

## Transpersonal and Ethical Leadership Imperatives: An SACn Interview with the new National President of COMENSA

### Mokadi Max Mathye

**SACn: Congratulations on being elected National President of COMENSA. What are your thoughts on the road ahead?**

MMM: Thank you...being elected as the first African and the 8<sup>th</sup> National President of COMENSA was - and remains - a humbling and sobering experience.

I accepted the nomination with a sober mind knowing fully the opportunities and challenges facing the organisation I might be leading, which I now have the opportunity to lead.

I am determined to challenge the status quo and the adage that says "Determination to be wise is the first step towards becoming wise," inspires me as I reflect on both the opportunities and challenges that lies ahead of me.

It is an open secret that there are a lot of blind spots and open wounds within COMENSA and, in my view, they need to be reviewed and possibly be cleansed.

Organisational values inform our thoughts, words and actions. In my humble opinion, I think that the decisions that we make are a reflection of our values and beliefs, and they are always directed towards a specific purpose.

Pretending that I am taking over a utopian or ideal organisational paradise will be myopic and self-destructive, in my opinion. Even worse, I think that turning a blind eye to the obvious opportunities and challenges facing COMENSA would be suicidal and will not serve the organisation at all.

It is time to take stock of where we are and reflect on where we are going. At this stage, I will intentionally not go into details of what opportunities and or challenges are facing the organisation.

Equally, I think that there is a conscious need to relook at the organisational values of COMENSA and start embracing and living them. This should be done in conjunction with the ongoing imperative of not forgetting the *raison d'être* of the organisation.

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**SACn: In terms of the leadership work that you do, being a faculty member of LeaderShape Global, and a leadership coach, how do you plan to fulfil your leadership role in COMENSA?**

MMM: LeaderShape Global is primarily about transpersonal leadership, which basically means leading beyond the ego. As leaders, we are always exhorted to be mindful of the stakeholders we are supposed to be leading both externally and internally. Leadership is not about self and our immediate cronies.

As a leader, amongst the things that I am called to pay attention to are:

- ⇒ Active listening: which is not only listening to the obvious, but also listening to the unsaid and the silent conversations that are taking place in the organisation;



Mokadi Max Mathye, National President of COMENSA

- ⇒ Empathy: being able to spot the feelings and emotions of those who are wounded, without losing focus of what the issues at hand are;
- ⇒ Commitment to growth: promoting both personal and professional growth. As leaders we need to be prepared to continuously grow emotionally and also be held accountable.

My immediate focus will be to question whether members are deriving any benefits by virtue of being members of COMENSA. If not, we need to ask what we need to do to ensure that they do derive benefit from their membership. We must take stock of what benefits we offer members and ask ourselves how we make sure that, in delivering these and other benefits, we remain ethical and authentic in what we do.

The crux of the matter within COMENSA as an organisation is the recent establishment of the Social and Ethics Committee (SEC), which couldn't have come at a better time. There is a need for leadership to be held accountable and to be expressing a tone of ethical leadership. If the tone from the top is right, the environment, organisation and the culture will be positively affected.

If the Social and Ethics Committee were to identify a problem, it would be wrong of me – as a leader – to question or ignore them. They are mandated to hold us accountable and to ensure that ethical behavior exists in the organisation. If the leadership starts doing as they please, we have a problem. So, we need to accept that if the SEC say that something is not right, it is not a personal attack, but rather an opportunity for personal and collective growth. The role of the SEC should be remedial rather than

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punitive in my opinion.

Also included among the goals that I outlined when I agreed to stand for this role are:

- Embarking on an advocacy role to raise awareness of the strategic roles of coaching and mentoring within corporate South Africa and the public sector, and consequently creating a demand for professionally designated coaches and mentors;
- Introducing a culture of retaining existing membership by constantly creating a unique value proposition and benefits for COMENSA members;
- Introducing a well-managed Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme to ensure that coaching and mentoring professionals and practitioners continually update their professional knowledge and skills for the benefit of end-users and the profession in general;
  - Embracing digital technology in the face of the looming 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution to ensure that membership value is enhanced;
- Upholding and perpetuating the organisational values of COMENSA by turning them into specific operating principles;
- Instilling a culture of accountability by introducing a consequence management framework and addressing behavioural deficiencies guided by the Code of Ethics and Conduct with Behavioural Standards within all structures of COMENSA;
- Inculcating a collaborative ethos and synergy between the National Office, the Chapters and



Portfolio Committees by ensuring that we focus on common annual goals;

- Keeping abreast of local and global good practices and trends in coaching and mentoring & disseminating same to members to enhance their development;
- Exploring partnerships and leveraging relationships with international coaching and mentoring organisations;
- Implanting a co-operative philosophy amongst the Board, its Committees and a collective accomplishment of organisational goals, objectives and strategies;
- Presenting and preserving comprehensive and sound Corporate Governance conventions and prescripts within all structures of COMENSA;
- Setting annual membership growth targets in collaboration with Chapter Chairs as the *raison d'être* of COMENSA is at Chapter level, these will eventually create Key Performance Indicators of Chapter Chairs

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type of leadership is guided by ethical/moral and authentic/reliable leadership qualities. Leadership is about continuous personal growth. I think it's important as I go into this role that I harvest the importance of the collective in leading COMENSA, while at the same time motivating others.

I think COMENSA needs a servant leader who will be guided by the core mandate of the organisation and not allow personal self-interest to influence them. While I accept that leaders are human and that by implication might have friends and or cronies, I think it is ethically wrong to focus on the latter. Being an ethical servant leader encourages you to look at your friend and have the courage to say "you are wrong." I cannot have a situation where, because someone is my friend and he or she does something wrong, I turn a blind eye because of our friendship.

**SACn: And of course, if we refer back to the COMENSA Social and Ethics Committee, the Social aspect is talking about more than just members. It is talking about the impact of COMENSA on society and the stakeholders who form part of the profession, and servant leadership is applicable there as well?**

**SACn: How will you intend to use your personal leadership style to go beyond the ego?**

I subscribe to the ideals of Transpersonal or Servant leadership, which promotes and emphasises the need for the leader to always be aware of the stakeholders involved. The leader of the group must put the needs of others before his own, and motivate others to develop and perform in the best way possible. This

MMM: Society in general falls under the external stakeholders and therefore, COMENSA has a principle role to play as the custodian of coaching and mentoring in this country. I am of the firm belief that if COMENSA, as custodian of coaching and mentoring – at some point needs to start looking at what impact are we exerting in the communities that we are operating in.

I believe that coaching and mentoring can be a strategic intervention. If you look at competitiveness, for example, South Africa ranks low on the global competitiveness index. The question is: how can we use coaching and mentoring as a strategic intervention to improve competitiveness globally as well as in our own back yard?

I have taken on the role of National President of COMENSA at a time when the country is in a technical recession. We need to look at the role that coaching and mentoring can play in moving South Africa out of a recession. Coaching and mentoring need to be seen as proficient specialized business imperatives that

### Transpersonal Leadership

**Transpersonal [definition – from Webster's Dictionary]:** Extending or going beyond the personal or individual, beyond the usual limits of ego and personality

**Transpersonal Leaders [definition]** operate beyond their ego, continuing personal development and learning. They are radical, ethical and authentic while emotionally intelligent and caring. They are able to:

- embed authentic, ethical and emotionally intelligent behaviours into the DNA of the organisation
- build strong, empathetic and collaborative relationships within the organisation and with all stakeholders
- create a Performance Enhancing Culture that is Ethical, Caring and Sustainable

• Acronym: **BE REAL**  
Beyond Ego – Radical, Ethical, Authentic Leadership

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play positive roles in the personal and professional development spaces of leaders and followers to enhance the competitiveness of the country.

**SACn: COMENSA has historically been run by volunteers, with many stakeholder groups, including SAQA (as a SAQA-registered professional body) and the public. Can you share your views on the impact of volunteerism in serving these broad stakeholder groups?**

MMM: Allow me to share my views on volunteerism as follows: when you raise your hand and say that you are volunteering for a specific role and its associated obligations, you have taken stock of your time and your commitment. I have a serious problem when volunteers, who by virtue of having raised their hands and taken on certain duties and responsibilities, are quick to remind us that they are volunteers when they underperform. You raised your hand knowingly, so the balancing act of volunteers is crucial. We cannot have volunteer office-bearers using volunteerism as an excuse for not doing what they have said that they will do.

A conscious volunteer should be someone who says: "I know what I am standing for and irrespective of what is on my plate, I will do my best to make sure that what I raised my hand for, I will be able to fulfill." We cannot have a situation where we promote mediocrity and hide behind the fact that we are volunteers.

Another challenge with COMENSA being run by volunteers is that it impacts on sustainability in the event where volunteers might give preference to their personal obligations first before focusing on its obligations. What happens when a volunteer is unable to deliver on the expected mandate because they are busy? What impact does lack of delivery have to the organisation and ultimately to the profession?

**SACn: What is your vision for COMENSA?**

Let me start by reiterating COMENSA's current vision of empowering people to achieve their full potential in a consciousness of sustainable well-being. In the spirit of acknowledging the wisdom of my

predecessors, I certainly embrace this vision but I think at some point it must be reviewed.

I have a dream where COMENSA will gradually move away from relying entirely on volunteers. I dream of an organisation that will be sustainable both in terms of human and financial resources, where office-bearers will be fulltime and dedicated to the mandate of COMENSA as a SAQA-recognised professional body.

COMENSA is a non-statutory professional body, recognised by SAQA. It is becoming increasingly critical that all of us leaders and members - start to appreciate what it means to be a SAQA-recognised professional body. It is equally important that while we recognise what that means, we need to start acting as custodians of coaching and mentoring in a professional manner.

An outsider should see professionalism coming out without even asking questions about whether we really understand what professionalism is.

The NQF Act 67 of 2008 (as amended) and the Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation (2018) are very specific in terms of what both the statutory and non-statutory bodies are expected to do. The ability of COMENSA to appreciate these prescriptions are crucial in my view. Intensifying the need to have more Credentialed Coaches forms part of my vision for COMENSA.

Equally, the need to attract new members and retaining existing ones remains my focus.

**SACn: What role can COMENSA play on a global scale?**

Earlier on, I mentioned that there are certain opportunities that COMENSA should be leveraging. Playing in a global landscape with like-minded organisations is but one of those opportunities. The need to partner and collaborate with other global organisations is an opportunity worth exploring. I firmly believe that there are best practices that COMENSA can, and should, be sharing in a global coaching and mentoring scenario.

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