

'Firms more aware of staff needs'

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COMPANIES are paying more attention to the needs of their employees than they have before, a study by a Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University masters graduate has found.

Francine du Plessis, who will be awarded her Master of Commerce degree with distinction later this month, looked into servant leadership as part of the corporate philosophies of companies on the Johannesburg and New York stock exchanges.

The financial planning lecturer said servant leadership was becoming a popular style of leadership, with companies achieving results by giving priority attention to the needs of their colleagues and those they served.

"I identified 50 of the top 200 companies on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and 50 from the top 100 on the New York Stock Exchange. I sourced their vision and mission statements through their websites and after I had developed a framework of core principles for servant leadership, I checked to see how they compared," she said.

Du Plessis said she had discovered that companies listed on the JSE, on average, had five of the 10 principles, while companies on the NYSE had seven. The principles are service to others, employee empowerment and development, trust, listening, respect, ethical and moral behaviour, teamwork, concern for all stakeholders, input and feedback and integrity.

"Companies on the JSE held integrity as the most important, while companies on the NYSE held employee empowerment as the most important and I found this



INNOVATIVE ... Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University lecturer Francine du Plessis will be awarded her MCom degree for her research into corporate philosophies. With her is supervisor Prof Miemie Struwig.
Picture: EUGENE COETZEE

the most fascinating because I thought it would be the other way around."

Companies researched included Woolworths Holdings, Group Five, MTN, Sasol and Pick n Pay on the JSE and Coca-Cola, Nokia, Boeing and Wal-Mart stores on the NYSE.

Her supervisor, Prof Miemie Struwig, the director of the School of Management Sciences at the

university, said Du Plessis had completed her dissertation as an "above-average student", passing with distinction and handing in her final product in the minimum time given.

Du Plessis is preparing to present her dissertation at a conference at the University of Johannesburg and is writing an article on it for an academic journal.