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LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA: THE CASE OF A HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED TERTIARY INSTITUTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

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- Above all, I thank the Almighty, for giving me courage, strength and wisdom to complete this thesis.

DECLARATION

I declare that:

"LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA : THE CASE OF A HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED TERTIARY INSTITUTION IN SOUTH AFRICA"

is my own work, that all sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this thesis was not previously submitted by me or anyone else for a degree at another institution.

_____

Adv. M.N. LIDOVHO

DEDICATION

This effort is dedicated to:

- My parents Elelwani (Snr) and Tshinyadzo (Snr), as well as my late brother Fulufhelo.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study has dealt with the concept of leadership and governance within the University of Venda. Issues of leadership, human resources management as well as financial management have been investigated.

Leaders at universities are appointed to lead from the front, with the certain knowledge that their autonomy does not free them from accountability to government, which is by far the main stakeholder. Government sets parameters as well as the public mandate for these institutions, and they are expected to govern themselves co-operatively with government. Government does not have control of their day-to-day activities, but nevertheless expects returns on its investment. Students on the other hand aspire to obtain degrees at the earliest possible time as higher education costs are escalating at an alarming rate. Leadership of these institutions face the challenge of students making a claim to knowledge on how the institutions should be "run". It is therefore important for management to strike a balance between the interests of the public and those of students and make decisions that take the institutions forward. This requires strong leaders who have vision, the right values, integrity and passion for their jobs. What is needed are leaders who do not walk too far ahead of their followers, but who are also not far behind their peers, for in the latter case, they will not be able to see the challenges lurking ahead.

It has been established in this analysis that human resources are undoubtedly the lifeblood of any university institution. It is therefore crucial that a competent Human Resources Manager be employed to manage this vital

asset of the institution. This qualified and experienced manager has the responsibility to formulate effective human resources management policies and in particular an effective policy on recruitment, selection and training of staff.

The role of the university in training its staff cannot be overemphasised. Universities need to adopt training policies that are aimed *inter alia* at the creation of efficiency and effectiveness in line with the vision and mission of the institution. The University of Venda carries a public mandate that has to be fulfilled, in its capacity as an organ of the state. This institution is funded by public monies and the public no doubt deserves a return on their investment. It is therefore important that periodic appraisals and performance management of staff be done on a regular basis, and proper training be given, should it be found that there are shortcomings to be corrected. It is only after training that staff members will be able to deliver in terms of their job descriptions and other legal requirements.

Alongside human resources, there is an equally important task of financial management. In providing guidelines for implementing university finance management systems, one is struck by the challenge of trying to address a moving target in a diverse and changing environment. It is therefore important for one to always keep in mind that the goals of a university

institution viz. research, teaching, learning and community outreach, should be the driver of one's journey.

Financial managers need to shift their attention from day-to-day operations to strategic planning. The importance of a future oriented approach to financial management is underscored by the large number of authors who have examined strategic planning at universities.

The question of governance has also been dealt with in detail. The failure by the leadership of the University of Venda to acknowledge that the institution would not be governable without involving the traditional leaders on whose soil the University is situated, shows a lack of vision on the part of the leadership. It has been shown how the traditional leadership can be accommodated at this late stage, with a view to solving the crisis that the University finds itself in.

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