

## **FIX THE KNOWLEDGE NGWENYA MESS MOET MINISTER**

**A**s a myriad of issues unfold at the Teaching Service Commission [TSC], the Minister of Education and Training [MoET] needs to be alive to the fact that the elephant in the room for her are the scandals around one Knowledge Ngwenya who used to wield absolute power at the MoET Headquarters in his hey days. For the record, I will not make no bones about the level of unprofessionalism this self-acclaimed investigator of the MoET exhibited whilst illegally occupying the office of Assistant Career Guidance Officer at the Headquarters in Mbabane.

My memory is still glowing though on how Ngwenya ear-piercingly blew his own trumpet in a seven [7] page statement [19 June 2019], coming out guns blazing on what the then Controlling Officer [PS] at the MoET, Sibongile Mntshali, had averred before the Public Accounts Committee [PAC] about him as an employee of the MoET. Making a spectacle of himself, Knowledge spew unparalleled bile in that in his fifteen [15] years of 'investigating experience,' he had inspected almost 93% of teachers' professional misconduct matters which were used by previous schools' managers and the current one, Macanjana Motsa. So pompous was his crusade to redeem himself that he went on a tirade, ranting that his work speaks volumes as even some public prosecutors, officers in different police stations and even at the headquarters could attest that Knowledge Ngwenya knew his work.

To say I am still nauseated in reading his statement would be an understatement considering that the Public Accounts Committee [PAC], as established by section 209 [b] of the July 26, 2005 National Constitution, with powers, rights and privileges of the High Court or a Justice of the High Court [as contained in section 129 of the National Constitution], discovered last year that Knowledge Ngwenya was a deception. The committee exposed that he had not been reporting to duty at his official work station in Nhlanguano where he had been promoted to the position of Assistant Career Guidance Officer in August 2014. Instead of reporting at Nhlanguano like all civil servants, he remained at the MoET headquarters, terrorising and abusing teachers in schools in the name of carrying investigations. The PAC then ruled that he must pay back the E524, 352.38 which is a salary he

was paid yet he failed to assume his new duties from August 2014 to March 31, 2018.

Upon reflecting on the above, the lingering questions in my mind are: was this resolve of the House implemented by the MoET and Public Service? If not, why are heads not rolling at the MoET? Who is failing to crack the whip thereat? It should be borne in mind that the issue of Knowledge Ngwenya has always been thorny with few officers fearing to burn their fingers in resolutely dealing with it. It is an open secret that in 2016, the erstwhile MoET Minister, Phineas Magagula, responding to questions from Senator Chief Ngome Ndlangamandla, intimated that the scandals around Ngwenya compelled him to report same to the Anti-Corruption Commission [ACC] for investigations. This was after the discovery that Ngwenya did not even possess the relevant qualifications to be at the MoET as he forged his Form 5 Certificate.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2020, Bodwa Mbingo wrote a story entitled, ‘Knowledge Ngwenya in messy promotion scandal’ where he revealed that Ngwenya possess two [2] Form 5 certificates which reflect that he sat for the school leaving exam in the same year, but in different schools [St Marks and Londunduma].

It boils my blood that a plethora of teachers have endured the lethal wrath of the TSC in forging certificates, shown the exit door by same, in a tick. I recall that on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 2011, two [2] female educators, one teaching at Nyambo and Mnjoli Primary, respectively were arrested for allegedly possessing fraudulent O’ Level [Form 5] certificates to the Teaching Service Commission [TSC] when seeking employment as primary school teachers. It is by sheer coincidence that the other female teacher was alleged to have uttered and put off a forged O’ Level Certificate to Knowledge Ngwenya of the TSC when applying for a teaching post. So severe were their charges that Senior Magistrate then, Siphosini Dlamini referred the two [2] to the High Court for bail applications. Little did the educator and Court know that the recipient himself was an imposter-an accident in waiting. The Times [07-11-2013], reported that a teacher was apprehended for defrauding government one million after she presented a forged certificate to the TSC. I can

count endlessly educators who were brought to justice for the despicable act of forging certificates.

Lo and behold, it gives me sleepless nights as to what makes the MoET to treat Knowledge Ngwenya with kid gloves? What is so special about him at the MoET which makes him a super employee? The Office of the Schools Manager, time and again, springs into immediate action to charge teachers for misconduct whenever they are called to show cause why they should not be suspended as contained by the skewed and obsolete Teaching Service Regulations of 1983; as if any response from a teacher has ever been satisfactory at the MoET.

With no intent to ruffle Minister Lady-Howard's feathers, the truth must be told that failing to deal with the Knowledge Ngwenya saga is an egg on her face. If the Minister's memory is short, one would gladly stimulate it in that in 2019, a behind the scenes move took place at the MoET whilst she and the PS were away in SADC, on a National Duty. The incumbent charlatan, [Knowledge], was recommended for the position of Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer to the Civil Service Commission [CSC] without the nod of the substantive PS in the ministry as the Controlling Officer.

Nobody faced disciplinary action for this clandestine move; instead, the matter was swept under the carpet. Nothing was reported of the Minister reading the Riot Act to the Officers thereat. The Minister should wake up from her slumber and smell the coffee. If she is genuinely in charge of the Ministry, let her be seen to be seized with the Knowledge Ngwenya scandals. A thorough internal investigation needs to be carried out within the Ministry to uncover the dirt that is hovering over thereat.

The Minister should not let this scot free and be helpless like Phineas Magagula was, decrying that Senior Officers at the ACC and the Police have not been forthcoming in attending to the Knowledge Ngwenya fiasco. It can't be right that a ministry that is anticipated to uphold the highest standards for academic credentials is turned a laughing stock with the Minister folding her arms on rampant corruption.

On the same vein, the PAC should not bury its head on this issue of non-effecting of its resolve; that Knowledge repay the pilfered money from the Government. In simple terms, the non-implementation of this resolve equals to contempt of parliament [obstruction] by the MoET. Senator Ngome wouldn't have said it any better that with most entities timid to deal with Knowledge, it all goes to show that that a Senior Officer within the ministry was protecting him. The question then is: who is that Senior Officer and what has been done to him/her as all that is happening puts the MoET into disrepute?

Avoiding any temptation to sit on the fence, let Knowledge Ngwenya be brought to justice in the manner it happened to a litany of educators out there who lost their jobs emanating from the so-called desolate investigations undertaken by the HIV and Counselling Certificate holder. In the name of administrative justice and setting a virtuous precedence, let the Minister grab the bull by its horns and make Knowledge answer to the shenanigans around his forged certificates, skewed promotion that was intercepted by ex-PS Sibongile Mntshali, paying back the E524 352.38 as captured by the Auditor General [AG]. Knowledge must have his guts for garters.

As the SNAT, we expect the Minister to pit herself against where the likes of Phineas Magagula have dismally failed to succeed in cleansing the MoET from the corruption scandals. Let the approach to issues be undeviating as it was happening when this HIV Counsellor cum investigator was toiling with the lives of teachers in schools. If the Minister is worth her salt, bringing Knowledge to book shouldn't be an insurmountable task considering the fact that there is sufficient evidence that warrants prosecution thereat. We submit.