

ISSUES OF MORALITY AND STUDENT LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The demise of moral values in our society, especially those that are aptly encapsulated in the Ubuntu social ethic is cause for concern. Love for the neighbour, truth and consideration of others in all circumstances seem to have been lost. What is worrisome though, in this relation, is the fact that morally unacceptable behaviours and practices have become a demon that is beginning to hold the post-1994 South Africa to ransom. As a result ethical issues such as bribery, intentional lying or misrepresentation of facts, murder and sexual offences are becoming common offences that actually claim much of the time of our courts of law.

Introduction

The demise of moral values in our society, especially those that are aptly encapsulated in the Ubuntu social ethic is cause for concern. Love for the neighbour, truth and consideration of others in all circumstances seem to have been lost. What is worrisome though, in this relation, is the fact that morally unacceptable behaviours and practices have become a demon that is beginning to hold the post-1994 South Africa to ransom. As a result ethical issues such as bribery, intentional lying or misrepresentation of facts, murder and sexual offences are becoming common offences that actually claim much of the time of our courts of law.

What is more, it is becoming normal in our society for a political or civic leader to be associated with an unethical business transaction at one stage or another in his or her career. These anti-social behaviours and practices are embedded in a culture of “better life for few” that is becoming prominent amongst some of our country’s leaders in the political, economic and civic domains. What is most unfortunate in this regard is that this situation of anomaly is gradually encroaching into student leadership and governance in the higher

education institutions of democratic South Africa. As part of the larger society some of the student leaders are beginning to adopt some of the morally bankrupt social values which in the long run are bound to compromise the transformation agenda in the higher education environment. What is bothersome is the fact that these young leaders are part of the cohort of South Africa’s future leadership that will soon be occupying the boardrooms of our private and public organizations.

Critically looking at reports on anti-social behaviours and tendencies that has been and continues to be displayed by some of past and present African leaders; it is obvious that corrupt leadership is a worst enemy of and an obstacle to the continent’s socio-economic development and prosperity. In the South African context, this is clearly demonstrated by the type of service delivery related challenges that some of our communities are daily experiencing in certain parts of our country. In some cases very critical service delivery projects to the poor of the poorest of our communities have been compromised or delayed merely because the powers that be could not reach

consensus on the choice of a service provider.

Unquestionably, the project of socio-economic transformation and advancement of post -1994 South Africa is a very serious business that needs leadership that is not motivated by greed and self-interest. Most importantly, the project needs leaders who can morally be in a position to guard against the country being mortgaged to crony capitalism.

At all levels and in all organizations leadership with sound moral values is critical in that it is the force through which a group or community can achieve its objectives and strive for excellence. Thus eighteen (18) years into democratic dispensation those who have the welfare and future of South Africa at heart are grappling with the following critical questions and working hard to find ways of addressing them:

- i. “What are the issues facing the next generation of leaders?”
- ii. “Where will next generation [of our leaders across the board] come from and what will they look like?”

The aim of this paper is to reflect on the issues of morality and student leadership and how they impact on student governance. Central to the higher education transformation agenda is the desire to have a higher education system that is efficient, effective and responsive, and this can be achieved through moral leadership and effective cooperative governance at all levels. The paper then proceed to consider some characteristics of African leadership and how they can benefit student leadership development programmes in higher education institutions - as a strategy to develop a

cohort of incorruptible leadership that will put South Africa and its people first at all times and in all endeavours. In the main the paper attempt is to motivate for an understanding of issues of moral student leadership and questions related to governance within the South African socio-political context post-1994.

1. Challenges related to issues of morality in our society and student leadership and governance in some of South African higher education institutions

As already pointed out there are number of emerging socio-culturally related behavior tendencies that directly or indirectly continue to contribute towards the collapse of the moral fiber in our society (Mayson, 1999), and this is beginning to impact negatively on student leadership and governance, especially in the past ten (10) years or so of the eighteen (18) years of democratic South Africa with its framework and processes of transformation in the higher education environment. Men, women and youth in our communities have since adopted selfish motives in their leadership roles as the way to go. Example of such cases is the one of a Northern Cape provincial department of health officials who alleges that they were persuaded by a political leader to manipulate tenders for the latter's personal enrichment (Mail & Guardian, 2012:3). Another evidence that clearly demonstrates the level of the collapse of sound morality within our society is the murder case of a North West councillor who was killed because of reporting corruption (City Press, 2012: 1).

Wharton (n.d.) explains behaviour and actions/practices as two aspects of leadership that are clearly connected (the former dealing with the **what** and **how** of interpersonal interactions, and the latter being about everything else a leader is expected to do, such as making decisions,

allocating resources, organizing, etc.). What this means is that in order for a leader to discharge his or her responsibilities effectively and efficiently it is important that there should be harmony between his or her conduct and actions. In this relation Ciulla (2004: 116) confirms that “the moral triumphs and failures of leaders carry a greater weight and volume than those of non-leaders. In leadership we see morality and immorality magnified, which is why ethics is fundamental to our understanding of leadership.”

The increasing number of unethical tenderpreneurship. Tenderpreneurship refers to a practice of making it a habit to secure tenders in unacceptable manner. Activities that are linked to the culture of “better life for few,” and thus wreaking havoc in our society, are beginning to attract some of our student leaders. As a result some of them are gradually beginning to lose focus on their responsibility to monitor the core business of the higher education sector and also failing to adequately protect and advocate for the interests of their constituency effectively. Equally important is the fact that the student leadership is also beginning to falter in contributing effectively towards the transformation agenda of higher education in South Africa.

The worst case scenario in this regard is that some of the student leaders are beginning to find it difficult to cope not only with their studies but also with their roles as representatives of their constituency precisely because their minds are preoccupied with the “politics of the stomach”. Politics of the stomach – is a term that is commonly used in political circles that defines an individual who is in politics for personal gain or material interests and is determined to achieve this by any means necessary. In order to create business opportunity for their sponsors some of them have been deployed to

ensure that there is always crisis of some kind regarding services to students in their institutions. Example is the issue of the processing of contracts for catering services. Managers from some of the catering services companies bribe student leaders to use their positions to influence the decision of the tender committee or the institution’s management in their favour. As a result in his speech to the National Assembly on 20 September 2011, the Department of Higher Education and Training Minister, Dr Blade Nzimande, had this to say,

... in some universities student representatives have demanded and secured representation into tender committees. This is unacceptable, as it has a potential to corrupt student politics and student leaders (Nzimande, 2011).

In the process the situation compromises some student leaders who seek to serve their fellow students with honesty and passion, when they do not cooperate they become intimidated and threatened with marginalization inside and outside their organizations.

Some in a hope of being rewarded financially or securing future jobs in government they volunteer to be deployees of certain cabals within their political mother body (in the case of SASCO it is the ANC, PASMA is the PAC, AZASCO is AZAPO etc.) who are contesting for power base and their responsibility in this case is to mobilize fellow students in their campuses to support a particular leader. Unfortunately, these tendencies results in dividing student leaders unnecessarily and creating confusion that renders them dysfunctional as a voice of students on real bread and butter issues that affects them, such as adequate financial support for those who are from the poorest communities and academic support

programmes that will ensure that all hard working and determined students succeed in their studies. Also critical is the issue of inadequate student accommodation in most of the higher education institutions. For us the most effective way student leaders can play a role is in ensuring that students are not exploited by some of the unscrupulous private student accommodation owners.

The fact of the matter is that while the student leaders continue to be distracted by and preoccupied with “politics of the stomach” issues of inequality within higher education and lack of access to it by majority of our youth remains a growing problem (Voster, 2011: 4). Another challenge which also bears testimony to the situation of collapse of morality in our society is the acceptance and support of some acts of misogyny by some of our community and political leaders. What is appalling in this regard is that these acts directly or indirectly are also beginning to contribute towards the increase of abuse of vulnerable female students in our campuses, especially 1st years, and in some cases the main perpetrators have been identified as some of our student leaders who are SRC members. Issues related to sexual harassment within higher education institutions are aptly captured in the 2008 Soudien report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions.

2. Conversation with some of former student leaders of post-1994 South Africa

In an attempt to produce something that is alive we have chosen not only to refer to some literature on the subject of student leadership and governance in higher education institutions but most importantly to engage in some form of conversation with a few of former student leaders, who served as SRC members at different times

in the past ten (10) years post-1994 and at various higher education institutions of our country. They were selected randomly without any specific criteria.

Our conversation with these former student leaders was guided by the following set of questions through which we wanted them to share their experience(s):

- i. What characterized the election of student leaders in your time?
- ii. What motivated your cohort to participate in student leadership?
- iii. What values were attached to student leadership?
- iv. Who amongst your community leaders or political figures inspired you as a student leader?
- v. What was the level of political awareness amongst your cohort in student leadership?
- vi. Were financial benefits ever a problem during your time as a student leader?

The main purpose of this conversation and the type of questions we posed was to review and establish factors that have contributed and continue to contribute, either negatively or positively, towards moral, intellectual and political grounding of student leaders in higher education institution who participate in student governance and how they chose to play their role individually and collectively in whatever circumstance that they may have found or find themselves.

The purpose of this exercise was to provide student developers a tool of analysis in their process of self-examination and self-criticism as they seek to re-position themselves in the midst of challenges related to moral decay in our communities.

We have selected two of the responses that we received from former student leaders that we would like to present to you for the purpose of giving you an idea of how our conversation with them unfolded (**Annexure A and B**).

2.1 A Brief Analysis of The Responses

The following is a brief analysis of the responses we received from the former student leaders who responded to our questionnaire. We sent out twenty (20) questionnaires and received back only thirteen (13).

For the purpose of this paper we were more interested in what they had to say regarding **values and choice of their role models**.

2.1.1 Critical Values

The following were identified as values that were attached to student leadership of the respondents' time:

- i. Honesty – 4 respondents
- ii. Integrity – 6 respondents
- iii. Accountability – 4 respondents
- iv. Commitment – 4 respondents
- v. **Discipline** – 3 respondents

As you can see from the list of the values Integrity was identified by 6 respondents as the most critical value that should be embraced by student leaders.

2.1.2 Role models

In as far as role models are concerned there are number of names that were identified and the following are names that were common amongst the respondents:

- i. Anton Lembede – 1 respondent
- ii. Oliver Tambo – 2 respondents
- iii. Nelson Mandela – 4 respondents
- iv. Samora Machel – 1 respondent
- v. Thabo Mbeki – 3 respondents
- vi. Chris Hani – 3 respondents
- vii. Bantu Biko – 2 respondents
- viii. Peter Mokaba – 1 respondent

There were also other names of community leaders who were more local than national.

The following we found to be a very interesting response:

“I am inspired mostly by fellow leaders who have the same passion as I do, who also want to see Black youth and South African youth in general getting education. I am also inspired by leader (sic) who has intention (sic) of taking this country to another level, in terms of service delivery, eradicating corruption in government departments ...”

In this response the respondent did not identify a specific leader but in an outstanding manner provided us with what can be regarded as criteria for a good leadership that can be considered as a role model for our student leadership in South African higher education institutions.

2.2 A Point of Disconnection

The trend that we have attempted to sketch in this essay show a disconnection between what originally formed the basis

for the idea of student governance and the current situation in student leadership and governance. There is among some student leaders a drifting away from the principles that underpin co-operative governance within higher education environment and this has a negative impact to effective and accountable co-operative governance.

As Tabane et al. (2003: 1) asserts the expectation in the new social order is for Student Representative Councils (SRCs) as critical partners in the post-1994 higher education system "... to transcend from being mere representative structures to become student government structures that play a role in co-operative governance through participating in various institutional governance structures." This role is being compromised by preoccupation with issues that are sometimes irrelevant to the bread and butter issues that affect their constituency and this for us is the result of the disconnection that permeates student leadership and governance.

The poor grounding in terms of the sole purpose of SRCs as student governance structures tend to attract all types of leaders with varying personal agendas. As Tabane et al (2003: 8) indicates historically "SRCs were organized as structures that were to assist students in pursuing their aspirations." The primary responsibility being to ensure that within higher education setting there are structures and systems in place that contribute towards the "... creation of an atmosphere within which the ethos of the freedom of intellectual activity and academic excellence can be promoted, protected and guaranteed" (Mbeki, 1998: 37). Unfortunately this is gradually disappearing and no longer a driving force and this has become one of the contributing factors to student apathy when it comes to SRC elections in some institutions. In the current transforming higher education environment there seems to be lack of appreciation of the fact that

co-operative governance "recognizes the positive contribution students can make and should make as critical and rational thinkers" (Mandew 2003: 34), in ensuring that we have responsive institutions.

There is a need to reconnect with the rich history of student governance and this is something that can be addressed in conjunction with issues of ethical leadership in student governance.

3. Some Characteristics of African Leadership

The situation of moral decay and leadership crisis in student governance, as sketched out in this paper, requires of us to go back to the basics and critically analyze the characteristics of African leadership and what informed the impeccable legacy that some of African leaders have left behind.

A leader in an African context is expected to be a guardian of the shrine of sound morality. In this connection Makwana(2004:40) asserts that,

Reflections on leadership lessons that can be drawn from the 10 years of freedom in South Africa would show that the legacy of Nelson Mandela speaks to the most profound phenomenon of leadership – moral authority. . . . That moral authority requires a strong foundation of inner peace from the leader.

What this implies is that despite the fact that he became President at the most complicated and challenging time of the post-1994 South Africa - the period when the country was beginning its journey of transition from apartheid to democracy - Nelson Mandela carried out his responsibilities with moral authority. Mandela's leadership was grounded in African culture and values that are aptly

encapsulated in the philosophy of *Botho/Ubuntu*. Khoza (2011:xxxvii) defines Ubuntu as "... expression of a people's outlook on life that spans political, economic and social relationships in Africa. Ubuntu respects the individual and places great importance on working for common good – on belonging with and contributing to a group, an association, a corporation, a polity - ..." that encourages basic qualities of good character, which he crystallized in the words of a letter that he wrote on 01 February 1975 to Winnie Mandela while he was still incarcerated.

In judging our progress as individuals we tend to concentrate on external factors such as one's social position, influence and popularity, wealth and standard of education ... But internal factors may be even more crucial in assessing one's development as a human being. Honesty, sincerity, simplicity, humility, pure generosity, absence of vanity, readiness to serve others – qualities which are within easy reach of every soul – are foundation of one's spiritual life (Mandela, 2010: 211-212).

What we have here is a powerful expression of an individual who was in touch with his internal being that made him lead with integrity and a desire for selfless service to others. Naturally moral authority derives from ethical behaviour and practices, and without ethical behaviour leadership is the most difficult role.

As seen from the example of the leadership of Mandela, as one of great African leaders of our time, good leadership is informed by sense of being commissioned by some divine power, spirit of servanthood, character and skill (Maxwell et al., 2005: 12-26). He was grounded in his leadership role in the African thought and belief that "... emphasizes the realm of **to be** over that of **to have**, without necessarily negating the joy of physical being" (Mphahlele,

2004:289). This is an ethic that defines the morality that is informed by traditional African culture and values which can be shared by all those in the modern (South) Africa who aspire to make change in others' lives. Undeniably, what makes corruption thrive in the (South) African context is the insatiable desire **to have** (amass wealth) by any means necessary.

In addition, what we learn from the legacy of Mandela is the fact that sometimes we are unable to be good leaders not necessarily because we do not have what it takes, but mainly due to our inability to deal with the internal conflict, meaning the lack of the capacity to make independent moral judgments. In this regard "Mandela constitutes a challenge to all of us – an intellectual challenge, a moral challenge, a political challenge, and an existential challenge" (West, 2006:13).

The internal conflict that we are referring to is clearly highlighted by what Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe is said to have observed, namely, that "true leadership demands complete subjugation of self, absolute honesty, integrity and uprightness of character, courage and fearlessness, and above all, a consuming love for one's people" (Mangu, 2011). Without a doubt in possession of these qualities a true leader can easily inspire and galvanize entire group or community towards attainment of a common ideal.

Gutto maintains that, "an African leader is conscious of the responsibilities of leadership, whether in a political field within government, civil society or the private sector" (Meyer, 2004:2). In carrying out his or her duties such a leader is always guided by a clear sense of what is right and what is wrong. In fact, what is also of significance is the fact that despite the socio-political woes that the modern Africa is daily confronted, which in some cases are ascribed to bad leadership, the "traditional African political systems and values treasured democracy, freedom of

expression, consensus, grass-roots participation, consultation and institutionalization to preserve the collective solidarity of Ubuntu above confrontation, foreign ideologies and personal cult, [and] this ensured political stability and unity” (Mbigi 1997:28).

From these few examples we would like to safely conclude that a truly service-to-others driven leadership (contrary to a self-serving leadership that could result in deception and exploitation of followers) must be grounded in sound moral foundations that are open to be influenced by African cultural experiences and practices. The student leadership can draw from this cultural heritage as they navigate their way in leading their constituencies within a complex environment that requires both intellectual capacity and sound morality.

4. Propositions on Developing a Cohort of Incorruptible Student Leadership

To reverse the tide of moral decay as it is described in this essay we need an intensive programme of moral renewal amongst the student leaders in our campuses. Among other things, to be included in this programme should be an audit process that would assist the entire South African society in its newly found democracy to find out what really happened during the evolution of society that ultimately led to the collapse of sound social morality. In this regard we wish to advance a few propositions that encourage ethical leadership amongst student leaders – that possesses the intellectual capacity to solve tough public problems – and the ability to efficiently and effectively address challenges that are an obstacle for their followers to achieve their goals. As Khoza (2011: xxxii) points out “a leadership that is not vested in the vital interest of its followers ... is not leadership at all but a perversion of authority.”

In as far as some of the politically aligned student formations are concerned, that are active in our campuses, we have noted that the unacceptable moral values that are usually displayed by the leadership that they sponsor to contest for positions in student governance is a cause for concern, in that it is one of the elements that contribute towards apathy when it comes to SRC elections in some of our campuses. Our view is that if mother bodies really want to make an impact on student governance and contribute constructively and effectively to the transformation agenda of higher education they should go back to their drawing boards and seriously organize formation schools or political education schools that will ground their cadres properly in what they stand for and also equip them in how to defend democracy.

As student developers and of course in collaboration with student leaders themselves, in our project of developing a cohort of good leaders within our higher education institutions we should also consider identifying role models with integrity from within our society, here we are referring to people who set an example with such charisma and energy to serve rather than to be served that others want to emulate them (Ronge, 2002:8), and give them the responsibility to mentor our student leaders.

More than any official within a university by virtue of their responsibilities and role they play student developers have a moral obligation to produce responsible citizens. As Ramphela (2008: 126) observes there is in the democratic South Africa a gap that exists between the rights and responsibilities of citizens as envisaged in the constitution. This is seen in how “different sectors of the population face different challenges in the transformation they have to undergo to be able to take up their roles as participants in the democracy.” Student developers can contribute towards bridging this divide by

designing programmes that will capacitate student leaders as responsible citizens to consciously and deliberately discharge their duties to the common good, and this can be done in collaboration with relevant organizations that specializes in leadership development.

As they lead with peace in their hearts (or the internal conflict resolved) student leaders should be in a position to confidently handle the following basic questions that would serve as their moral compass and enable them to make a difference:

- i. Who am I as I play my role of leadership?
- ii. What do I care about?
- iii. What ideals am I willing to commit to?
- iv. How can I serve others and better their lives?

As West rightly points out “good and evil are locked in all our souls. The question is

what kind of choices do we want to make?” (West, 2006: 21).

In line with the ideas expressed generally throughout this paper and specifically in the preceding and specifically in this section, in our endeavour to develop ethical student leadership (that will aspire **to be** rather than **to have**) in a situation of moral decay, as committed student development practitioners, we may consider adopting the **Social Change Model of Leadership Development** that was designed by the Higher Education Research Institute of the University of California Los Angeles (Wagner, 1996: 8). The model emphasizes leadership as a process and addresses the key issues that are central in student leadership development, and it deals with student leadership development from the following three levels of human interaction and relations (**namely, Individual, Group and Community**) with their related values, briefly outlined as follows:

Three Levels of Development	Values
A. Individual: about development of personal qualities	Congruence and Commitment
B. Group: emphasizes collaboration and interaction between group and individuals	Collaboration, Common purpose and Controversy with civility
C. Community: goal should be change for the common good	Citizenship

We embrace this Model in that among other things it recognizes the fact that it is important for a student leader to be in touch and able to deal with the issues related with self. In the whole the Model is compatible to the Ubuntu philosophy as it

5. Conclusion

As we conclude we need to admit that the collapse of sound social morality in our society is in itself costly and damaging to our democracy with its framework and processes of transformation. In some cases

relates with issues of leadership. In addition, it confirms the view that a leader is a leader through those that recognizes his/her leadership in a group and exists to represent the vital interest of his/her followers in a broader community.

allegations of corruption have become a weapon that those who are enemies of sound democratic principles use to destroy legitimate and credible leadership and as result communities become confused and not knowing who to trust.

For us to purge our society of anti-social behaviour tendencies that tend to undermine the fundamental human relations principles that govern society we need to inculcate the spirit of compassion and respect for the neighbor and we can achieve this objective by among other things reclaiming and redefining some of African cultural values that can be employable in our democratic South Africa. In this way we will produce a leadership that is anchored in service to others and unreservedly committed in improving lives of others.

In his Easter 2007 sermon Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane registered his concern on the criminal activity that is so rife in the country. He warned members of his flock to refrain from these activities that undermine the Zionist Christian Church credo that encourages harmonious co-existence amongst all members of society and hard work in an undertaking to achieve a better South Africa for all. It is thus through such calls that we can also remedy the situation of moral crisis that is prevalent in the democratic South Africa. Developing and producing ethical leaders is a socio-cultural project we cannot live to fate.

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Annexure A

QUESTIONNAIRE

The following are questions that are going to form part of a paper titled “**A Reflection on Morality and Student Leadership in Higher Education Institutions: An African Perspective**”, to be presented by Dr. Pakiso Tondi and Ms Nkosazana Nelani at the 2011 NASDEV Winter School.

As a valued former student leader (SRC member) you are kindly requested to make your inputs to this paper by answering the following questions:

Name: XXXXXXXX

Institution: Technikon Northern Gauteng

Period Served: 2000-2003

vii. What characterized the election of student leaders in your time?

Response:

- *Manifestos that talks to bread and butter issues of students.*
- *Also ideological orientation of those available was an issue too.*
- *The Character of the leader and his/her appeal to masses.*

viii. What motivated your cohort to participate in student leadership?

Response:

- *Accountability mechanism that were in place. Student Assembly promoted participatory democracy wherein SRC leaders will account to structures before accounting to masses.*
- *Therefore leader's ability will be measured by peers.*

ix. What values were attached to student leadership?

Response:

- *Honest, discipline, humility and dedications to serve students and represents their interest without any fear.*

x. Who amongst your community leaders or political figures inspired you as a student leader?

Response:

- *I was inspired historically by the 1944 ANCYL Leadership of Lembede, Tambo, Mandela and 1976 Soweto Uprising Cohort of students' leaders, their determination even when they face ultimate price of death.*
- *On campus I was inspired by scholars of Marx Cde Sello Maluleke, who selflessly guided me throughout the process.*

xi. What was the level of political awareness amongst your cohort in student leadership?

Response:

- *Very high and of course divided in line with ideology which characterized the founding principles of those movements.*

xii. Were financial benefits ever a problem during your time as a student leader?

Response:

- *Not really, it was an acceptable issue that students' leaders will receive stipends during holidays; otherwise the only incentives were your ability to study and stay free.*

Thank you!

Annexure B

QUESTIONNAIRE

The following are questions that are going to form part of a paper titled “**A Reflection on Morality and Student Leadership in Higher Education Institutions: An African Perspective**”, to be presented by Dr. Pakiso Tondi and Ms Nkosazana Nelani at the 2011 NASDEV Winter School.

As a valued former student leader (SRC member) you are kindly requested to make your inputs to this paper by answering the following questions:

Name: XXXXXXXX

Institution: University of the Free State

Period Served: 1999 - 2000

xiii. What characterized the election of student leaders in your time?

Response:

The elections were political and mainly across colour lines. During that period, the university was a clear-cut racially motivated student life. In that period a new constitution was introduced which allowed for a separation between policy making portfolios and service orientated portfolio of the SRC.

The policy making positions could candidates were required to be nominated by a student organization (whether cultural or political it didn't matter). This allowed for a broader participation in key decision making positions. However, Out of the 20 contested SRC seats, only 2 positions made it into the SRC.

There was a lot of apathy from students towards the SRC elections. Voter turnout was poor. In 1999 about 3000 students cast their votes in a student population of almost 10 000.

xiv. What motivated your cohort to participate in student leadership?

Response:

We decided to participate in SRC election because we wanted to participate in the crafting of the transformation agenda of the University. Our organization was already participating in structures such as Student Transformation Forum, Student Parliament and other forums with the university management, and we also had 1 member of the SRC. We wanted to provide voice for African students at the university and make sure that the university is accommodative of all races.

xv. What values were attached to student leadership?

Response:

Our values were that of service delivery, reliability, transparency, openness and accountability.

xvi. Who amongst your community leaders or political figures inspired you as a student leader?

Response:

I was inspired by the vast leadership of the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party, in particular the likes of Chris Hani, Lance Nawa (from Pretoria, a political activist and a writer) and Peter Mokaba.

xvii. What was the level of political awareness amongst your cohort in student leadership?

Response:

In our SASCO branch on campus, the political awareness and understanding was of a very high caliber. This branch was where I had my first interactions with Marxism theories and socialist ideas for a better world. Before that, I did not know of Marxism, Lenin, Mao etc. and the depth of debates around the South African higher education sector were key. During that time, issues around mergers, SETAs and the transformation of skills development and the qualification

registration with SAQA were critical day to day issues.

xviii. Were financial benefits ever a problem during your time as a student leader?

Response:

Not really. The only issues were around funding of political associations rather

than the incentives for participating in leadership. We used to receive an honorarium (stipend) quarterly as SRC members, but our participation in the structure was not motivated by the financial incentives.

Thank you!