



**10 September 2019**

**Zondo Commission – Motsoeneng: “I’m the main man who influenced decisions of the SABC”**

Hlaudi Motsoeneng has blamed bad advice given to him in 1995 by Marie Swanepoel, an official at the SABC in the Free State, for the narrative of lying about his lack of matric, that has dogged his profile at the public broadcaster. He conceded that he had never applied for any of the positions he held at the public broadcaster, but was head hunted from the start, due to his talent.

Motsoeneng was testifying before the commission of inquiry into state capture on Tuesday, where he told the chairperson Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo that it was a well-known fact within the SABC that he did not have matric. The issue, he said, would come up from time to time as he progressed up the levels within the organisation, to the point that there was division among board members in 2014 over whether or not he should be permanently appointed to the position of COO. What he had, said Motsoeneng, was talent that many others – some with more formal education – did not possess, and that opened doors for him.

Motsoeneng confirmed that he had been appointed by a Free State SABC official, Alwyn Kloppers, as a permanent employee in March 1995, some years after he had begun freelancing as a journalist for Lesedi FM. “I declared from the onset to Alwyn that I don’t have matric. He said: ‘But you are talented, I have seen your talent when you were freelancing’.”

When he was given his appointment letter later, it had attached to it a form that Motsoeneng was required to complete, to detail his educational qualifications. It was at this point that he engaged Swanepoel, explaining to her that he had written his matric exams, but had not passed.

“I said to her I wrote matric but I didn’t pass,” he told the commission, adding that she made a note next to the matric field that only said ‘outstanding’. “In my view outstanding meant I didn’t have matric,” he said. Zondo impressed on Motsoeneng that Swanepoel’s note could also have meant that she understood that his matric certificate was outstanding and upon him presenting it to her at a later stage, she would update the note. Motsoeneng conceded that her note could be read in that way, but that his understanding at the time had been that after a conversation with Swanepoel – in which he promised to enquire with education authorities on obtaining the results of the supplementary exams that he had written subsequent to failing matric – she understood him to have clarified that he did not hold a matric certificate.

Letters read by evidence leader Advocate Thandi Norman, however, poked holes in Motsoeneng’s statement, as they indicated that the SABC’s human resources division had asked him in 1996, 1999 and 2000, to hand in his certificate to complete his employee file.

He further defended himself against the findings of former public protector Thuli Madonsela, who investigated claims that Motsoeneng had lied to the SABC about having matric. According to him, Madonsela pushed him on the issue, despite having received a satisfactory response from him.

“I don't know what was happening in her mind, with due respect, chairperson. She pushed, she said to me: Hlaudi, looking back, do you think you were supposed to write Standard 10?’ I never lied chairperson, God knows. I never lied.”

Madonsela’s report on Motsoeneng in 2016 led to his suspension, and later dismissal, but not without a legal challenge from him, which failed in 2017.

“In my view, chairperson, I'm very educated. If you check the SABC minutes — 70% of [the] board’s [decisions were influenced by me]. I'm the main man who influenced decisions of the SABC,” he said.

“In the SABC no one was better than me ... It's an insult to say I'm not educated,” Motsoeneng told Zondo, saying that he had won many awards within the SABC, and was even recognised as an industry visionary. He had even delivered leadership lectures at Wits Business School (WBS), which were now part of its syllabus, he added.

Not long after this, however, WBS denied Motsoeneng’s statement, stating on social media that: “Hlaudi Motsoeneng was invited to take part in a breakfast panel discussion at WBS on 6 Dec 2013. A guest speaker does not make an academic. At no stage has Mr Motsoeneng lectured at WBS, nor has any material authored by him formed part of the curriculum of any of our programmes.”

Asked by Norman to comment on the evidence of his former boss Lulama Mokhobo that he introduced her to members of the Gupta family a mere week after her appointment in 2012, Motsoeneng did not only give the commission the full version of events of the day, but said Mokhobo spent a pleasant time in the company of the Guptas at their Johannesburg home, where they all “enjoyed curry”.

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