



ENTREPRENEUR AND CHAIRPERSON OF MOSES KOTANE INSTITUTE

As the old saying goes, “the path to success is never a straight line”. This is especially so for MUT alumnus, entrepreneur and chairman of the Moses Kotane Institute, Dr Sakhile Ngcobo. “When my father died, he said, 'Sakhile, I want you to be the first child in the family to have a degree.' I was literally following on his death wish,” says Dr Ngcobo.

Dr Sakhile Ngcobo - Class of '98

When enrolled for his National Diploma in Agriculture at MUT in 1995, he used to commute by train from KwaMashu to Umlazi to attend lectures. To reduce his travelling time during exams, he would look for a place closer to campus to rent during that period, and the only place he could afford was in the informal settlements near campus.

“Although those years were tough, I was very lucky to be assisted by very good lecturers, especially Dr Malizo Buyeye. I think he is now the head of department. He literally became my mentor,” remembers Dr Ngcobo.

Dr Buyeye saw potential in the young student and offered him valuable insights. He told him that he had the potential to succeed in his studies and that the issue of improving his English could be solved by making friends with other students who were not Zulu speakers, which would force Dr Ngcobo to converse in English. Dr Ngcobo graduated in 1998 and went on to study further, specialising in Agricultural Finance and Strategy. He then conducted research on catchment management. He found that the farmers along the uMgeni catchment were not farming responsibly, and used to plant trees close to the river. His research looked at the amount of water the trees were consuming and what it meant for the environment.

Mondi picked up on his research when it was published and invited Dr Ngcobo to talk about the two issues raised in it, namely water

usage and the company's relationship with the community. Mondi, which was owned by Anglo American at the time, took Dr Ngcobo on board and within two years he was made Executive Head of Corporate Social Responsibility for the company's South Africa operations.

It was during his time at Mondi that Dr Ngcobo developed a Socio-Economic Toolbox for Anglo American, which was rolled out globally. He was then recruited to De Beers as an Executive Head of Corporate Affairs.

Dr Ngcobo is the Chair of the Gambling Board in KwaZulu-Natal, Chair of Moses Kotane Institute, and Chair of Audit and Risk at the Industrial Development Zone in Richards Bay. His experience includes Head of External and Corporate Affairs for De Beers, Chairman of SASA Gold, Board member of Anglo American Zimele Fund and former Head of Corporate Social Responsibility at Mondi SA. Dr Ngcobo has been an advisor to the minister of Agriculture and has been involved in the formulation of the Forestry Charter, the Mining Charter and now the Maritime Charter.

“My passion for working hard and excelling at everything I do came from Mangosuthu University of Technology,” acknowledges Dr Ngcobo.