



FROM AFRICA TO THE WORLD

Tshwane School for Business and Society, under the leadership of Prof Kobus Jonker, is looking to live up to its new name, promoting both entrepreneurship and social change.

Prof Kobus Jonker is the director at the Tshwane School for Business and Society. He set off on his academic career lecturing at the former Port Elizabeth Technikon in Port Elizabeth, in 1989. In the “windy city”, he would go on to be part of the team launching the first MBA programme in the province, and establishing the business school within the Nelson Mandela University (NMU). He was the founding director here, from 2005 to 2008 and Graduate School Director from 2008 to 2016 before heading north to the nation’s capital in 2019.

Moving on up

Jonker is understandably proud of the progress the NMU school made under his steerage, climbing from 14th to sixth in the national business school rankings. It is a trajectory he is looking to recreate at Tshwane, which shrugged off the name of “TUT Business School” in 2019, to reflect its aspirations and purpose.

“I am in the last five years of my career, but I believe it will be the most important five years,”

he says. “Our vision is to transform the Tshwane School for Business and Society into one of the top schools in South Africa and the most relevant in terms of the unique circumstances of South Africa. We want to live our new vision and name, and strive to equip leaders and managers who will not only make an economic impact but an important social impact on the people of South Africa.”

Play our part

This is part of his general view on the role of business schools. He explains: “I think the days are gone that business schools in South Africa can focus only on the corporate sector, in line with criteria set by business schools in the developed world. We are in a developing context and need to make a difference on a broad front in supporting business and the community to the benefit of all people.”

Part of that difference lies in empowering youth entrepreneurs, he says. That’s why one of the school’s aims is to support “young dynamic township entrepreneurs who want to take their business to the next level and employ more people”.

“To achieve this, we will offer an international certificate in entrepreneurship from 2021, that will be specifically aimed at this group who are normally excluded from business schools because they do not qualify to do an MBA,” he says.

The programme will include practical business coaching, and will run over four months. It was developed for African entrepreneurs in cooperation with Altis Business School of the Catholic University in Milan Italy. It’s quite a feather in their cap: “This programme, approved by the African Union, is already successfully implemented with big success in eight other African countries. We will be the only business school that will offer this programme in South Africa.”



The background of the page is a photograph of a hand holding a large, clear, spherical object, possibly a piece of glass or a large lens, against a bright blue sky. The sphere is the central focus, and the text is overlaid on it. The hand is visible at the bottom left, holding the sphere from underneath.

Riding the corona-coaster

Alongside the rest of the world in 2020, the school had some big challenges this year. “With Covid-19, we were forced to transform our total learning system to virtual learning which was a very painful process,” Jonker says. But it does “bear excellent fruits in terms of what is possible, and demonstrated to us in a short period of time how blended technology can improve our learning delivery.”

“We recently delivered our first on-line management development programme which was made possible because of this change in paradigm. The offering of our MBA will never be the same, and we will use technology to improve our process on a continuous basis.” They are also part of a University of Technology, he says, and so in line of their slogan of “Lead for Impact” focus on the technological impact on business and society.

Lines of leadership

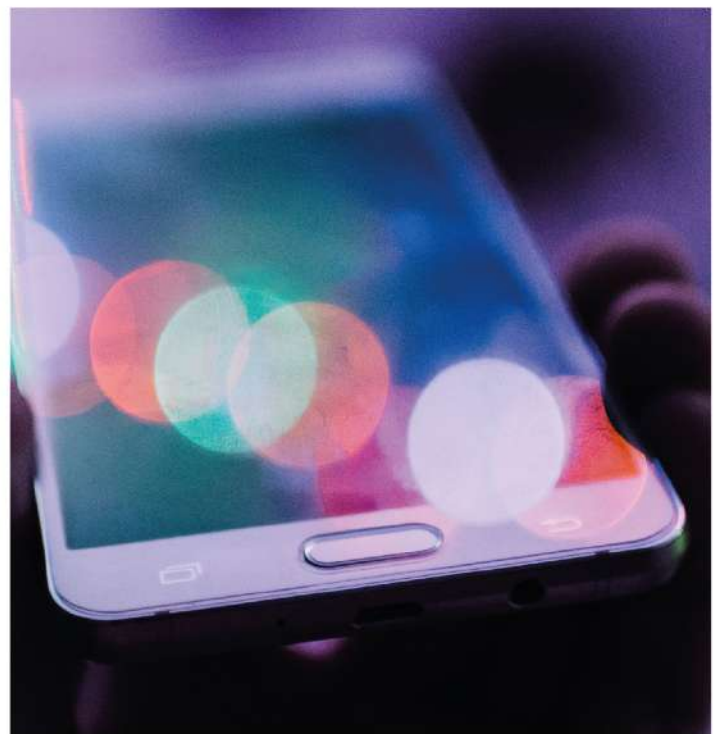
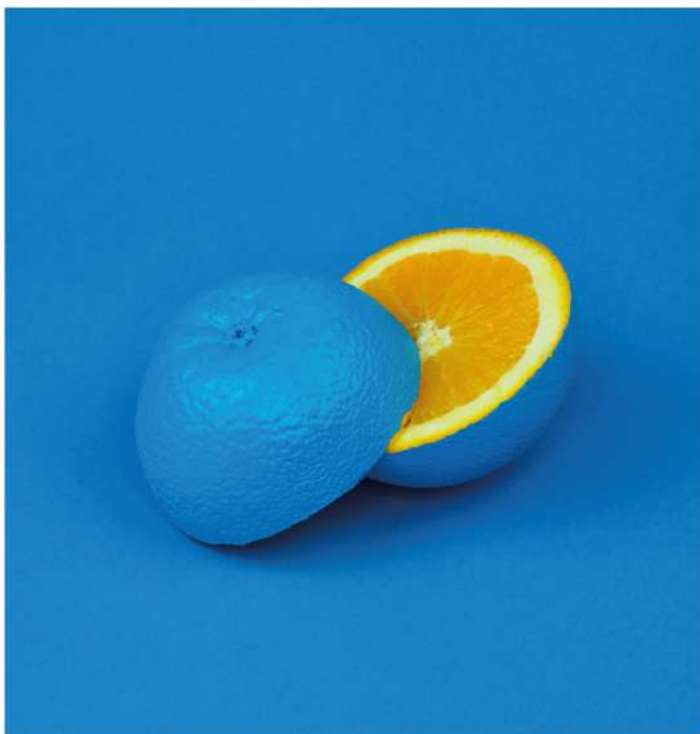
There were two leaders who played a significant role in Jonker's own development as a manager and leader, he explains. "The first is (now-retired) Professor Niekie Dorfling, the dean of the faculty of management at Nelson Mandela University. I worked under Niekie's leadership for more than 20 years and

learnt a lot from him. He was undoubtedly one of the best academic managers and deans I ever met."

"The second is Prof Piet Naude who recently retired as Director of Stellenbosch University Business School. Piet was an outstanding role model for me

and knew how to treat people and honestly care for employees and people in general. He is an outstanding leader and people's person."

It is a similar legacy that he would like to be remembered for, he says, as "a person who cares for people and leads by example".



Quick-fire questions

a. What are you reading right now?

I am not reading a specific book at the moment.

b. What book (fiction, non-fiction, business) had the greatest impact on you?

The Bible.

c. Who is your personal hero?

I do not have heroes because all people have outstanding strengths and weaknesses. For some it is more visible and promoted. I think we can learn something from all people.

d. Where will I find you on a typical Saturday morning?

At home with my family.

e. What is the top role or benefit of SABSA membership in your opinion?

SABSA plays an important strategic role to facilitate important engagement between business schools and also as a national representative of business schools.

f. My next travel destination is

Probably Nürnberg in Germany because I often go there to lecture and work with MBA students.

g. My top bucket list destination is...

Athens, Greece.