

**Schools on a mission to teach, By Sarah Murray
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In the developing world, one area with the potential to make a substantial contribution to improving the prospects of poor countries has received little attention - business education.

To try to fill this gap, the International Finance Corporation, the private sector investment arm of the World Bank Group, is working to bring business schools together with institutions in the emerging markets.

"Business education is something that's totally outside the radar screen of most foundations and certainly the bilateral aid agencies," says Guy Pfefferman, director of the IFC's Global Business School Network (GBSN).

Meoli Kashorda, dean of Nairobi's United States International University, one of the African schools participating in the programme, agrees. "Good business management education can make a big difference and the local businesses are telling us that," he says. "But for some reason the development world doesn't always see that the private sector can actually make a very significant contribution here."

Part of what hampers economic growth in developing countries is a shortage of competent local managers. Local businesses and multinational organisations operating in those countries must either train managers themselves or send them overseas on management courses - both expensive and time-consuming exercises.

The idea behind the GBSN is to use the resources and knowledge of top international institutions to make such management training available locally, through existing business schools. The IFC believes that by providing local, regional and multinational organisations with a stronger pool of trained managers, business schools in developing countries will help foster a healthy private sector and a stronger economy.

Seventeen international business schools including Wharton School, London Business School, MIT-Sloan, Harvard Business School and Insead are to provide resources and faculty to help strengthen local schools in areas such as curriculum development, executive programmes and case teaching methods.

In Ghana, for example, the GBSN will assist the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration in developing MBA course modules as well as helping it raise the general quality of its programme through international accreditation. In Nigeria, the network will help the Lagos Business School expand its small enterprise course to include a series of week-long seminars, culminating in an entrepreneurship degree programme.

Through the GBSN, faculty from the European and US schools will spend time at the African institutions, while academics from those schools may also visit the west for mentoring programmes or training courses.

In one of the first of what the IFC hopes will be many such arrangements, two senior faculty from the Ghanaian school have been accepted on to a mentoring programme at Sloan, through which they will be twinned for an entire semester with Sloan professors.

While the GBSN has initially targeted Africa, the model could be employed in other parts of the world.

"If you can make it work in Africa you can make it work in a number of other places," says David Schmitlein, deputy dean at Wharton. "There's definitely an opportunity there and there's definitely a need in Africa."

In putting together the network, the IFC has identified academics with a strong interest in this area.

"There are faculty in these schools that have been working in developing countries," says Mr Pfefferman. "But they're very few ...so it appealed to them to have a network with the IFC in the middle that would bind them together like a sort of club."

Many of the schools and academics approached by the IFC have already embarked on projects in the developing world. Wharton, for example, has recently engaged in a large-scale initiative in China, making training available to entrepreneurs via the internet, with some local back-up.

Some of the institutions involved have already seen the results produced by such initiatives. In the early 1990s, the Tuck School of Business Administration at Dartmouth College assisted in the launch of the Hanoi School of Business at Vietnam National University. And since 1996, Tuck has run an annual international executive development programme in which more than 350 Vietnamese managers have participated.

The revenues of these managers' companies now represent more than 30 per cent of Vietnam's gross domestic product, says Joseph Massey, professor of international business at Tuck: "So if you provide managers with the skills, you can contribute to a strong economy."

Nairobi's United States International University, which wants to develop a stronger case method for its management teaching, has already benefited from the GBSN scheme. Prof Kashorda and George Ondego K'Aol, assistant professor of management, this summer attended Harvard Business School's colloquium on participant-centered learning, a 10-day seminar focusing on teaching and course development.

"Now we can draw on the intellectual resources of the more experienced faculty in these schools," says Prof Kashorda.

"Our hope is that we will continue to have interactions with these faculty. And that exchange can only be good for our faculty."

The participating schools, as well as being able to make a contribution to development in poorer parts of the world, can gain a greater knowledge of markets with which they may be unfamiliar, knowledge that can then be fed back into the MBA programme.

"We'd love to have some great cases about a business start-up in Lagos," says Prof Schmitlein. "And so would the business school in Lagos, so that's something we're pursuing."

Once the GBSN is firmly established, Mr Pfefferman believes the benefits to both international schools and those they are interacting with in developing countries should help the programme to become self-sustaining.

"And all the programmes that these [developing country] schools are proposing and that we're helping them with will be financed out of student fees so they will be able to continue to grow without us," he says.