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Dr Rica Viljoen

“People’s lives, the communities and societies in which they live, and the organisations in which they work, are all affected by waves of change”



*The Minister of
Higher Education
and Training, Dr
Blade Nzimande*



Research Design Education

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Towards understanding the importance of organisational culture and climate

Dealing effectively with diversity and change presents an immediate challenge to leadership today. Business leaders, strategists and Human Resource practitioners tend to ignore the salient role played by the culture of an organisation in ensuring the success of true organisational diversity, and give little credence to the reality that attitudes toward human diversity develop through generations of psychological, social and cultural conditioning (LeBaron, 2005).

It seems that there is little concern that different employees may have different perceptions about human differences, and thus will hold varying attitudes in respect of diversity within the typical organisational climate (Thomas, 2005). A culture conducive for Inclusivity may assist organisations in managing change efforts successfully and in unleashing the benefits of diverse environments.

Everything is subject to change. People’s lives, the communities and societies in which they live, and the organisations in which they work, are all affected by waves of change. Some changes are gradual; others traumatic; while some are of the own making, and many are beyond control. The effects of global recession, globalisation and technological transformation involve changes of an unknown scale and complexity (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski & Flowers, 2004).

A Message from the Minister

The Higher Education system in South Africa is facing challenges closely related to the broader socio-economic requirement typically faced by a developmental state. Within this context Higher Education has been broadened to include the provision of learning solutions as designed and developed by Private Higher Education Institutions in South Africa since 1994.

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Graduates

All these changes generate human reactions to change - for individuals, for organisations and for societies (Nel, 2003). Living systems thrive when they balance the need for stability with the imperative to change (Senge, 1993). In order to manage resistance effectively resistance must be understood in terms of the effort on the part of individuals to regain the equilibrium that has been disrupted by change.

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Towards understanding the importance of organisational culture and climate (continued)



Organisational Development initiatives such as change resilience interventions are often viewed as ineffective with benefits that are only temporary and, thus, this topic becomes very relevant (French and Bell, 1999). The realisation that different systems (e.g. different individuals or groups) act differently when confronted with uncertainty and ambiguity can lead to an enhanced leadership ability to deal with transformation dynamics.

Any strategic effort to change the fundamental functioning of an organisation will result in a climate change since people will be required to behave differently or will be encouraged to adopt new mental models (Viljoen, 2008). Companies that process the ability to adapt to change more quickly than their competitors will gain a competitive edge (Senge, 1993). In this respect, it thus becomes necessary to understand the change dynamics of individuals, teams and organisations. It becomes important to ensure that the capacity to renew itself must be built into the organisational culture as a core competency that can lead to differentiation.

in order to come to a comprehensive understanding of organisational culture and climate, the individual, the team, the organisation dynamics and contextual domain dynamics, in relation to each other, should be studied. It could greatly benefit an organisation to gain an understanding of the diverse dynamics and strengths of individuals, the dynamics of groups and the essence of the organisation concerned, since optimisation of these dynamics lead to increased engagement that could give rise to a climate conducive for growth on all different levels. Ultimately, when new behaviours are cemented into the way that things are done in the company – the culture - sustainable competitive advantages can materialise...

Continued from frontpage - A Message from the Minister

In line with these developments the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande reiterated the Government's commitment to the improvement of the education system as follows:

"We face many challenges in Higher Education. These include, amongst others:

- Ensuring that the Higher Education system is an integral part of the post school education and training system and that it articulates with, and contributes to, the strengthening of the rest of that system
- **Expanding access** to Higher Education, especially for poor and working class young men and women
- Expanding scarce and critical skills in areas of **applied knowledge**: such as Engineering, Architecture, Accounting and **Technology**
- Growing South Africa's capacity for cutting edge research and **innovation** in various natural and social sciences
- Through **research** and skills training support, helping to identify and increase our understanding of how to tackle social priorities (Education, Health, Safety and Security, expanding employment through the creation of decent jobs and rural development)
- Helping to empower **communities** through various community outreach programmes."



GRADUATIONS AND RECOGNITION

To The Da Vinci Institute, our bi-annual graduations are celebrations of our students' victory! As the students enter into the auditorium to migrate from graduands to graduates, the triumph of tenacity, perseverance and most of all, growth – both in knowledge and in personal development - is evident in their demeanour.

In an era in South Africa where investment in education has to be one of the key strategies for both government and business to pursue, The Da Vinci Institute is playing a pivotal role. The on going development and delivery of post graduate study programmes that are focused on enhancing the Management Leadership education of business people, is gaining in momentum year on year.

With us only being in our 4th graduation year, The Institute can celebrate having graduated over 300 students, all of whom can and are, making a significant difference to their workplace practices and communities. You need only look at our learning partners and graduates from November 2010 and April 2011 to realise just how seriously South African organizations are taking up the challenge of education. [Read more](#)

It is also with pride that we can announce that in 2010, the Academic Council of The Institute approved the addition of *THE DA VINCI LAUREATE AWARD* to its existing portfolio of Council Awards.



These awards are conferred on people who, over and above their scholarly contributions, display exceptional characteristics. One such person who during his lifetime has demonstrated unquestionable commitment and passion to the development of communities, and has made an immense contribution to the re-definition of social systems is **His Excellency, President Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma**.

Being forced through circumstance to educate himself, and being influenced by a trade unionist family member, President Zuma became involved in politics at an early age, joining the ANC in 1958. His political journey has seen many achievements, but that which stands out most prominently has been his contribution to conflict resolution and mediation in a myriad of circumstances. [Profile link](#)

In researching and understanding the major contribution Jacob Zuma has made to social transformation, The Da Vinci Institute bestowed the prestigious *Da Vinci Laureate Award in Social Architecture* on President Zuma at the Service Seta Graduation in October 2010.

The 2011 Autumn Graduation saw Council Awards being conferred on the following Da Vinci Alumni:

- *Ms Mimi le Roux:* *The Da Vinci Ndlovu Award*
- *Dr Ivor Blumenthal:* *The Da Vinci Excellence Award*
- *Dr Ivan May (posthumous):* *The Leonardo da Vinci Award*
- *Dr Barbara Holtmann:* *The Ann van Dyk Applied Research Award*

In closing this article, we would like to repeat the message of our Chairman, Professor Roy Marcus, and believe that it resonates with all our graduates who have gone that extra mile:

"Da Vinci Graduates are recognised for a number of distinguishing characteristics viz a vis:

- They are known to be catalysts of change
- They are acutely aware of the environment, constantly prepare themselves for the unexpected and are consciously aware of the need to build a spirit of community
- They understand systems, are known for their passion to remain global, embrace diversity and are willing to take risks."

TO THOSE STUDENTS WHO MAKE US WHO WE ARE, THANK YOU!



Da Vinci Graduation



The Da Vinci Ndlovu Award Winner, Ms Mimi le Roux