business complexities is making business schools realize that they just cannot cope. It's not feasible to expect business faculty to teach their core subjects thoroughly and address all the soft skills a business student must also develop” (Bisoux, 2007, p.27). It is often acknowledged that the soft skills that are often required for updated MBA programmes, such as such as leadership, communication, human capital and interpersonal skills are not that easily accepted by the students as they seek only the skills that will increase their employability. Complicating matters, research done by Rynes et al, (2003) found that students increasingly harbour negative attitudes toward learning soft skills due to their perceived opinion that recruiters are not needing these skills.

Another barrier to change, is the unique environment in which Business schools operate. Where does one start, as redesigning the curriculum is not an easy task as schools differ in their resources and capabilities, as well as their underlying philosophies and there are different requirements according to each schools environment (Cullen et al, 2010). Navarro (2008) concurs with the need to reflect this diversity "this expectation does, in fact, conform to reality, one might further expect to observe schools using various clusters of courses to competitively position their curricula in a thematic way. For example, one school might seek to position itself as

the leader in soft-skill development and include more soft-skill courses in its core. Another school might seek to differentiate its product through a globalization brand. Still another might seek to distinguish itself with an IT focus" (Navarro, 2008, p.113).. Other studies, go against this calling for diversity for a common and standardised body of professional knowledge although they acknowledge that each business school operates in a unique environment. However, in contrast to Mintzberg, Thomas and Schlegelmilch (2011), believe that business schools need to play an important role in turning their MBAs into professionals who share a common body of knowledge, practices and values. Accreditation bodies would have considerable responsibility here in that they need to ensure a sensible degree of similarity in the core body of knowledge taught. However, management education does not occur in a social vacuum, which limits the degree of standardizing management education (Thomas and Schlegelmilch, 2011, p.478). According to Gupta et al, (2007) the problem for employers, businesses, and students is deciding the best curriculum structure at any point in time that offers the greatest benefits.

## **2.7 The MBA landscape in South Africa**

The landscape in South Africa is unique, as it has a history of inequality in education, a high unemployment rate, first world country and third world country elements; restrictive labour legislation and a high skills shortage. "In my opinion the skills shortage is a reflection of the relative unattractiveness of working in South Africa compared to the rest of the world. South Africa's skills are getting on planes and leaving for greener pastures with less crime and more power." Mbeki (2006). The only way to prevent this is to make South Africa more attractive.

A lot of the previous criticisms have come from the international arena, and thus is aimed at business schools in developed countries, such as the UK and USA. In South Africa, the general MBA programme tends to focus on core functional subjects aimed to develop general skills and knowledge in management, students also get to choose

various electives to specialise in. Table 2.2, examines the most popular core module of 18 accredited business schools that are members of the South African Business Schools Association (SABSA). This table reveals that the functional subjects are still the dominant design of today's MBA programmes. Some subjects were only scored as half a subject, as these were combined with others such as "Operations and Information management" into one course.

**Table 2.2 MBA curriculum in South Africa**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>No. Of schools offering this subject</b>
<b>Functional</b>	
Marketing	17.00
Corporate Finance	4.00
Financial Accounting	12.00
Operations research/ management	16.00
Corporate Strategy	10.00
Human Resource Management	13.00
Organizational Behavior	8.00
Managerial/Cost Accounting	11.00
Management Information Systems	11.00
<b>Analytical</b>	
Managerial Economics	16.50
Quantitative Analysis/ Statistics	10.50
Decision Analysis	4.00
Research Methodology	16.00
<b>Soft-Skills</b>	
Management Communications	0.50
General Management	5.50
Leadership	9.00
Organisational Development And Transformation	3.00
Negotiations	0.50
Personal Development	2.50
Entrepreneurship	5.00
<b>Socially Responsible</b>	
Ethics/Corporate Governance	5.00
Business & Government	2.00
Business Law	4.00
<b>Global</b>	
Macroeconomics	2.00
Global Strategic Management	3.00
International Business	6.00

Adapted from [www.mba.co.za](http://www.mba.co.za)

It is evident from table 2.2 that only 17.26% of the total modules offered in South Africa represent the subjects mentioned in the “new MBA” proposed by Blass and Weight (2005). A salient point that emerges is that only two schools offer a module on personal development. Whilst debate rages in the UK, Europe and USA about what should be taught on an MBA programme, is unclear as to what is still relevant content on South African MBA programmes.

Bosch, Louw and Venter (2001) conducted research involving 420 MBA graduates on their perceived value of the MBA; which highlighted the following themes for the development of South African MBA programme:

- “Strong support for the incorporation of a greater practical component into the course content as well as the prevention of the proliferation of the MBA programme;
- Sentiments were expressed that courses should become more contextual, relevant and current;
- More emphasis should be placed on Small Business Management and Entrepreneurship;
- The accent should be on developing more qualitatively-orientated and less quantitatively-orientated skills;
- While a holistic approach, highlighting the integration of all core courses, was suggested, there was a tendency towards specialisation rather than a generalist approach.”

(Bosch, Louw, Venter, 2001, p.44)

In South Africa, with its unique developmental issues, importance needs to be given to aligning the correct management education to its business needs and attracting potential graduate management students. “South Africa needs managers not only to improve its global competitiveness in its organizations but also to improve the standards of living in South Africa” (Cronje, Smit, Brevis and Vrba, 2011, p.5).

## **2.8 Summary**

It becomes quite apparent from this literature review that criticisms abound around the issue of the MBA programme, and its relevance in today's society is a reality. Common themes found in this review were that it was not practical enough and too scientific, some subject areas such as soft skills were under represented, there was a lack of integration across disciplines and it did not lay the proper ethical grounding for future business leaders. This section investigated secondary data, in the form of existing literature, and this will be enforced with primary data in the form of a questionnaire aimed at MBA alumni. In Chapter 3 the study will focus on the research methodology and data collection techniques that were used in this study to collect this primary information. The research will also explain our preferred methodology and the considerations made in choosing this option, and finally focus on the limitations of this methodology.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of research is to learn whatever has never been known before, to ask significant questions for which no conclusive answer has previously been found; and, through the medium of relevant data and their interpretation, to find an answer for the that question (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001, xviii). In this section, a detailed explanation of the methods used in this study, will be provided. This section will first look at the research approach and strategy adopted and proceeds into more detail on the data collection methods, the research instrument design, the sampling used, and data analysis used.

#### **3.2 Aim and Objectives**

There has been much criticism regarding the relevance of MBA programs, especially since the large corporate scandals such as Enron and WorldCom, and recently due to the financial crisis (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Khurana, 2007; Mintzberg, 2004; Navarro, 2008; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002). In most of the literature, there is mention of the relevance of the subject offerings of MBA programmes in terms of the current business environment. This research aims to determine if South African business school subject offerings meet the requirements of external stakeholders in today's business environment, and if any changes are necessary. A mixed research approach combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to this exploratory study will be used in this study. As an exploratory study, this research will aim to seek new insights into phenomena, and to ask questions about the phenomena being explored (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). This approach was required both due to broad nature of the topic, practical constraints and to ensure a balanced approach (Creswell 2003). Creswell (2003), point out that mixed methodology is a systematic, principled



approach, better able to make sense of and extract meaning from “the real world”, so that a more comprehensive understanding of the problem can lead to findings that can be applied in a practical sense.

A systematic process of collecting and analyzing data was followed to obtain an assessment of the relevance of the MBA curriculum in the South African context as well as fulfil the research objectives of this study. The objectives of the study are:

1. To determine what core subjects are being offered by South African business schools;
2. To determine what elective subjects are being be offered by South African business schools;
3. To consider how South African business schools should change their content to meet current business requirements;
4. To determine whether the MBA is still relevant in South Africa.

### **3.3 Research Approach and Strategy**

According to Bryman and Bell, 2007, a paradigm is a cluster of beliefs and dictates which for scientists in a particular discipline what should be studied, how research should be done and how results should be interpreted. Although two main paradigms of research have been identified in this study, it is best to regard them as two extremes of a continuum. As you move along the continuum, the features and the assumptions of one paradigm are gradually relaxed and replaced by those of the other paradigm (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). These two paradigms are highlighted in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Features of the two main paradigms**

<b>Positivistic paradigm</b>	<b>Phenomenological paradigm</b>
Tends to produce quantitative data	Tends to produce qualitative data
Uses large samples	Uses small samples
Concerned with hypothesis testing	Concerned with generating theories
Data is highly specific and precise	Data is rich and subjective
The location is artificial	The location is natural
Reliability is high	Reliability is low
Validity is low	Validity is high
Generalises from sample to population	Generalises from one setting to another

Source: Hussey, J. and Hussey, R. 1997. *Business Research: A Practical Guide for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students* Macmillan Business: New York p. 54.

The paradigm used for this approach favours the phenomenological paradigm although it has elements of the both paradigms as it does not want to confine itself to one philosophical position.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005) research can be said to be a scientific enquiry with the purpose of systematically collecting, analyzing and interpreting information (data) in order to increase our understanding of the phenomenon in which we are interested. The principal purposes of research include exploration, description, and explanation. Research studies often combine more than one purpose. "Exploration is the attempt to develop an initial rough understanding of some phenomenon. Description is the precise measurement and reporting of the characteristics of some population or phenomenon under study. Explanation is the discovery and reporting of relationships among different aspects of the phenomenon under study." (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005, p.100). This study will use exploration and description to achieve its objectives.

A cross sectional non experimental approach will be adopted to analyse and describe the data obtained from online questionnaires, using descriptive statistics and graphical representations. A cross sectional design is often called a social survey design, and collects quantitative and qualitative data at a single point in time which are then examined to detect patterns (Bell and Bryman, 2007). This study uses a non experimental approach, and therefore did not manipulate or control any variables

using an experimental situation, and as such cannot infer casual connections between variables (Bell and Bryman, 2007). The objectives will be determined from an online questionnaire and the results will be analysed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive Statistics is used to summarise the general nature of data, and is useful in condensing large amounts of data into an amount of information that can be more readily comprehended (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). This will be done, in conjunction with an analysis between the questionnaire results and international studies to look for similar patterns or differences.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

Primary data was collected using the questionnaire survey method. The link to the web based survey <http://questionpro.com/t/ADowvZHCYm> on QuestionPro was emailed to 585 University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) alumni, and about 120 of these emails were returned “undeliverable”. The benefit considered in choosing to use an online questionnaire was due to its quick turnaround times, cost effectiveness, as well as the ease of use for participants and considerable anonymity for them. In order to widen the survey reach, a number of social websites were used as well, to invite MBA graduates from other South African Business Schools to participate in this online research questionnaire. It was ascertained from QuestionPro, that 181 respondents started this questionnaire, and 90 completed it which is a completion rate 49.8%.

Advancements in technology has allowed for quicker and easier access to a larger pool of participants and thereby it has also allowed for more ethical violations in the research arena. Ethics in research concern four main areas: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy, and deception (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Research ethics was applied in this study when developing the research instrument and obtaining informed consent prior to the collecting of data. Respondents were assured their anonymity and privacy during the entire research project. In this regard a ethical clearance letter was obtained beforehand.

Qualitative research is subjective and used to give deeper understanding and obtain richer data within a specific context. Quantitative research is objective, measurable and can be subjected to statistical analysis (Bell and Brymam, 2007). Qualitative research is used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena for the purpose of understanding the phenomena from the participants point of view, whereas quantitative examines relationships among measured variables for the purpose of explaining, controlling and predicting phenomena (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). The online questionnaire is a quantitative technique and will be used to provide numerical information to backup the various views and opinions obtained from the qualitative research. Qualitative research will be used to gain holistic insight into the problem, Secondary data will be collected, summarised and interpreted from the following secondary data sources that are deemed necessary to give a deeper understanding the subject matter of this research paper. The most cited sources are listed below:

- 1) CHE, 2004 report on “The state of Provision of the MBA in South Africa”
- 2) Association of MBA (AMBA) 2009 report on “The Post Turndown MBA: An agenda for change”
- 3) Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) “management education at risk” report (2002)

The first item, is important as it is done by the South African education body, the Council for Higher Education (CHE) and gives an extensive report on the current MBA programme from various South African stakeholders representing Government, Business Schools, Students and Employers. The second report, is used to present the international perspective in the findings of this study and was completed by an international MBA alumni sample. The 544 MBA alumni respondents were asked to provide answers to questions on the future development of the MBA by ranking their opinions on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating the lowest level of agreement and 5 the highest. The inclusion of item number (3) above was due to its extensive exposure in the CHE (2004) report. The purpose of this report was to identify the challenges that face business schools worldwide and make recommendations.

All these data sources were completed by renowned institutions, and they all refer to the perceptions of MBA alumni in their papers.

### **3.5 Sample size and group**

The population size as the exact number of MBA graduates in South Africa was not determinable due to the lack of publicly available statistics. However it was noted that 6628 MBA graduates, graduated between 1998 and 2002 (CHE, 2004). As the entire population was too large for the scope of this research, convenience sampling was used to extract a subset of the population of MBA graduates in South Africa. Sampling will lead to easier and quicker administration of the survey, and is also cost effective and practical. Probability sampling refers to the fact that all elements in a population have an equal chance of being selected and the results are more closely reflected to those of the population. Non probability sampling is when the probability of including each element in the population in a sample is unknown. (Bell and Bryman, 2007). Probability sampling reduces systematic sampling errors but due to shortened timelines and convenience, non probability sampling was used in this research. However, using non probability sampling means that the results cannot be generalized to the population (Creswell 2003). More specifically, convenience or accidental sampling was used to collect data on the virtue of its accessibility. Generally, the larger the sample the more accurate it becomes. Irrespective of the size of the population, it is highly recommend that the sample size should be more than thirty, to use descriptive statistical method on the results. (Bell and Bryman, 2007). If the population of MBA graduates over a ten year period is assumed to be around 50 000, then for a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, the sample size should ideally be 381 ([www.research-advisors.com/tools/samplesize.html](http://www.research-advisors.com/tools/samplesize.html)) . Therefore, the sample size being targeted was around 585, but due to a low response rate and dropouts, the final sample size was 90 participants.

### **3.6 Research Instrument Design**

A combination of nominal scales, a non quantitative measurement scale, used to categorise, label and classify the variables, as well as rating scales to measure an attitude or perception, was used in the instrument design (Bell and Bryman, 2007). A variable is simply an attribute on which cases vary. If an attribute does not vary then it is a constant (Bell and Bryman, 2007). The most commonly measured variable in this study will be the different subjects that are offered on the MBA curriculum. The online questionnaire started by asking basic demographic questions to establish a basic profile of the respondents, broad questions were then used to investigate which subjects were mostly studied by the MBA graduates, and their perception of which of these were essential to the MBA curriculum. It then got more specific regarding the curriculum and asked questions such as how often the change was required as well as what changes were needed. The questions were mostly structured closed ended questions to get exact information needed for this research, with one open ended question relating to “Do you feel there are other subjects not mentioned in any of the previous selections that are essential to an MBA curriculum”. The closed ended questions will also make data analysis of these more effective. However, it must be noted that the close questions also have certain disadvantages such as a loss of spontaneity in the respondents answers and forced-choice answers may not be mutually exclusive (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

Well constructed questionnaires normally have high measurement reliability and validity. “The Validity of a measuring instrument is the extent to which the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. Reliability is the consistency with which a measuring instrument measures yields a certain result when the entity being measured hasn’t changed.” (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005, p. 27). The validity and reliability of a measurement instrument influences the extent to which you can learn something about the phenomenon you are studying, the probability you will obtain statistical significance in your data analysis and the extent to which you can draw meaningful conclusions from your data (Bell and Bryman, 2007).

In constructing this questionnaire, careful consideration was given to avoid the usual pitfalls of questionnaires, such as using jargon, double-barrel questions, neutral wording with no leading or loaded questions and double negative questions. The reliability of the measure was high, as it is easily replicable and the variables were clear and direct.

### **3.6.1 Pre-Testing the Interview Questions**

The questionnaire was reviewed by my study supervisor as well as the UKZN ethics committee. It was further sent to MBA graduates. Upon suggestions received, changes were made to improve the construct validity that included:

- Grammatical improvements
- Longer questions were shortened where possible
- New sections were added on the research component of the MBA programme
- Corrections were made to the logical connections between questions
- Questions were reordered into related sections

These improvements were made to make the sure the questionnaire appeared logical and would be comprehensible to future respondents.

### **3.7 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005) statistics can help condense an overwhelming body of data into an amount of information that the mind can more readily comprehend. They further explain that descriptive statistics summarise the general nature of the data obtained, for example how certain measured characteristics appear to be “on the average” how much variability exists among different pieces of data, how closely two or more characteristics are interrelated. In contrast, inferential statistics helps the researcher make decisions about the data, descriptive statistical analysis will be applied to the data collected in this study. The findings will be

summarized in tables and graphs in Chapter four, using descriptive statistics central tendency measures such as the mean and mode and frequency distributions; as well as measures of variability such as the standard deviation. Some analysis on the data has already been done by QuestionPro, however further analysis will be done using the SPSS statistical programme, as well as excel. Once the survey data has been truly measured, it will then be compared to secondary data items in the discussion chapter.

### **3.8 Summary**

This chapter examined the methodical approach used in this study. The research methods used, were briefly explained and reasons for their selection were given, starting with how data was collected, and from whom it was collected. The reason for sampling was given, as well as a brief description of the measuring instrument. This chapter finally described the analysis that would be done on this data, to look for patterns or differences to substantiate the objectives of the study. The next chapter will show the results obtained from this analysis of data.



## Chapter 4

### Presentation of Results

#### 4.1 Introduction

Chapters two and three provided a theoretical and technical grounding for the empirical study. Data was collected over a period of two months. This chapter presents the results of empirical study in the form of graphs, tables and narrative explanations.

#### 4.2 Demographics

The profile of the respondents who participated in the study is presented in Table 4.1

**Table 4.1 Demographic profile of the respondents**

Description	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	72
Female	28
<b>Age</b>	
25 – 29	5
30 – 34	30
35 – 39	31
40 – 44	16
45 – 49	9
50 – 54	8
54 >	1
<b>Seniority</b>	
Non-Management	10
Junior Management	14
Middle Management	27
Senior Management	49

It is evident from Table 4.1 that the majority of respondents were male and that 60% of the respondents were in their thirties. The next section gathered supplementary basic information on the respondents. Table 4.2 examines where the respondents completed their MBA degree.

**Table 4.2 Province in which the MBA was completed**

Province	Percentage
Eastern Cape	28
Free State	2
Gauteng	13
Kwazulu-Natal	43
Limpopo	5
Mpumalanga	4
The Western Cape	4

Whilst this study attempted to get the opinions of a cross section of graduates from across South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal respondents were in the majority as the researcher had direct access to the alumni database. This could skew the results towards the subjects offered by the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN). Table 4.3 shows how long ago the respondents completed their MBA.

**Table 4.3 How long ago did you complete the MBA**

No. of Years	Percentage
1 Year	28
2 Year	12
3 Years	18
4 Years	15
5 Years	11
6 Years	4
7 Years`	1
8 Years	5
9 Years	1
10 Years	1
> 10 Yrs	3

Most of the respondents completed their studies one year ago prior to this study, and 83% of the alumni, completed their MBA between 1 and 5 years ago prior to the study. The MBA is a management focussed development programme, it is not surprising therefore that the majority of the respondents reported being in Senior Management positions (49%), whereas only 9% were in a non management positions.

Table 4.4 highlights the industries that the respondents worked in.

**Table 4.4 Industry where the respondents work**

Industry	Percentage
Agriculture	1
Building & Construction	1
<b>Business &amp; Management consulting</b>	<b>13</b>
Distribution, Warehousing & Freight	2
Education	9
Engineering	2
<b>Financial</b>	<b>14</b>
FMCG, Retail & Wholesale	3
Government & Local Government	5
Human Resources & Recruitment	1
Information Technology	7
Legal	3
Manufacturing, Production & Trades	9
Maritime	2
Marketing	1
Media	1
Medical	3
Mining	2
Motor	6
Petrochemical	3
Property	1
Social & Community	1
Telecommunication	5
Transport & Aviation	1

According to table 4.4, the two largest industries which the respondents worked in, were the financial and business & management consulting industries. This data corresponds to the findings of the AMBA report (2009), where most of their respondents worked in consulting (15%) or financial businesses (13%). However, according to Cullen et al (2010), due to the financial crisis the landscape for these MBA

graduates is changing as many firms in these highly sought after fields have reduced their hiring substantially and recruitment agencies are tending to hire non MBA graduates for these positions.

#### **4.3 Subjects covered by the MBA**

The core and elective subjects were firstly examined from the viewpoint of the percentage coverage they received on the MBA programmes. Thereafter, the Alumni were questioned in relation to these subjects. It must be noted that some Business Schools used different terminology relating to the naming of these subject and were renamed in this study to the most common names used to refer to them. As a starting point, data obtained from the internet is summarized in Table 4.5, giving a general overview which shows the importance of MBA subjects according to their coverage of curriculum on the South African programmes.

**Table 4.5 Coverage of subjects on MBA programme**

Institution	Choice of elective subjects/ clusters	Number of electives subjects required	Number of required core courses	% Core Courses	% Elective Course
School A	21	5	18	78%	22%
School B	5	2	13	87%	13%
School C	6	2	12	86%	14%
School D	9	1	13	93%	7%
School E	14	3	12	80%	20%
School F	7	3	13	81%	19%
School G	8	6	13	68%	32%
School H	16	2	14	88%	13%
School I	6	1	11	92%	8%
School J	9	4	15	79%	21%
School K	6	2	12	86%	14%
School L	12	2	14	88%	13%
School M	3	1	12	92%	8%
School N	7	2	15	88%	12%
School O	24	3	14	82%	18%
School P	15	2	11	85%	15%
School Q	3	1	17	94%	6%
School R	0	0	16	100%	0%

Adapted from [www.mba.co.za](http://www.mba.co.za)

Table 4.6 shows a further breakdown of the coverage of subjects required using descriptive statistics.

**Table 4.6 Statistical Breakdown of subjects on MBA programme**

Descriptive Statistics	Number of electives subjects required	Number of core courses required
Mean	2.33	13.61
Median	2	13
Standard Deviation	1.50	1.97
Sample Variance	2.24	3.90
Kurtosis	1.12	0.05
Skewness	1.02	0.77
Range	6	7
Minimum	0	11
Maximum	6	18

As can be seen from Table 4.6, the average number of core subjects offered is on average around 13 subjects and the greatest number of required core courses is 18. The average number of elective subjects required are 2 subjects, and the maximum no of elective subjects required are 6 subjects. This data shows that the South African MBA programme is more general than specific, with greater importance placed on compulsory core subjects than elective subjects.

Data from the questionnaire first focused on the compulsory core subjects, and then moved onto the topic of elective subjects. The most common core subjects that the alumni studied on the MBA programme are shown in Table 4.7.

**Table 4.7 Core Subjects Studied**

Core Subject	Yes	No	Elective
Organisational Behaviour	80%	20%	0%
Business Law	43%	54%	2%
Ethics/ corporate governance	32%	60%	8%
Business Statistics/ Decision Analysis	63%	37%	0%
General business management	77%	23%	0%
Economics	82%	18%	0%
Information Management	77%	21%	2%
Managerial Accounting	88%	11%	1%
Financial Accounting	87%	12%	1%
Corporate Finance	66%	31%	3%
Marketing Management	94%	4%	1%
Operations Management	92%	7%	1%
Entrepreneurship	38%	44%	18%
Research Methodology	87%	11%	2%
Strategic Management	91%	8%	1%
Leadership development	30%	62%	8%
Supply Chain Management	53%	42%	4%
Human Resources	88%	10%	2%
Labour Relations Management	46%	49%	6%

Table 4.7 illustrates that the majority of the core subjects represent the functional areas of management, such as strategy, accounting and financial management, human resources, information's systems, operations management and marketing and

sales. Mintzberg (2004) refers to these subjects as those that study the science of management. The next table ranks the importance of the core subjects offered on the MBA programme in terms of the current business requirements. They were rated from 1: “Little Value” to 3: “Essential”. The results are summarized in Table 4.8.

**Table 4.8 Value of Core Subjects for Business Requirements**

Core Subject	Little Value	Desirable	Essential	Mean
Strategic Management	4%	20%	76%	2.71
Ethics/ Corporate Governance	4%	24%	71%	2.67
Human Resources	4%	29%	67%	2.62
Organisational Behaviour	10%	20%	70%	2.6
Financial Accounting	3%	37%	60%	2.57
Leadership Development	4%	36%	60%	2.56
Managerial Accounting	9%	30%	61%	2.52
General Business Management	7%	37%	57%	2.5
Economics	7%	42%	51%	2.44
Corporate Finance	9%	38%	53%	2.44
Operations Management	7%	42%	51%	2.44
Information Management	12%	37%	51%	2.39
Marketing Management	4%	54%	41%	2.37
Labour Relations Management	6%	52%	42%	2.37
Entrepreneurship	17%	31%	52%	2.36
Business Law	11%	51%	38%	2.27
Supply Chain Management	17%	42%	41%	2.24
Business Statistics/ Decision Analysis	17%	44%	39%	2.22
Research Methodology	19%	40%	41%	2.22

It is apparent from Table 4.8 that according to the respondents, the four essential subjects that are relevant for South African business with the highest average rating are: strategic management (2.71), ethics / corporate governance (2.67), and organizational behavior (2.6). The subjects with the lowest average rating were research methodology (2.22) and business statistics/ decision analysis (2.22).

Electives subjects are chosen by the individual students, and are indicative of the flexibility of the MBA programmes. The subject selection is often restricted by the Business Schools based on subject demand and availability of faculty to teach the

required elective. The popular electives subjects studied by the respondents are summarized in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9 Elective subjects taken by respondents**

<b>Elective Subject</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Investment and Portfolio Management	14%
Entrepreneurship	11%
Project Management	10%
Taxation	8%
Management Information Systems	8%
Other	8%
Global/ International Business Strategy	7%
Business Ethics/ Corporate Governance	5%
Advanced Marketing	5%
Change Management	4%
Quality Management	4%
Negotiation	3%
Mergers and Acquisition	3%
Integrated African Leadership	2%
Advanced Labour Relations	1%
Small Business Management	1%
Knowledge Management	1%
Emotional Intelligence	1%
Service Management	1%
Enviromental Management	1%
Strategic HIV/Aids Management	1%
Women in Management	1%

Table 4.9 indicates that the most popular choices for elective subjects were “investment and portfolio management” (14%), “entrepreneurship” (11%), and “project management” (10%). The least popular subjects were “Strategic HIV/Aids Management” and “Women in Management”.

Respondents then rated the importance of these elective subjects in terms of business requirements. They were rated on the same scale as the core subject scale from 1: “Little Value” to 3: “Essential” (Table 4.10).

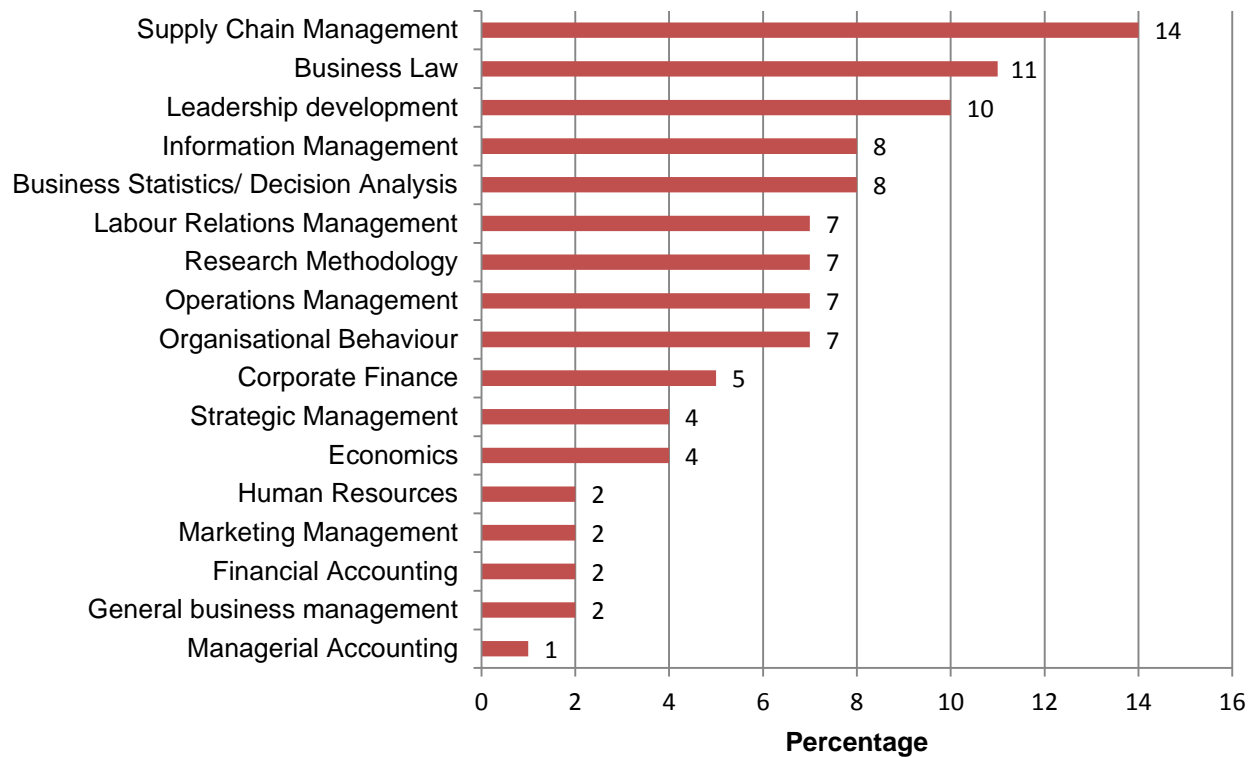


**Table 4.10 Value of Elective Subjects for Business Requirements**

Elective Subject	Little Value	Desirable	Essential	Mean
Business Ethics/ Corporate Governance	19%	21%	60%	2.41
Change Management	16%	43%	41%	2.26
Project Management	20%	38%	42%	2.22
Global/ International Business Strategy	19%	41%	40%	2.21
Entrepreneurship	20%	47%	33%	2.13
Management Information Systems	20%	53%	27%	2.07
Advanced Labour Relations	21%	51%	28%	2.07
Quality Management	27%	43%	30%	2.03
Small Business Management	20%	59%	21%	2.01
Enviromental Management	20%	61%	19%	1.99
Service Management	20%	61%	19%	1.99
Negotiation	27%	49%	24%	1.98
Advanced Marketing	19%	62%	19%	1.96
Emotional Intelligence	27%	53%	20%	1.93
Internet Marketing	27%	53%	20%	1.93
Taxation	29%	50%	21%	1.92
Knowledge Management	24%	60%	16%	1.91
Investment And Portfolio Management	29%	57%	14%	1.86
Integrated African Leadership	40%	41%	19%	1.79
Mergers And Acquisition	38%	48%	14%	1.77
Women In Management	41%	47%	12%	1.71
Strategic Hiv/Aids Management	40%	50%	10%	1.7

Table 4.10 show that the following are essential subjects and had the highest average rating business ethics/ corporate governance (2.41), change management (2.26), project management (2.22) and Global / international business strategy (2.21). The subjects with the lowest average rating were “Strategic HIV/Aids Management” and “Women in Management” (1.71). These ratings correspond to the findings in Table 4.4, which show these subjects as be the least popular for selection as an elective subject. Factors such as the majority of the respondents being male, as well as it not being offered at most universities as an elective, could account for the low rating of the “Women in Management” elective.

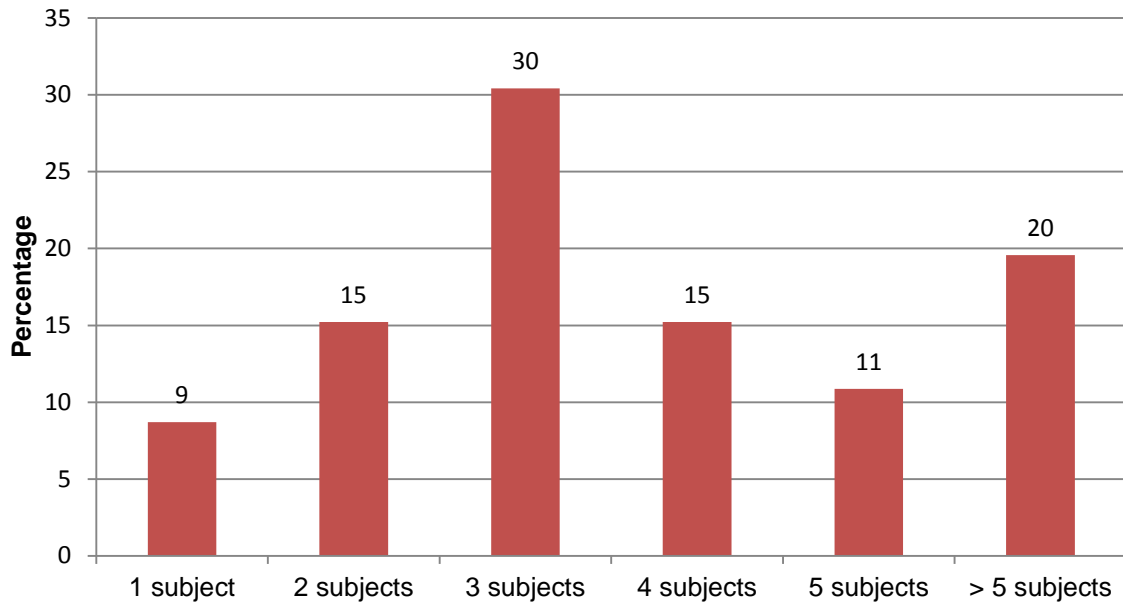
The next section looked for subjects that were not considered of such importance that they should be compulsory content on the current curriculum (Figure 4.1).



**Figure 4.1 Core subjects that should be offered as electives**

The following subjects that were highlighted as having lost their importance in terms of being a required subject: supply chain management, leadership development and business law. Supply chain management and business law also received little support in terms of being essential to business requirements as a core subject.

Respondents were asked whether the MBA programme should be offering more electives than the core modules, and just over half (51%) felt that electives should outnumber core modules. Their suggested number of electives subjects that should be offered as a selection is illustrated in Figure 4.2.



**Figure 4.2 Number of electives that should be offered**

Of those who supported this, the majority (30%) felt that three electives were sufficient, 15% felt that four or more subjects should be offered as electives. The mean of 3.88 however suggests that there should be at least four elective courses. This, however, is inconsistent with current practice where on average 13 core subjects are offered on an MBA, and on average 2 elective subjects are offered.

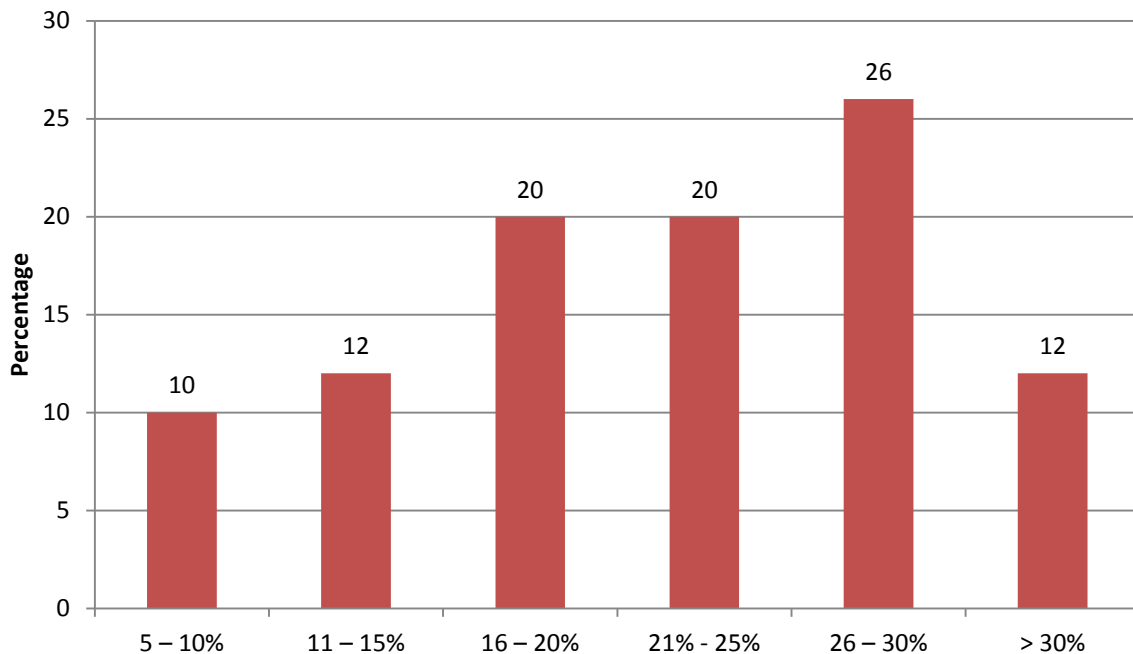
#### **4.4 Dissertation**

Literature suggests that the MBA has been widely criticized on its high academic research orientation (Bennis and O’Toole, 2005; Kleinman and Kass , 2007; Mintzberg, 2004;) This section probes the value of the dissertations, from a MBA graduates perspective. A total of 91% of the respondents confirmed that they were required to do a dissertation as part of their MBA programme. Table 4.11 describes the value the graduates perceived to have gained from doing a dissertation.

**Table 4.11 Value gained from doing a Dissertation**

Value gained from Dissertation	Percentage
I gained new knowledge about an area of interest to me	60.98
It has made me a critical thinker	25.61
It has improved my analytical skills	10.98
I got no value from doing the dissertation	2.44

It is clear from the responses that the dissertation had value for the majority of the respondents. The greatest value according to these results is that the respondents gained new knowledge about an area of interest to them which is indicative that the “area of interest” to the respondents and were probably not forced on them. The majority of the respondents (85%) felt that the MBA should have a dissertation. Figure 4.3 illustrates what percentage as a total of the course respondents felt the dissertation should comprise on the MBA curriculum.



**Figure 4.3. Dissertation contribution to the MBA curriculum**

Once again, it is clear that the dissertation has great perceived value to these respondents, and according to 26 respondents it should take up almost a third (26 – 30%) of the MBA curriculum. Table 4.12 lists the reasons why some respondents

(15%) felt there should be no dissertation on the MBA. Half of the respondents who did not complete a dissertation as part of their MBA, felt that a dissertation was not required.

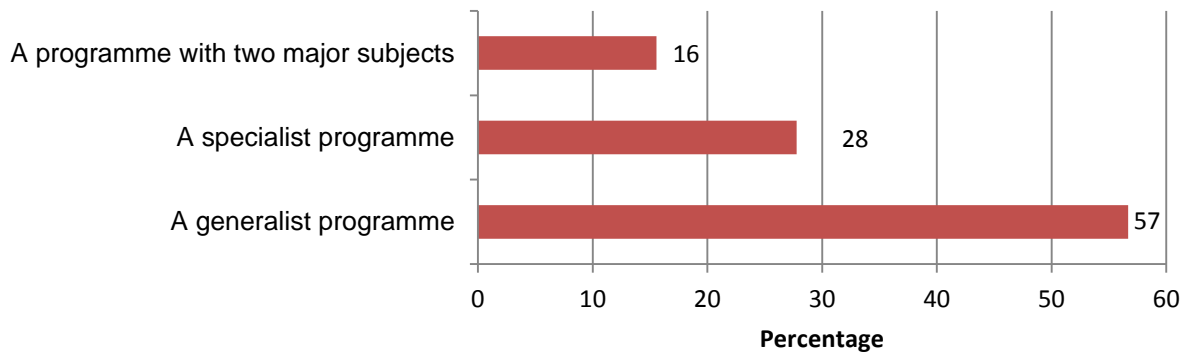
**Table 4.12 Reason for unimportance of dissertation**

Reason for no dissertation (n = 13)	Percentage
It delays completion of the MBA	7.69
It adds no value to my knowledge	7.69
It has no benefit to industry	80.00

These results indicate that these respondents did not feel that the dissertation provided any benefits to the industry.

#### 4.5 General information

This section examines other areas relating to the MBA curriculum that are not specifically covered by the subject matter in previous questions, such as what type of MBA programme should be offered by universities. The specialist MBA offers a firm grounding in the traditional generic MBA programmes, and then offers in-depth studies in a more particular field, such as health care. Most undergraduate university degrees in South Africa, offer a basic subject selection, with two subjects chosen as major subjects that are taken to a higher level than the general subject selection. The value of these different types of programmes is indicated in Figure 4.4.



**Figure 4.4 What type of MBA programme should be offered?**

Over half of the respondents (57%), chose a generalist MBA programme, over the other types of MBA's programmes. It was then investigated what type of majors subjects would be preferred by the MBA alumni. These were selected from the core subjects currently being offered on the programme, and the choices are shown in Table 4.8. Question 15, proceeded to ask respondents who chose "a programme with two majors" to highlight two subjects from the core MBA subjects that should be offered as majors (Table 4.13).

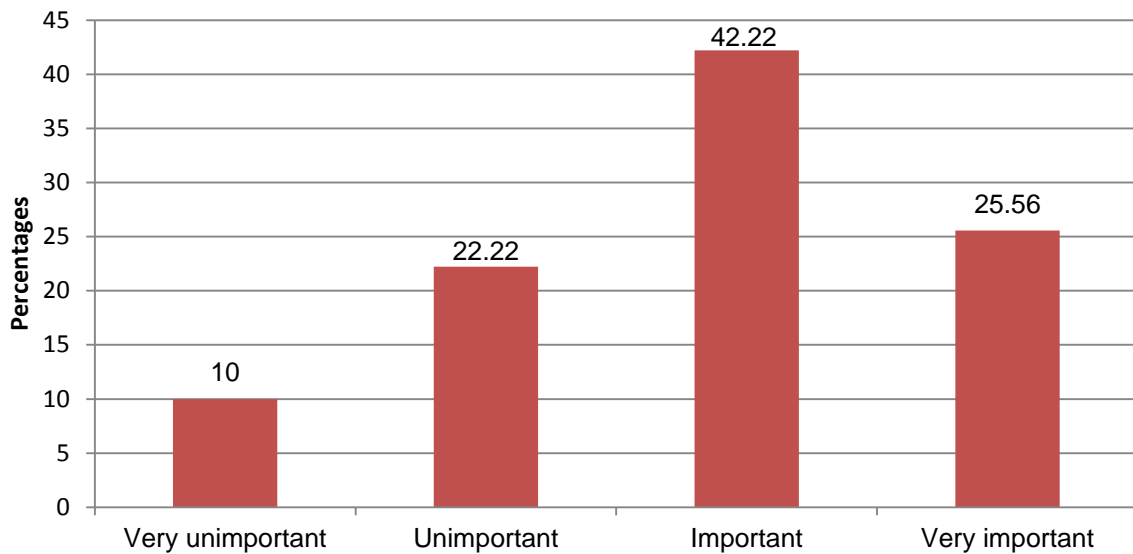
**Table 4.13 Major subjects that should be offered by the MBA**

<b>Subjects that should be offered as Majors (n=40)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strategic Management	<b>27</b>
General Business Management	<b>17</b>
Financial Accounting	<b>12</b>
Leadership Development	<b>10</b>
Business Statistics/ Decision Analysis	5
Managerial Accounting	5
Corporate Finance	5
Operations Management	5
Organisational Behaviour	2
Economics	2
Marketing Management	2
Supply Chain Management	2
Human Resources	2

A large number of respondents, selected "Strategic Management" as well as "General Business Management" as the popular subjects to be offered as major subjects.

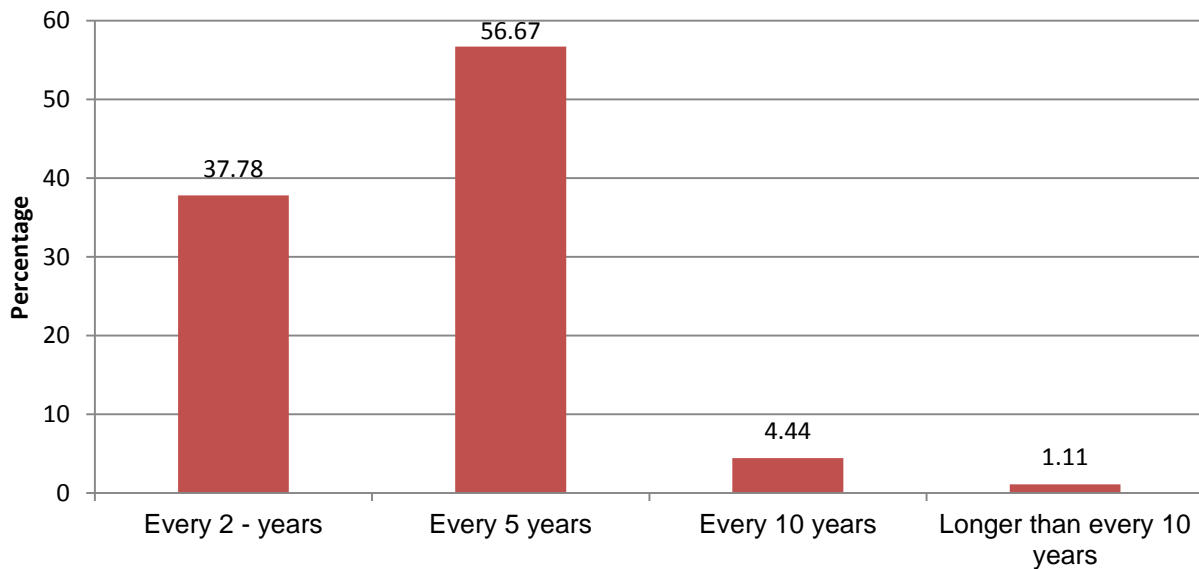
A large majority (80%) of respondents felt that no subjects were excluded from the current MBA curriculum. Of the 20% who felt some subjects were left out recommended that the following subjects should be included: doing business in South Africa, cultural diversity management, lean principles and personal development and project management.

Figure 4.5 illustrates the importance of subject offerings on the choice of school.



**Figure 4.5 Importance of subjects in selecting a Business School**

Two thirds (68%) of the respondents considered the selection of subjects offered by the business school as important in their decisions in studying at a particular business school. Figure 4.6 illustrates how often the MBA curricula should be revised.



**Figure 4.6 Revision of MBA curriculum**

As shown in Figure 4.6, intervals of between 2 and 5 years were considered to be the most important timelines for revisions of the MBA curriculum. The most popular selection, was for the MBA curriculum to be changed at least every 5 years, as this was selected by more than 50% of the respondents. Who should be involved in the revision of the MBA curriculum is illustrated in Table 4.14.

**Table 4.14 Parties that should be involved with changing the MBA curriculum**

Parties involved in revision of MBA curriculum	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very Important
Higher education institutions eg: council for higher education	6.67%	20.00%	<b>48.89%</b>	24.44%
Business community	2.22%	3.33%	32.22%	<b>62.22%</b>
Business representative bodies	2.22%	5.56%	38.89%	53.33%
Business Schools faculty members	2.22%	6.67%	34.44%	<b>56.67%</b>
South African Business School Association	2.22%	1.11%	36.67%	<b>60.00%</b>

For further information on this Table the two variables “very unimportant” and “unimportant” were combined into one variable “Total for Unimportant”; as well as the two variables “Important” and “Very Important” were combined, with these condensed results shown in Table 4.15.

**Table 4.15 Importance of Parties that should be involved with changing the MBA curriculum**

Parties involved in revision of MBA curriculum	Total for Unimportant	Total for Important
South African Business School Association	3.33%	96.67%
Business community	5.56%	94.44%
Business representative bodies	7.78%	92.22%
Business Schools faculty members	8.89%	91.11%
Higher education institutions eg: Council for Higher Education	26.67%	73.33%

Table 4.15 clearly indicates that the South African Business School Association, together with the Business community are important parties that should be consulted with when changing the MBA curriculum. The lowest percentages for importance



went to the Higher education institutions which show a disregard for these bodies contribution to MBA education.

#### **4.6 Summary**

The data gathered from the questionnaire were presented in this chapter Basic demographic information was gathered on the respondents, and then further information was gathered on the core and electives subjects that they studied. More in-depth detail surrounding the dissertation required by the MBA was gathered, and finally some general information was gathered relating to curriculum revisions. These results show that the a general MBA programme is preferable, with curricula revisions done at least every five years, in consultation with Business community members. The next chapter will look in further detail into these findings, in conjunction with secondary data obtained from the literature review and other sources.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

According to the CHE, learning criterion 9 “The MBA must display clear practical relevance and be well grounded in current theory”. This chapter will seek to further explore the meaning of relevance in terms of the current MBA programme. It becomes apparent that for CHE (2004), that “Relevance in this context involves preparing students for the rapid pace of business change, which cannot be done simply from textbooks and cases”. This chapter shows how relevance is strongly connected with the broad content of the curriculum, the emphasis on analytical skills and the introduction of innovations in the curriculum. Thus, the data obtained in this study will be interpreted with this in mind, and will specifically look at the core subject, elective subjects and type of MBA programmes. The research component of the MBA programme will also be critically evaluated. Finally, this chapter will link the subjects offered with the necessary competencies needed for management as an important indication of the MBA’s relevance to the real world.

#### 5.1.1. Core subjects and Elective subjects

In terms of the CHE accreditation standards, the following core subjects are mandatory for an MBA programme: accounting, finance, marketing, operations management, information systems management, human resources management, economics and quantitative analysis (CHE, 2004 report). The study finds that what is being offered on the MBA programmes reflects coverage of these subjects that are representative of the functional areas of management. These subjects have been widely criticised, (Mintzberg, 2004, Cornuel, 2005) and it is time for them to receive less coverage on the MBA programme than they do at the moment. According to Cornuel (2005), “Keeping PhD programmes organised around functional chimneys

will not allow crucial challenges to be addressed.” The results further indicate that strategic management has also been given importance on the MBA curriculum in terms of subjects studied. However, in terms of core subjects required for current South African Business requirements, it becomes evident that organisational behaviour, ethics and leadership are of greater importance to businesses. Important elective subjects for business requirements, according to the respondents in this study are business ethics/ corporate governance, change management, project management and global / international business strategy. According to the 2008 South African skill shortages list, Project management is a much needed skill in this country. From an international perspective, AMBA (2009) reports similar results as their MBA alumni highlights the following subjects as having importance in the future development of the MBA, business ethics, business policy and strategy, leadership and entrepreneurship, sustainability and globalisation. It follows that what South African MBA alumni find relevant does not concur with that which were considered important on the MBA programmes. AACSB (2002), shares this sentiment of incongruence “Alumni rate interpersonal, leadership, and communication skills as highly importing in the business world, yet they often rate these skills as among the least effective components of business school curricula.” It is thus, contended that it is time for Business Schools to move away from the functional subjects and include a broader and diverse base of subjects that reflect the needs of a changed business world such as soft skills and socially responsible subjects. However, with pressures from CHE to have these as compulsory subjects, it might be a difficult task for Business Schools to tackle. Further analysis of the MBA curriculum offered by South African business schools shows that more than one course relating to a functional area is offered, especially accounting subjects. Thus, they might consider combining these to make room for broader content.

The AMBA (2009) report suggested the following improvements to the MBA programme to help it better equip MBA students for the Post Downturn environment (Table 5.1)

**Table 5.1 Improvements needed for the MBA programme**

<b>Improvements to MBA</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Ethics	10
Risk management	12
Leadership	11
Internships / in-company projects	15
Change management	16
Curriculum development	16
International	18
Sustainability	36
Real business situation focus	31
Soft skills	34

Adapted from Association of MBAs (AMBA) 2009, *The Post Downturn MBA: An Agenda for Change* available <http://www.mbaworld.com/postdownturnmba> (p. 27)

Another similarity with the (2009) AMBA report that corresponds to the results of this study was that the curriculum was definitely an important consideration in selecting an MBA programme. In the AMBA (2009) report, 80% of the respondents found that it would be important criteria in selecting an MBA programme in today's uncertain climate. Therefore to keep attracting prospective students, there is a definite need for Business School's to relook at their MBA curriculum and ensure that it moves away from the functional subjects towards a new broader and diverse curriculum representative of new challenges faced by business today. The AMBA report (2009), clearly demonstrate in their results the need for this move away from a narrowly focused functional MBA "The needs and requirements of MBA graduates has shifted over time, from a more focused programme on functional skills and leadership, to a broader, more comprehensive curriculum required today" (The Post Downturn MBA, p.17). However, it must be cautioned that South Africa MBA programmes need not necessary change their curriculum to the western worlds newer versions such as the Yale School of Business. According to Pellet (2007), the School's Dean, Joel Polodny changed his curriculum from a functional subject orientation (financial, accounting, marketing, operations) to a curriculum that incorporates the viewpoint of corporate stakeholders (customer, competitor, investor, employee, shareholder). The open ended text answers hinted towards the need for subjects that represent South Africa's

unique requirements with words used such as Cultural diversity management; Local country dynamics, BBBEE and requirements for doing business in South Africa. It seems implicit however, that the broader diverse programmes could lead to less coverage of specialized topics. Further investigation is necessitated into what changes are relevant to South Africa's unique environment.

Much attention has been given to corporate scandals, financial crisis and corruption in current news headlines. And the MBA does not escape blame on these issues, as asserted by Crane (2004), (as cited in Navarro 2008), "an MBA education doesn't build moral character but actually tears it down—turning incoming idealistic students into myopic share price maximisers within the space of two short years." A study of 5000 business Graduate Students, concluded that a solid majority of MBA candidates (56 percent) acknowledged that they had cheated at least once, compared with 47 percent of graduate students in other disciplines (Butterfield, McCabe and Trevino, 2006). The areas of cheating behaviours reviewed in this study related to the student's exams and tests, as well as their written work and included items such as plagiarism, the use of unauthorized crib notes, collaborating on assignments when specifically asked for individual work, fabricating or falsifying a bibliography and submitting work done by someone else (Butterfield, McCabe and Trevino, 2006). With regards to being socially responsible, only one South African business school appears on "Beyond the Grey Pinstripe" ranking list for socially and environmentally aware MBA programmes. According to this website, schools that appear in their ranking list "are preparing students for the reality of tomorrow's markets by equipping them with the social, environmental, ethical and economic perspectives required for business success in a competitive and fast changing world" (Aspen Institute, 2011). It can be postulated that more course coverage in the MBA programmes should go to topics related to business ethics, risk management, corporate governance and sustainability. These sentiments are shared by these studies respondents who see business ethics/ corporate governance as essential. However, once again the MBA curriculum is not meeting the MBA alumni expectations as coverage of this subject is not given enough attention locally and globally. In AMBA (2009) respondents rated

the level of importance given to these topics from “To a very Small Extent” (1) to “a very large extent” (5). The results confirm that the following topics needed more coverage (2.20), business ethics (2.48) and risk management (2.9). The latest financial mail survey also proves that ethics and soft skills are the business skills lacking by MBA graduates in South Africa, as indicated in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2 Business skills associated with MBA graduates**

Skill	Percentage
Strategic Insight	92
Strategic planning ability	91
Research ability	82
Leadership ability	82
General management ability	77
Intellectual ability	75
Self-starting ability	64
Entrepreneurial ability	64
Crisis Handling ability	63
Ethical ability	63
Team Player	56
People Skills	49

Adapted from: Ranking the MBA’s survey, MBA programmes: Masterful Manipulation. *Financial Mail*, September 2011, p.42

According to this table, which show the low ranking skills as ethical ability, team player and people skills, it can be concluded that corporate social responsibility and soft skills subjects need to be reinforced on the MBA programme in South Africa.

### **5.1.2. Towards a generalised orientation**

In terms of elective subjects, it was found difficult to effectively evaluate from these elective subjects in the same light as the core subjects due to them not being consistently available to students. The reason for choosing the elective subjects was not found out in this study as they are subjective in nature, and not necessarily due to the South African business requirements. The ranges of electives offered by South

African Business Schools are between one subject and six subjects. Of these the most common options are two subjects, with five business schools offering this option. Nevertheless, they are an indication of the degree of specialization allowed on the MBA programme. The CHE (2004) report stated that five business schools offered a selection of nine specialist programmes between them. It is apparent that when taking cognisance of the results of the questionnaire that the MBA programmes should offer a greater selection of subjects. The respondents highlighted that an average of four subjects should be offered whereas the South African business schools currently offer an average of two subjects. However, the need for flexibility and choice is counteracted by more than half of the respondents favouring a more general type of programme as shown in their large response in support of a general MBA.

This debate between specialisation or a general MBA is a well cited one. As Blass and Weight, (2005, p.237) point out it is unclear as to whether the MBA “be offered with specialism’s, for example, to address certain niche markets (e.g. an MBA in Health Sector Management, or an MBA in Marketing), or should it remain focused on a generalist, all-round curriculum supposedly applicable to everyone? At the moment, none of the answers to these questions are clear as conflicting views are held both within and between institutions. Until some consensus is reached, the MBA will continue to be in search of an identity as it cannot be all things to all men.” Disagreements on this topic vary between Bennis and O’Toole, (2005) who propagate more specialization is needed so that students will have a more in depth knowledge of a particular job function, Gupta et al (2007), who conclude that a more general MBA is needed to give students an overview of all business areas. Gupta et al, study highlighted the following requirements based on their content analysis of 721 job advertisements mentioning the MBA as a qualification requirement (Table 5.3)

**Table 5.3 Employers Choice of Master of Business**

Type of industry	General MBA	MBA with concentration
Manufacturing	97.8%	2.2%
Retail or wholesale	90%	10%
Information (e.g., publishing, broadcasting)	84.6%	15.4%
Finance, insurance, banking	95.7%	4.3%
Real estate	100%	0%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	93.3%	6.7%
Educational services	93.3%	6.7%
Health care	97.5%	2.5%

Adapted from: Gupta, P.B., Saunders, P.M. & Smith, J. 2007. Traditional Master of Business Administration (MBA) Versus the MBA With Specialization: A Disconnection Between What Business Schools Offer and What Employers Seek. *Journal of Education for Business*, vol. 82(6), p. 310

It is evident from this table that prospective employers seek the general MBA school graduate over the specialist MBA graduate. MBA programmes in South Africa need to do a careful balancing act in this regard. They need to keep a general approach to the MBA programme but still need to find a way to balance out the functional topics offered by the General MBA.

### **5.1.3. Research**

Research is a compulsory part of the MBA programme in South Africa, as shown by criterion 12 of the CHE accreditation requirements, 2004 which specifies that research should make a contribution to the field of management. The research component of the MBA programme is seen as lacking by the CHE (2004), “the trend in some programmes to dilute research training and diminish the importance of the MBA dissertation undermines the standing of the MBA as a postgraduate degree at the master’s level.” The CHE report concludes that the “weak or non-existent faculty research productions compromises the relevance of the MBA for the South African business world”, CHE are using this unproductive research as one of their reasons for downgrading the status of the MBA programmes in South Africa (Financial Mail, 2011) In contrast to this viewpoint, the MBA has been highly criticised for being too



academic or scientific, with too much emphasis on the research component that is of little use in the workplace afterwards (Bennis, & O'Toole, 2005; Bisoux, 2005; Mintzberg, 2004; Navarro, 2008). However, this study is in agreement with the first opinion that research should be seen as important component of the MBA programme. If one seeks to understand the fast past paced changing environment around them, an investigative questioning stance seems to be the best approach to take. The AACSB highlights the role that research plays in achieving curriculum relevance. "There is, moreover, a general agreement that globalisation and the changes it has brought about in terms of governance, markets, and the relations between macro and micro economics have heightened the need for research that helps us understand these changes and their implications." The AACSB report ,2002 , argues that business schools have a responsibility to respond to the need for research on business and this is surely applicable to a developing country such as South Africa with its unique challenges. Cronje, Smit, Brevis and Vrba (2011, p. 18), state that the current challenges faced in a changing business environment as "new technologies, diseases to cope with in the workplace, currency collapses, new wars, legislation, labour movements, crime and corruption. Additional pressures in South Africa are caused by crime, violence, corruption, shortages of skilled people at all levels and a loss of investor confidence. Today's managers are required to learn and educate themselves continually in a large number of disciplines." The importance of the dissertation as the research component of the MBA programme is evident in data obtained in the questionnaire and should form a large component of the MBA programme. This sentiment is backed up by the finding of the research done by Dierdorff and Rubin (2009, p. 217). "On the contrary, the present results suggest that the relevant management training grounds are likely to be found in institutions of elevated research activity rather than in institutions where research is deemphasized and less supported." Thus, in these uncertain and perplexing times, research is essential to understand the environment in which we operate and is considered essential to management training programmes such as the MBA. This research should seek to broaden business's insight on relevant and current topics, and also be useful to the business managers in the real world.

#### **5.1.4. What does this mean for South Africa?**

One urgent business requirement currently needed for the growth and development of the South African economy is the need for qualified and skilled managers. The correct MBA curriculum can fulfil these urgent requirements. The CHE report on the “State of the Provision of the MBA in South Africa” refers to evidence from business school alumni that the most important predictor of business success is management effectiveness. This opinion is echoed in the report, “The post downturn MBA” where the MBA was rated as highly relevant by MBA alumni, scoring an average rating of 4.01 on a scale of importance ranging from 1 (least important) to 5 (very important) Results in this report show that “Of those respondents who made further comment more than half suggested that the skills and knowledge they developed were of use to them at work, and roughly 15% suggested that it was ‘good foundation’ upon which to build a career”. Demographic evidence from this international report (AMBA, 2009), and the questionnaire used in this research show that the majority of MBA alumni hold a management position, with at least 50% of them being at a senior management level or above. As the MBA is also seen as a management education qualification, it follows that the MBA should have relevance in offering subjects that relate to required management competencies and that they also fulfil the necessary management skills needed in this country. Table 5.4 shows the management skills that are needed in south Africa for economic growth and development, as extracted from National Master Scarce Skills List for South Africa (2008).

**Table 5.4 Managers Skills Shortages in South Africa**

<b>Occupational Grouping</b>	<b>Magnitude of Scarcity</b>
<b>Chief Executives, General Managers and Legislators</b>	
General Managers	1455
Senior Government and Local Government Officials	400
Chief Executives and Managing Directors (Enterprises / Organisations)	200
<b>Specialist Managers</b>	
Advertising, marketing and Sales Managers	<b>4045</b>
Finance Managers	2530
Human Resource Managers	815
Corporate (Administration and Business) Services Managers	800
Research and Development Managers	750
Policy and Planning Managers	125
<b>Construction, Distribution and Production / Operations Managers</b>	
Engineering Managers	3130
Supply and Distribution Managers (inc Logistics Managers)	2950
Contract, Programme and Project Managers	2860
Production / Operations Managers	2770
Construction managers	1825
<b>Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Managers</b>	
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Managers	885
<b>Miscellaneous Specialist Managers</b>	
Other Specialist Managers (Includes Environmental, Arts and Culture, Office and Quality Managers)	<b>6955</b>
Safety and Security Managers	350
<b>Events, Hospitality, Retail and Service Managers</b>	
Retail Managers	<b>4830</b>
Call or Contact Centre and Customer service managers	<b>3390</b>
Event and Conference Managers	300
Miscellaneous Hospitality, Retail and services managers	150
Transport Services Managers	70

Adapted from: The National Master Scarce Skills List for South Africa, 2008.

Table 5.4 shows that there is a major need for a variety of miscellaneous managers, such as Environmental, Arts and Culture, Office and Quality Managers. There is also a shortage in the following managerial skills: retail managers, call or contact centre and customer services managers, and advertising, marketing and sales managers. According to Dierdorff and Rubin's (2009) classification of subjects to management

competencies, this indicates a need for the following management subjects marketing management; interpersonal skills and sustainability.

However, if one compares these requirements with the importance placed on the major subjects that should be offered on an MBA as perceived by the alumni, it does not tally up to the management skills needed in this country. This shows a disconnect between what has been published by the labour government in South Africa, and what the MBA alumni see as relevant. The important major subjects as perceived by the respondents on this study, have been classified according to two well known classification systems. The first classification system has been highlighted in the literature review, and is based on a study done by Rubin and Dierdorff (2009) on the subjects that represent management competencies. The subjects are further compared with the classic ten management roles classification developed by Mintzbergs longitudinal study on managerial work (Cronje et al, 2011). According to Mintzberg, managerial work was described as consisting of 10 roles classified that were further classified into the following three groups: (a) interpersonal roles including the figurehead, leader, and liaison roles; (b) informational roles including the monitor, disseminator, and spokesman roles; and (c) decisional roles including the entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator roles. The results of this comparison are shown in Table 5.5.

**Table 5.5 Classification of the important major subjects required by MBA alumni**

Subjects categorised according to Rubin and Dierdorffs, 2009 management competencies	Percentage major subject select by alumni	Mintzbergs Ten Management Roles
<b>Managing Human Capital</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Interpersonal</b> Figure Head Leader Liaison
Human Resources	2	
Organisational Behaviour	2	
Leadership Development	10	
General Management	17	
<b>Managing Strategy &amp; Innovation Thinking Creatively</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>Informational</b> Monitor Disseminator Spokesperson
Strategic Management	27	
<b>Managing Administration &amp; Control Evaluating Information</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>Decisional</b> Entrepreneur Disturbance Handler Resource Allocator Negotiator
Managerial Accounting	5	
Corporate Finance	5	
Financial Accounting	12	
<b>Managing Logistics &amp; Technology</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Decisional</b> Entrepreneur Disturbance Handler Resource Allocator Negotiator
Operations Management	5	
Supply Chain Management	2	
<b>Managing Decision-Making Processes:</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Decisional</b> Entrepreneur Disturbance Handler Resource Allocator Negotiator
Business Statistics/ Decision Analysis	5	
<b>Managing the Task</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Informational</b> Monitor Disseminator Spokesperson
Economics	2	
Marketing Management	2	

Adapted from: Dierdorff, E., & Rubin, R., & 2009, 'How Relevant Is the MBA? Assessing the Alignment of Required Curricula and Required Managerial

Competencies', *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 8, 2, (p. 213) & Brevis, T., Cronje G.J., Smit, P. Vrba, M.J. 2011 *Management Principles: A Contemporary Edition for Africa*. 5 ed. Juta and Company Ltd, Cape Town (p. 15)

According to Table 5.5 the relevance according to the alumni selection of major subjects is not aligned to the management skills needed by this country. A major discrepancy is the need for marketing and Production / Operations Managers whereas the need for the management competencies aligned to this skill is low. It is important to consult a wider arena of stakeholders to find out what is needed to get the right skills needed for successful managers in South Africa The importance of having the right managerial skills is linked to better economic conditions that allow for society to prosper and grow. According to Cronje et al, (2002) "Civilizations rise and fall on the quality of their organizations and, therefore on the quality of their managers."

Finally, the importance of the MBA programme as an education tool for business managers is also highlighted by the need for the business community to be involved in curriculum redesign on a regular basis. It is certain that MBA alumni students could play an important role here as part of this business community or a business representative body, "Although students may not know in situ that they are missing these competencies, it becomes quickly apparent when confronted by the demands of their work roles" (Dierdorff and Rubin (2011), p.15). The role played by CHE is given less importance in changing the MBA content, and this could be attributed to the negative impact that their proposed changes will have for MBA students and alumni. Although it has been noted that accreditation leads to standardisation of the MBA programme as Business Schools adapt their programmes to conform to the norm (Mintzberg, 2004). In South Africa, this standardisation based on accreditation requirements, has clearly lead to the over emphasis of the compulsory functional subjects on their programmes. According to Blass and Weight (2005), accreditation bodies "also publish measures that differ from other evidence, which disguise how thin their approved programmes actually are". This study also shows that the MBA

curriculum should be revised at least every five years based on input from the Business Community and the Business Schools representative body, SABSA. However such changes need careful consideration, “As we tackle the challenges that face our industry, we must remember that getting on any bandwagon pro- or anti-research or pro- or anti-rankings is dangerous. We must be careful of how we react to the pressures generated by the media or the spate of recent articles lamenting the state of business education. As business school leaders, we have a responsibility to determine what changes are needed at each of our schools based on the needs of our stakeholders. Only then can we implement constructive changes that make sense” (Anderson & Danko, 2005, p. 28).

## **5.2 Summary**

This chapter looked at some broad issues impacting the relevance of the MBA programme in today’s society. The curriculum was critically evaluated according to business requirements, and then the type of MBA programme. Finally the critical element of research was examined. The findings of this research should lay some guiding principles for MBA curriculum development committees to respond to the current business requirements in South Africa. It is clear from the findings that the needs and opinions of various stakeholders such as MBA alumni must be taken into account when redesigning an MBA programme. Consideration must also be given to teaching the management competencies that are relevant and transferable to the real world. The next chapter will look at making recommendations based on the findings of this study, whilst also looking at the limitations of this study, and offer suggestions for future research topics.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The MBA programme has a long yet credible history, as MBA enrolments continue climbing despite negative criticisms (Pfeffer and Fong 2007, Cullen et al 2010). This chapter shows the improvements that Business Schools can make, to silence their critics and respond proactively to their stakeholders needs. However, it appears that there will always be some controversy surrounding the MBA programme as has been shown historically. However, this study is an important starting point that can be used for laying stronger foundations for the MBA curriculum.

#### **6.2 Has the problem been solved?**

This research has shown that it is time to re-evaluate the current MBA programme in terms of South African Business requirements. The relevance of the MBA programme was evaluated in terms of curriculum offerings and the findings that support the objectives of this study show the following.

- MBA alumni have identified the core subjects, business ethics, organisational behaviour and leadership as being important for future curriculum developments.
- In today's turbulent times, corporate social responsibility subjects also need to receive particular attention on the MBA. These subject changes should change the current emphasis the shareholders gains, to the viewpoint that caters for all of the relevant corporate stakeholders.
- A general MBA programme is preferable, but the electives subject choice needs to move from two subject to at least three.



- The curriculum needs to focus less on a narrow perspective functional management subjects and move to a broader perspective.
- Research that is relevant to the business world, and must be kept as an important part of a fully integrated MBA programme. This research should seek to explain the changing times that businesses operate in.
- A more flexible approach is needed to electives, with a need for more elective subjects being offered.
- The curriculum changes must ensure the right managerial skills needed in South Africa will be produced, as indicated by the skill shortages in the country.
- This study shows that the MBA curriculum needs to be changed at least every five years in consultation with various stakeholders, especially the business community.

It is important to keep the broader viewpoint in mind, that future managers produced by the MBA degree will influence businesses of South Africa and the success of these businesses will impact the economy and therefore create prosperity in society.

## **6.2 Implications of this Research**

The implications of this research impact predominantly on South African Business schools as it is highly recommended that they implement a programme of continuous improvement with regards to their curriculum. These improvements must be done based on inputs from members of the business community. Other stakeholders, such as CHE, need to take a look at some of the issues mentioned here, such as their insistence of compulsory functional subjects. This will ensure that MBA students continue to enrol in this degree and in the long term will continue to fulfil the much needed requirement for successful managers in South Africa. As noted by Cullen et al (2010), that “without significant changes to the MBA curriculum, business schools are likely to see enrolment rates in full-time programmes drop”.

More specifically, current business requirements show that emphasis needs to be placed on subjects relating to social responsibility, as well as soft skills. These subjects must be added whilst still keeping the MBA general in nature. The research component of the MBA programme needs to keep as an important part of the MBA programme. Finally, the programme needs to be fully integrated and redesigned into a multi disciplinary programme design with the aims of practically training managers according to current business needs.

### **6.3 Limitations of the Research**

Due to practical constraints, it was found that there were the following limitations on the study.

- The timeline did not allow for effective follow up on the respondents to get in more questionnaires and more representative sampling, leading to a low response rate. Due to this low response rate, the desired sample size of approximately 565 students has not been achieved. Thus non sampling error which highlights differences between the population and the sample, has been caused by deficiencies in the sampling approach such as the as the non response to the survey (Bell and Bryman, 2007). This non response is due to some of the targeted survey members refusing to participate as well as not being able to contact some of them.
- Access to the actual population was restricted due to them being widespread over the country. The online questionnaire was used to overcome this limitation.
- The scope of this study was a limiting factor as it ignores many important variables related to the relevance of the MBA curriculum.
- There was also a high dropout rate which elicited non response and missing data on some of the questionnaires. This missing and incomplete data was cleaned out, and these questionnaires were discarded.
- The problems with survey questionnaires is that they can be biased and misrepresentation from respondents is common place. There is no way to

circumvent this, however, a declaration was placed on my questionnaire stating that the person was an MBA alumni. Finally, it is plagued by non delivery as was found out in this study. So doubts can be placed on how truly representative of the population the respondents are, and due to non probability sampling the results cannot be generalized to the population with any statistical significance.

These limitations can be overcome in further studies on this topic, which can also incorporate many other elements into their research. The scope of this topic is much more extensive than what has been covered here, and it leaves the door open for many new studies that would look at this from varying viewpoints. However, it remains evident that the MBA curriculum must be changed, and the most effective way to do this, still needs further investigation.

### **6.3 Recommendations for Future Studies**

This study briefly touches on some contentious areas with relation to the relevance of the current MBA curriculum. Since all areas in this extensive topic could not be covered by one study, and further investigation is needed in the following areas:

- The research reached a very small sample of the population of MBA alumni in South Africa and further investigations are needed in a larger representative probability sample so that the findings can be generalized to the population. The research sample must also include other stakeholders, such as non MBA business representatives, recruitment agencies, education bodies and business schools;
- This research makes conclusions based on the name of the subjects offered on the MBA curriculum, but it does not cover the actual content and aims of the subjects, nor does it cover teaching methods used to impart this content;

- There are various factors affecting the relevance of MBA curriculum that are not accounted for in this study, such as teaching method, programme delivery style, assessment methods and learning outcomes;
- There are also various factors not accounted for in this study, affecting managerial competencies such as a student's prior work experience and their undergraduate studies;
- Other stakeholders besides MBA alumni, such as employers, recruiters and government should work in partnership with MBA Business Schools to ensure that essential managerial competencies are imparted to current and future managers;
- Further investigation is required on the alignment of management competencies and MBA curricula such as what role does the students prior undergraduate studies as well as prior work experience plays their ability to master the necessary management competencies. Due to the extensive nature of this study other possible future studies could also investigate the following issues.
  - Does the country need more people to run existing businesses (managers) or do they need people to start new business (entrepreneurs)?
  - What is the effect of the MBA programme on their student's managerial abilities?
  - What hinders the ability of South African business Schools to rapidly reposition themselves in a constantly changing environment?
  - Are the factors of curriculum content outcomes and teaching methods important to the future development of the MBA programme?
  - Do accreditation bodies restrict the freedom of South African Business Schools to implement new experiential type programmes that offer more diversity and practical applications?

## **6.4 Summary**

This research examines the relevance of the MBA programme in terms of current South African business requirements. Although, this study shows room for improvements, it is hoped that the MBA will continue to grow from strength to strength in this country, as it is apparent that South Africa urgently needs to breed successful and effective managers to deal with the unique complexities of the country, and enhance its economic well being. Regular and relevant changes to the curriculum based on industry needs will ensure graduates are equipped with the necessary skills to make a difference locally and globally in society.

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10 October 2011

**Ms L Wojtulewicz (208524987)**  
Graduate School of Business

Dear Ms Wojtulewicz

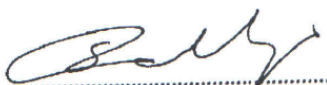
**PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/1008/011M**  
**PROJECT TITLE: An assessment of the South African MBA curriculum**

In response to your application dated 5 October 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.  
**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
**Professor Steven Collings (Chair)**  
Humanities & Social Science Research Ethics Committee

cc Supervisor – Professor A M Singh  
cc Mrs. C Haddon

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**Dear Respondent,**

**You are invited to participate in an online questionnaire for an MBA research paper. I am a third year MBA student, at the University of Westville and doing research to see "whether the South Africa MBA curriculum is still relevant" The focus of this research paper will be see what are the similarities between business schools in the subject offerings, and do these common core subjects meet the external stakeholder requirements in today's business environment. This questionnaire is designed for MBA graduates. If you are a MBA graduate, please could you assist by taking the time complete the questionnaire to best of your ability, keeping in mind that this relates to relevance of Management development MBA programmes in the current South African Business environment. It will take approximately fifteen minute to complete the questionnaire.**

**Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There will no personal information revealed in the results. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the questionnaire at any point. It is very important for us to learn your opinions.**

**Your survey responses will be strictly confidential and data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate. Your information will be coded and will remain confidential. If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact Laura Wojtulewicz by email at the email address specified below. (laura.w@polka.co.za)**

**Thank you very much for your time and support. Please start with the questionnaire now by clicking on the Continue button below.**

**I declare that I am an MBA graduate, and agree to partake in this questionnaire**

**1. Gender**

- Male
- Female

**2. Age group :**

- age 25 - 29
- age 30 - 34
- age 35 - 39
- age 40 - 44
- age 45 - 49
- age 50 - 54
- 54 >

**3. Industry that you currently work in (please select the main one):**

- Admin, Office & Support
- Agriculture
- Arts & Entertainment
- Beauty
- Building & Construction
- Business & Management consulting
- Design
- Distribution, Warehousing & Freight

- Education
- Engineering
- Financial
- FMCG, Retail & Wholesale
- Government & Local Government
- Hospitality & Restaurant
- Human Resources & Recruitment
- Information Technology
- Legal
- Manufacturing, Production & Trades
- Maritime
- Marketing
- Media
- Medical
- Mining
- Motor
- Petrochemical
- Property
- Safety, Security & Defence
- Science & Technology
- Social & Community
- Sport & Fitness
- Telecommunication
- Transport & Aviation
- Travel & Tourism

**4. Please select your current position of management in your company:**

- Non-Management
- Junior Management
- Middle Management
- Senior Management

**5. Province in which you completed the final year of your MBA:**

- The Eastern Cape
- The Free State
- Gauteng
- Kwazulu-Natal
- Limpopo
- Mpumalanga
- The Northern Cape
- North West
- The Western Cape

**6. Please indicate how many years ago you have completed your MBA**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- > 10 yrs

**7. Please select the CORE subjects that you studied on the MBA program by selecting one of the following choices for each subject**

	Yes/ similiar subject	No	Was offered as an elective
Organisational Behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business Law	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ethics/ corporate governance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business Statistics/ Decision Analysis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General business management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managerial Accounting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial Accounting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Corporate Finance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Operations Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Entrepreneurship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research Methodology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strategic Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leadership development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supply Chain Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Human Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Labour Relations Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**8. Please rate the following core subjects offered on a general MBA programme, in terms of the current South African business requirements**

	Little Value	Desirable	Essential
Organisational Behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business Law	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ethics/ Corporate Governance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business Statistics/ Decision Analysis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



General Business Management	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
Economics	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
Information Management	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
Managerial Accounting	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
Financial Accounting	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
Corporate Finance	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
Marketing Management	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
Operations Management	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
Entrepreneurship	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
Financial Management	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
Research Methodology	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
Strategic Management	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
Leadership development	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
Supply Chain Management	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
Human Resources	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
Labour Relations Management	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	

**9. When you did your MBA, which ELECTIVES did you choose?**

- Small Business Management
- Knowledge Management
- Management Information Systems
- Negotiation
- Integrated African Leadership
- Change management
- Entrepreneurship
- Environmental Management
- Business Ethics/ Corporate Governance
- Project Management
- Emotional Intelligence
- Global/ International business Strategy
- Investment and Portfolio Management
- Service Management

- Advanced Marketing
- Internet Marketing
- Strategic HIV/Aids Management
- Mergers and acquisition
- Women in management
- Quality Management
- Advanced Labour relations
- Taxation
- Other

**10. Which core subject/s mentioned below, should be offered as an elective rather than a core subject (please select up to a maximum of three). Please select the option "none of the above" if you do not think any of these core subjects should be an elective.**

- Organisational Behaviour
- Business Law
- Business Statistics/ Decision Analysis
- General business management
- Economics
- Information Management
- Managerial Accounting
- Financial Accounting
- Corporate Finance
- Marketing Management
- Operations Management
- Research Methodology
- Strategic Management
- Leadership development
- Supply Chain Management
- Human Resources

- Labour Relations Management
- None of the above

**11. Please rate the following elective subjects offered on a general MBA programme, in terms of the current South African business requirements:**

	Little Value	Desirable	Essential
Small Business Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowledge Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Management Information Systems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Negotiation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Integrated African Leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Change management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Entrepreneurship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enviromental Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business Ethics/ Corporate Governance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Project Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emotional Intelligence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Global/ International business Strategy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Investment and Portfolio Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Service Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advanced Marketing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internet Marketing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strategic HIV/Aids Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mergers and acquisition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Women in management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advanced Labour relations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taxation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**12. Should the MBA programme be more offering more electives than the core modules**

- Yes
- No

**13. If the answer to question 12, is "yes", please specify the number of elective subjects that should be offered?**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- > 5

**14. Should the MBA be:-**

- A generalist programme
- A specialist programme
- A programme with two major subjects

**15. If you selected " a programme with two major subjects" which subject should be majors. Please select two from the options below:**

- Organisational Behaviour
- Business Law
- Business Statistics/ Decision Analysis
- General business management
- Economics
- Information Management
- Managerial Accounting
- Financial Accounting
- Corporate Finance
- Marketing Management

- Operations Management
- Research Methodology
- Strategic Management
- Leadership Development
- Supply Chain Management
- Human Resources
- Labour Relations Management

**16. Were you required to do a dissertation?**

- Yes
- No

**17. If you answered "yes" to question 16, what value did you gain from the dissertation? Please select one:**

- I got no value from doing the dissertation
- It has improved my analytical skills
- It has made me a critical thinker
- I gained new knowledge about an area of interest to me

**18. Should the MBA have a dissertation?**

- Yes
- No

**19. If you answered "yes" to question 18, what percentage of the program should it comprise?**

- 5 – 10%
- 11 – 15%
- 16 – 20%
- 21% - 25%

- 26 – 30%
- > 30%

**20. If you answered “No” to question 18, why shouldn’t a dissertation be required?**

- It is too time consuming
- It delays completion of the MBA
- It adds no value to my knowledge
- It has no benefit in industry
- Other

**21. Do you feel there are other subjects not mentioned in any of the previous selections that are essential to an MBA curriculum?**

- Yes
- No

**22. If your answer is “yes” to question 21, please specify up to a maximum of two:**

**23. How important was the subjects offered, in determining the school you chose to attend? Were the subjects offered an important consideration in selecting your institution that you studied with. Please select one of the following:**

- Very important

- Important
- Unimportant
- Very unimportant

**24. How often should the MBA curriculum be revised to keep up with South Africa's changing business environments (please select one)**

- every 2 - years
- every 5 years
- every 10 years
- longer than every 10 years
- Not at all

**25. Please rate the importance of which parties should be involved in the revision of the MBA curriculum?**

	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very Important
Higher education institutions eg: council for higher education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business representative bodies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business Schools faculty members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
South African Business School Association	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>