



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**THE CHOICE** SA's working women are increasingly being bitten by the studying bug - be it for career advancement or pure pleasure. But as women continue to swell the ranks of SA's business schools and universities, the juggling act between home and work takes on yet a third factor: study time.

**THE CHALLENGES** Life coach Monita Gutuza, CEO and founder of Inspiring Purpose, advises women to be clear in their purpose and examine how studying fits into the bigger picture. "Ask yourself why you want to study - is it the only way to get where you want to be, or are you giving in to undue pressure that may not fit your particular path?" If you decide to study, Gutuza highlights two key factors in maintaining balance - time management and energy management.

# Back to SCHOOL?

FURTHER EDUCATION IS KEY TO EMPOWERMENT AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT. BUT BETWEEN WORK AND FAMILY LIFE, IS THERE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN TO RETURN TO THE CLASSROOM? FOUR WOMEN SHARE HOW THEY ARE JUGGLING BOOKS, BABIES AND BALANCE SHEETS

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**W**hether women should consider studying further depends on the individual and her environment, says life coach Monita Gutuza, CEO and founder of Inspiring Purpose.

Sandra Burmeister, CEO of executive search group Landelahni Business Leaders, agrees: "Contrary to popular belief – that education is the panacea for all ills and the fastest way to get ahead in business – your worth to employers is based on the sum total of four factors: experience, tangible skills, intangible skills and education. Each of these is equally important."

If you've recently completed your first qualification, it may be more worthwhile to gain practical experience in the workplace than to study further at this stage. "Once you've worked for five to eight years and know exactly what you want to do, part-time study may provide a big advantage in supporting your chosen career direction," says Burmeister.

This may explain why the average age of MBA students at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) is 32, and why more and more women are considering becoming students a second time around.

According to Dr Linda Ronnie, Director of the AIM and post-graduate programmes at the UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB), the GSB Modular MBA was introduced in 2005 to address issues of diversity, including low numbers of female applicants. The

course currently comprises 30% women and Ronnie hopes to see this percentage increase in the future.

Shireen Chengadu, Academic Director at GIBS, says the number of female MBA students at the school is currently at 40%, up from 25% five years ago. The percentage of women undertaking the post-graduate Diploma in Business Administration has also risen. "Women are recognising the worth of their personal brand and choosing to invest in developing it," says Chengadu.

#### TAKING THE PLUNGE

Gutuza advises, however, that continual reflection is key. "Check in regularly with yourself and give yourself permission to change direction, if necessary, without feeling guilty or as if you've failed. It's about becoming more mindful and staying tuned into the here and now – you can only do so much at this moment."

Ronnie, who's researching the effects of studying on the personal lives of working women, says those with good support structures at home tend to outperform others academically. She adds, however, that nobody's as interested in your career as you are – you're responsible for your own growth.

If you're considering further study, finance is available through most learning institutions by way of bursaries and scholarships. Your employer or bank may also provide a study loan. Alternatively, many companies partially or even fully sponsor their employees' course fees.