

In 1975 at Simmons College in the US, Margaret Henning and Anne Jardim founded the first women only MBA program in the world, designed to help women succeed as leaders and managers. Other unique aspects of this MBA curriculum were a required course on gender and negotiations, and an elective aiming to empower the women MBA's with the knowledge of particular challenges they might face as women moving into organizational cultures based on male norms. Their research based curriculum was developed from their pioneering work on managerial women, (Henning and Jardim, 1977), which documented the behavioural issues that women face entering male dominated business organizations. As Harvard alumni, they also recognized that women's voices were silenced in a co-educational classroom and that topics of concern to women were not addressed. In 1995 Vinnicombe and Colwill argued that women only training was needed because there were issues in the workplace that primarily concerned women at work and were best addressed in a women only group. Subsequent writing by the authors focussed specifically on the need to offer a women only elective in an MBA programme. Thus they recognized the importance of a single sex environment that produced a more relevant and supportive environment that enabled women to receive an excellent management education. There is a developing case evident in the management literature to support the emphasis on women only training programmes. These issues were organisational power and politics, sexuality, sex differences in working styles, stress and the nature of career development.