

**IN THE PARLIAMENT PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF BALANGANANI LUCAS MAKHADO**

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I, Balanganani Lucas Makhado

and SAY AS FOLLOWS:

1. I started work with the University of Venda in 1988 July as a Chief Clerk, and two years later I was promoted to the position of Senior Administrative Officer at the Committee Section of the University of Venda. My role was to prepare agendas, take minutes and make follow up for the Senate and all its committees.
2. Two years I was promoted to the position of Chief Administrative Officer within the same Section. In 2004 following the restructuring of the Committee Section I was transferred to the Department of Public Relation to work as Student Recruiter until I was transferred to Pretoria as Development Officer in the Foundation Office in Church Square, the position I held until I was dismissed following a disciplinary hearing initiated by the Director of Communication who then reported to the Prof PA Mbatlali. I have always had very good relationships with my work mates as well as very good feedback from my manager about my performance.
3. Other leadership position held  
I was elected to represent staff on the following structures:
  - University of Venda Council 2015 - 2017
  - Member of the Institutional Forum of the University of Venda
  - Member of the Human Resources Committee of Council
  - Member of the Bid Evaluation Committee
  - Chairperson of the Administrative Staff
  - Leader of the Joint Structures tasked to communicate with Management of the University on matters affecting staff.
  - Paralegal for NEHAWU
  - Chair of Univen Provident Fund( Managing assets worth R 900m

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 2020 I was approached and asked if I would be willing to give evidence to the enquiry being undertaken by the Portfolio Committee on Higher



Education on the fitness to hold public office by Prof Peter A Mbatia I agreed to the request simply because I believe that South Africa is bigger individuals. Holders of public office should display a great deal of ethical behaviour when they carry out their public responsibilities.

I wish to confirm that *the* statement hereby disposed of was done under no duress and invite the Committee to call for official request to support the issues raised on my statement.

Hereunder issues penned down for the Portfolio Committee to look at:

- **Abuse of subsistence and travelling allowance.**

Subsistence and traveling allowances are paid to staff every time they had to travel to perform official duties to areas that are 10Km and beyond. The University is rural based and this presents a challenge to both staff and students in terms of building relationship with other educational institutions and the business committee. For one to get to Cape Town, one needs to travel by road for 500km to get to OR Tambo and catch a night train to Cape Town. This puts a strain on the resources of the University and particularly departments when it comes to budgeting. More resources are put towards payment of subsistence and traveling allowances.

Unfortunately this gets abused by senior staff whose approval for such travel gets approved by themselves in some cases. As leader of the salary negotiating team, year after year, we had to call upon Management to open up their subsistence and traveling budget and their spending pattern, as normal. Management would resist this request or put some conditions as to how this could be viewed because we as structures have always suspected that a considerable number of Senior Management were abusing this allocation. Indeed after viewing the consolidated account, we discovered that halfway through the year (2016 actual spent) by the Vice Chancellor had already R966k and members of Senior Management had already blown 2.7m, top on list was the Director Communication. (Records can be pulled from the University to support this)

- **Unleashing students to challenge staff he did not like, and Using the University disciplinary committee to settle or get rid of staff which would express a view different from his own thereby incurring huge legal bills for the University.**

Staff who share a different view with that of the Vice Chancellor would have student leaders set on them. Cases in point are former Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic, Deans of Students Dr TS Ndohe (resigned due to ill health) and Mrs C Mbadamana (Charged with misconduct, found guilty and dismissed). The late Prof Thabede, Head of Social Work department, Mr BL Makhado, charged found guilty and



dismissed. In the case of Ms C Mbadamana, forensic audit was conducted to establish the base for her dismissal and such investigation was called upon by students.

At the same time staff who displayed loyalty to him would be protected and have their disciplinary sanction reduced or no action taken against them. The Director of Commutation assaulted the Human Resources Director in full view of staff but no action taken despite repeated attempts by HR Director to get him charged or summarily dismissed. Mr Mulovhedzi, the former chairperson of Admin Staff and staunch supporter of the VC got off with a light sentence after verbal assault on his Manager.

#### **Using security to spy on some members of Council including myself**

After my election to Council, I started experience delays in receiving my emails communications, I complained to the IT department but they could not establish the cause of the delay, it emerged later that I was not the only one, the Registrar too was affected including some members of Council. This came to fore when a special Council meeting had to be delayed because some members did not receive the document that was to be discussed in time. I was part of the group. Upon investigation and persuasion it emerged that the Head of Campus Security was aware that certain staff and members of Council had their emails intercepted or suspected that some of us were working or sharing information with outside agencies concerned with sexual harassment. I formally lodged the complaint with the Chairperson of Council but no action was taken.

#### **Abuse of performance bonus to benefit his inner circle**

Prof Mbatia, upon his appointment introduced or amended a number of policies, some were progressive but others disadvantaged staff. The performance bonus policy which all staff expected to benefit from was warmly welcomed. To our disappointment and dismay, we discovered that it was him, his PA and his close colleagues who benefited largely. General staff was not pleased at all and called for the policy to be suspended. He however resisted and engaged consultancy to delay the matter, but we pushed on until Human Resources Committee agreed to suspend the policy and eventually Council trained and schooled on the policy objectives.

#### **Appointing some former Council to work at the Administration.**

Former members of Council who were close to the VC were appointed to occupy Administrative Positions, Namely DR L Kone and the current Vice Chancellor, Dr



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my concern A meeting was held, we agreed on the wayforward but he

never followed it through. This had a huge impact on the fiscas in terms of subsistence and travelling allowance.

To make matters worse, he is the brain behind the formation of the UIGC, a private company operating and feeding from the University resources. The company had failed to produce audited financial statements.

Around 2015, the Foundation approach Domba with the assistance of Mr Mashudu Ramaano an amount of R3m was raised to assist with the establishment of the School of Mining and Engineering . The Commitment was that the project would start operating in 2016, unfortunately this never happened. When trustees started seeking progress reports on the donation, he would not show up or tender an apology.( minutes of the board)

This led to amongst other things the Trustees not been able to meet because the key player of the project did not have time or his schedule could not accommodate trustees meeting. One meeting was held in 2016, which unfortunately he could not attend, he was not campus traveling. The Chairperson was annoyed by this behaviour. Again in 2017, he failed to attend trustees meeting. It was later reported to the Board that RBOOK of the R3m to travel and organising conference by the relevant department.

Attempts to institute to set an enquiry were frustrated. This lack of reporting to donors left the Domba Trust with no option but recall its donation. Eventually the Trust was made dysfunctional

This behaviour frustrated trustees and their moral. The Domba Trust was left with No option but to recall the donation.

**Using the University disciplinary committee to settle or get rid of staff which would express a view different from his own thereby incurring huge legal bills for the University.**

#### **Pioneered the demise of internal audit unit**

The role of internal audit is to provide independent assurance that an organisation's risk management, governance and internal control processes are operating effectively. The Council of the University had taken a decision to revive Internal Audit and delegated Prof Mbatia to ensure that it is capacitated to prepare the University for External, since the University for Years had received qualified audits and this had a huge impact on resource mobilisation efforts.

Indeed the Director of the Unit was appointed. The unit did sterling job but things got worse the unit started raising uneasy issues which the VC was comfortable



with. Audit opinions were increasing especial with legal fees and infrastructure challenges. Prof Mbatl eventually disbanded the Unit without authority around 2017 and the Director had to leave. It emerged later that he had no authority to do so.

- **Withholding OF the findings and recommendation OF the post graduate inquiry which led to the tension between South Africans and foreign students.**

Following tensions amongst postgraduate students, nationals' v/s foreign which led to disruptions of academic activities, the University agreed to appoint a company to conduct an enquiry to get to the root cause of the tension. The enquiry was conducted and recommendation were made, unfortunately some of such recommendations were not acted upon nor implemented until today.

Management confirmed in one of the Executive Council meetings that the recommendation were acted upon and this was viewed as selected justice when foreign academics are involved, yet locals were being charged and dismissed.

- **Mismanagement of Univen Infrastructure development program which led to a large of uncompleted projects.**

The University of Venda was established in 1982 as a branch of the then University of the North. Its primary purpose was to assist in training of the former Venda Government civil servants, but the demand for higher education grew, more fulltime programs were introduced and a high school was taken over to start the University. The University never had a settlement grant and this caused huge infrastructure backlog.

The University however did not sit and watch. It engaged Government during the time of Prof GM Nkondo and Dr J Leatt. It was during Dr Leatt's Administration that Government started to fund seriously infrastructure development. Plan were drawn up.

Prof p Mbatl was appointed to manage and implement infrastructure development, indeed there were some projects which were implement successfully under his leadership but others were just disastrous, in terms procurement and contract management. The university was not prepared in terms of capacity to procure and e contract management. This led to overpayments of about R10m. (this was confirmed by 2014 Audit findings).

A number of projects were not completed in time, some did not have environmental impact assessment report, such the abattoir which was abandoned by the contract



in the School of Agriculture The school of Nursing Building, school of Education Building, and student's residents.


The audit findings amongst others are:

- Payment exceeded original contract price
- Weakness on supplier database
  - Deviation from the supplier chain management process
  - Performance evaluation of suppliers
  - Database of prohibited suppliers
  - Investment reconciliation not performed

Variation orders entered into by the Facilities Management did not follow any proper delegation of authority. The Director approved variation orders without proper delegated authority and no action was taken against the said individual.

All this happens under the watchful eye of Prof Mbatia and his Management.

Signed on the 24 August 2020



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