UCT runs BEE course with Empowerdex director

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The UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) and Vuyo Jack, Director of Empowerdex, will team up this July to run an innovative and practical Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) course.

The course, called Experiential Black Economic Empowerment, will explore the pressing issues and challenges around BEE implementation and investigate, both in the lecture theatre and through site visits, what leading companies have done to overcome these and make their BEE initiatives a success.

According to the course's director Jack, BEE has been in the spotlight recently as empowerment deals are at risk of falling through due to the high interest rate - this is one of the challenges placing pressure on businesses in terms of meeting equity ownership targets.

"A number of BEE deals in South Africa were financed through debt, except for deals involving established empowerment companies like Mvelaphanda. These deals are going to be in trouble, considering that they are interest-rate sensitive," said Jack.

Jack said that the UCT GSB course would cover this current climate for BEE in South Africa, and look at the solutions available. In addition, the course unpacks the progress made by businesses under of the BEE Codes of Good Practice, bringing in industry leaders to share their expertise.

The course is also geared to refocusing attention on the HR and skills issues of BEE. "We are seeing a skills crisis and there is a battle to get the appropriate skills at the appropriate time. Business can address this in terms of how they structure initiatives at employment level as well as in their pipeline to bring people up," said Jack.

"In addition, a firm may have a BEE strategy but in implementing it there may be challenges bringing people on board at different levels of the organisation. Senior leaders in business have recognised BEE as a business reality and the large majority of firms have a long-term plan. At operational level, however, there may not be the understanding needed to execute the strategy well and some may even be resistant to change. Businesses need to address these issues through initiatives such as awareness programmes and new systems," he said.

The experiential nature of the course is an important component added Jack that will help businesses engage more thoroughly with the issues.

"The practical approach enables people to own the process. If BEE remains in the lecture theatre, there is a risk that it can become a talk issue and not one of action. An experiential format enables business people to participate more actively, confront their assumptions, and test frameworks."

The course is designed for BEE implementers, HR practitioners, procurement officers, senior and middle managers and entrepreneurs. It is being run by the UCT GSB's Executive Education unit, which has a global top ten rating from the Economist Intelligence Unit, and was listed in 2007 by the International University Consortium for Executive Education (UNICON) - the leading global body for the advancement of executive education - as one of six leading business school innovators.

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