

## **A brief biographical PROFILE of Dr. Bonginkosi Emmanuel**

### **“Blade” NZIMANDE**

Dr. BE Nzimande, better known as 'Blade', was born on 14 April 1958 in Pietermaritzburg, in a place known as KwaDambuza, some 15 kilometers from the city centre. He is the first Minister of Higher Education and Training appointed by President Jacob Zuma in 2009, and again in 2014. He also holds the position of the General Secretary of the South African Communist Party (SACP) since 1998 to date. He has also been a member of the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) since 1994 together with its National Working Committee (NWC) between 1994 and 1997, and since 2007 to date. He holds a doctoral degree in philosophy from the then University of Natal's Sociology department, awarded in 1993, specializing in Industrial and Labour Studies.

Prior to his current position, Dr. Nzimande was a Member of Parliament and the first Chairperson of the Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Education in the democratic South Africa between 1994 and 1999. Between 1989 and 1994 he held the position of Director: Education Policy Unit at the University of Natal. He was also a member of the National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA), the main forerunner to SADTU, the Union of Democratic Universities Staff Associations of South Africa (UDUSA) and the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC), and served in many NGOs supporting the mass and labour struggles in the 1980s.

Dr. Nzimande matriculated in 1975 from Georgetown High School in Edendale, Pietermaritzburg. In 1976 he enrolled at the University of Zululand to study towards a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in Public Administration and Psychology. He participated in all the major student struggles at Ngoye university in the mid to late 1970s. This included the student protests against the installation of Chief Buthelezi as chancellor of the university in 1976, the food boycotts as well as the student reactions to the 1976 student uprisings which led to the closure of the university on 18 June 1976 for the remainder of that year. These also included pioneering gender struggles against the

university's attempts to expel pregnant women students. After graduating in 1979 he returned to Edendale where he joined the Azanian Student's Organization (AZASO). While active in AZASO, he completed his Honors and Masters degrees in 1982.

Whilst doing his honours degree at the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of Natal in 1980, he was introduced to Marxism by one of his Psychology lecturers, Mr. Grahame Hayes, an event that was to radically change his political and academic outlook forever. Since that time Nzimande embraced Marxism as the only correct theoretical and programmatic approach in the then immediate struggles against the apartheid regime. From his being inspired by Marxism at the time, he decided that he wanted to become an academic and activist whose goal was to produce more black Marxists, both inside and outside academia, in the struggle against apartheid and capitalism.

In 1982, Dr. Nzimande undertook his internship in Industrial Psychology in the human resources department of Tongaat Hulett Sugar Ltd in Durban. During the time working at this company between 1982 and 1984, Dr. Nzimande simultaneously started running clandestine student Marxist reading cells at Indumiso College of Education in Pietermaritzburg and in Dambuza from 1982, using Rick Turner's famous notes ***"Introduction to Marxism"***. He also started working part-time as a university tutor for Unisa students at the anti-apartheid education organisation, the South African Council for Higher Education (SACHED) in 1982, contextualising that university's study guides against the background of his Marxist perspectives. It was also at SACHED that Dr. Nzimande met his dear wife and life-long comrade, Phumelele Ntombela.

Working with the then Sweet Food and Allied Workers' Union (SFAWU), an affiliate of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), the predecessor to today's FAWU, Dr. Nzimande ran – from about 1982 – shop stewards' workshops on job grading, working with, amongst others, Cde Jay Naidoo, then KZN Secretary of SFAWU, and later to become the first General Secretary of COSATU in 1985.

At the end of 1984 Dr. Nzimande resigned from Tongaat-Hullett group at the first opportunity when offered his ideal job, a full-time academic post at the Umlazi Campus of the University of Zululand as a senior lecturer. He established the new Department of Industrial Psychology on this campus. However, during his stay at this university he was constantly harassed by both campus management and the apartheid Security Branch, together with fellow (and Mathematics) lecturer, the now late Jabu Sithole – a UDF activist from Lamontville – for teaching 'politics' instead of psychology (and not Mathematics in the case of Jabu Sithole).

In July 1987, Dr. Nzimande left a senior lecturership position at Umlazi campus to take up a lower (and less paying) post of lecturer in the Psychology Department at Howard College, at the then University of Natal. This choice was made as a result of the fact that in the 1980s the white liberal universities had fought for more space for left-wing and other anti-apartheid academic, political and social activism than any other university campuses at the time. This then allowed Dr. Nzimande the space to continue with his community and labour movement work in the 1980s in Dambuza, uMlazi and nationally. This included work in support of building the progressive trade union movement both before and after the formation of COSATU in 1985, as well as in the building of self-defense units against the apartheid and Inkatha-based sponsored counter-revolutionary violence, mainly in KZN.

Dr. Nzimande started working with the ANC in the underground from 1986, when he was drawn into the ANC's research and policy project called ***Post-Apartheid South Africa (PASA)***, aimed at preparing the ANC for a new democratic South Africa. This project was at the time led by former President Thabo Mbeki, and included other ANC leaders like former ministers Pallo Jordan, Zola Skweyiya, and the late Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, as well as the late ANC activists Harold Wolpe and Jaya Appalraju. From inside the country PASA involved, amongst others, Cde Mathole Motshekga and Dr. Michael Sutcliffe. In February 1989 Dr. Nzimande was recruited into the underground of the SACP by Mzala Nxumalo. It was for these reasons,

amongst others, that Dr. Nzimande became part of both the first ANC and SACP interim leadership core structures in the KZN Midlands at the unbanning of these organisations in February 1990.

On the academic and intellectual fronts, Dr. Nzimande served during the mid-1980s in the editorial board of the South African Labour Bulletin, as well as being founder of a progressive IsiZulu journal, *Injula*, whose few editions impacted significantly on especially shop stewards and UDF community activists in the late 1980s in KZN. During the 1980s, Dr. Nzimande also served as the President of the progressive Association of Sociology in Southern Africa (ASSA), an association of progressive and anti-apartheid social science scholars and activists, as well as participating in the premier Southern African intellectual hub of the 1980s, the ***Southern African Political Economy Series (SAPES)***, based in Harare, Zimbabwe headed by renowned liberation movement scholar, Dr. Ibbo Mandaza.

In addition to serving on the Boards and committees of many other progressive organisations, Dr. Nzimande has published extensively, including numerous works related to the areas he researched, namely: *Education, Civil Society and the State, Affirmative Action and Education Policy Development* and on Socialism.

In the early 1990s Dr. Nzimande was part of the SACP delegation to the negotiations, under the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa). The SACP delegation was led by Chris Hani, although its day to day work was under the direct leadership and supervision of Cde Joe Slovo.

Since 1994 Dr. Nzimande has made an enormous contribution in the reconstruction and development of our country. Over and above his service in the first democratic parliament, he was elected General Secretary of the SACP in 1998, and for a decade between 1999 and 2009 served full-time in this political capacity. He had been elected into the Central Committee of the SACP from 1991. During his tenure as full-time General Secretary of the SACP, he led many mass struggles and campaigns of the SACP, including the highly popular campaign for the transformation of the financial sector, and the struggles for the transformation of the land and agrarian landscape,

social wage and the struggle for access to affordable health for the workers and the poor. Through these struggles Dr. Nzimande, as part of the SACP national leadership collective, has been a central figure in growing the SACP into a large mass-based formation aligned to the ANC, but while also independently taking up the struggles of ordinary workers and the poor. In this way he has played a pivotal role in keeping the struggle for socialism on the radar of a post-1994 South Africa.

There has been great progress made over the past 20 years in expanding access to, and achieving success in, post-school education and training. Education at all levels remains a top priority of the South African government. The Department of Higher Education and Training is responsible for post-school education and training at universities, colleges and adult education centers.

During Dr. Nzimande's tenure as Minister of Higher Education and Training, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has more than tripled from R3bn to R9.5bn in 2015. During the same period NSFAS has been expanded to cover poor students from the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges, from R300million in 2009, to about R2, 2bn in 2015, including enormous expansion of this sector in terms of student numbers.

Under Dr. Nzimande the Department has made steady and visible progress and success in building a single, coherent, differentiated and highly articulated post-school education and training system. This will contribute to overcoming the structural challenges facing our society by expanding access to education and training opportunities and increasing equity, as well as achieving high levels of excellence and innovation for all South Africans, but especially the youth.

Dr. Nzimande is a well-read scholar and political activist whose political, personal and intellectual outlook has been widely influenced by the ideas (and politics) of amongst others, Marx, Lenin, Oliver Tambo, Harry Gwala, Joe Slovo and Mzala Nxumalo, and indeed his mother, Nozipho Lukhalo, as well as the local struggles of the community of Dambuza in Pietermaritzburg.

**Academic Qualifications:**

**PhD in Industrial and Labour Studies (1993) - University of Natal (now University of KwaZulu Natal)**

**MA in Industrial Psychology (1982) - University of Natal**

**BA (Hons) Industrial Psychology (1981) - University of Natal**

**BA (Majors Psychology and Public Administration, 1980) - University of Zululand**