

DR. KHATHUTSHELO RAMUKUMBA POISED TO STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP AT MMSEZ



Dr. Khathutshelo Ramukumba

Newly appointed Musina Makhado Special Economic Zone (MMSEZ) board Chairman, Dr. Khathutshelo Ramukumba says his PhD in Leadership from the University of Pretoria's Albert Luthuli Leadership Institute, aligns with his role at the State Owned Company (SOC).

His thesis, titled Collective Leadership Practices in Plural Organisations: An Autoethnographic Social Constructionist Investigation of South African State-Owned Entities, explores leadership as a shared and relational process.

“

The academic depth, contextual understanding, and leadership insights gained through this programme align well with the complex demands of governance, strategic direction, and stakeholder engagement expected of a board Chairman in South Africa's public sector context

”

According to Ramukumba, the specific focus of his research “reflects an advanced understanding of leadership as a relational and shared process rather than one centred on individual authority.”

He maintains that this is particularly relevant for MMSEZ, where governance structures involve multiple stakeholders, including provincial government departments, communities, and the private sector. Ramukumba asserts that “a Chairman who has deeply studied the dynamics of collective leadership is better positioned to foster inclusive decision-making, build consensus across diverse interests, and navigate the socio-political complexities that characterise public enterprises.”

Ramukumba asserts that “a Chairman who has deeply studied the dynamics of collective leadership is better positioned to foster inclusive decision-making, build consensus across diverse interests, and navigate the socio-political complexities that characterise public enterprises.”

The research focus on social construction further implies a critical, interpretive approach to leadership. This orientation enables the Chairman to recognise how leadership meanings, roles, and expectations are shaped by historical, cultural, and institutional contexts. In the South African environment, shaped by its apartheid legacy, developmental agenda, and calls for transformation, such a perspective is crucial. It allows one to lead with sensitivity to the evolving expectations around ethical leadership, transformation, empowerment, and service delivery, he explains. The Chairman adds that his PhD means he is equipped to identify and challenge dysfunctional leadership narratives or cultures that may have become entrenched at MMSEZ.

“

This qualification also provides a strong foundation in research, analytical thinking, and evidence-based decision-making. As a Chairman, this is valuable in overseeing the development of long-term strategy, evaluating performance metrics, and holding executive management accountable through informed oversight. The ability to critically assess reports, policies, and complex data aligns with the fiduciary responsibilities of a board Chairman, particularly in sectors where public funds and national interests are involved.

”

The setting of this qualification provides deep sectoral knowledge which includes an understanding of the governance challenges, regulatory frameworks, historical patterns of dysfunction or corruption, and the policy priorities driving reform.” The Chairman posits that such insights ensures that his leadership is not only theoretically sound but practically attuned to the realities of leading a complex public institution like MMSEZ in South Africa. “This situational awareness is essential for guiding the board through complex strategic choices, ensuring compliance with legislation (such as the PFMA and Companies Act), and navigating the interface with political principals while maintaining the independence of the board,” he emphasises.

Whilst studying for a PhD is by definition a gruelling academic marathon, the Chairman argues that the quest for a PhD degree, however goes beyond the amassing of academic qualifications. “Furthermore, this academic journey marked by discipline, perseverance, critical reflection, and intellectual humility, signals key personal attributes valuable for leadership at board level.

These include the ability to listen, reflect deeply, challenge assumptions, and make well-reasoned decisions under uncertainty. The collaborative nature of collective leadership research also typically involves engagement with practitioners, thereby enhancing the candidate's practical skills in stakeholder engagement, negotiation, and systems thinking," he expresses.

"A PhD in leadership focused on the social construction of collective leadership in South African SOEs offers a rich and highly relevant foundation for the role of Chairman of the board of MMSEZ. It combines theoretical depth, contextual insights, and leadership acumen that are crucial for ethical governance, strategic foresight, and transformative leadership in the public sector. Such a background ensures the Chairman is not only a custodian of compliance and performance but also a visionary leader capable of guiding the entity toward greater effectiveness and public value," concludes the MMSEZ Chairman.