

Vavi misjudged his appeal

Cosatu's special national congress went ahead without doomsayers' predictions coming to fruition

Analysis
MLULEKI DLELANGA

ZWELINZIMA Vavi, the former Cosatu general secretary who had sex in the office during working hours with a married subordinate and then later referred to her as a nopatanzana (Xhosa for slut), thought he was more popular among the masses of the federation's affiliates and shop stewards than the collective leadership of the federation.

Vavi was dismissed by Cosatu for multiple counts of misconduct and was embroiled in corruption allegations. The federation announced his expulsion in its Central Executive Committee (CEC) statement on April 8. Vavi, a man who likes people to believe that he has a high moral ground, convinced himself that he was popular and that this will see delegates at Cosatu special national congress reinstate him.

Well, here on earth all motions are governed by, if not subject to, the force of gravity. This is configured in such a way that what goes up, comes down – especially when it loses support from the pillars that ensured its upward movement.

It was made clear that Vavi will remain dismissed. This time not by the CEC, but by the decision of Cosatu's special national congress.

On credentials, an overwhelming majority voted in support of the admission of Cosatu's new affiliate, Limusa, and for Zingiswa Losi's continued locus standi as the federation's second vice president. The final tallies were about 1700 in favour of the decision, 200 against, with about 250 abstentions.

The results were clear from the onset. They could statistically be worked out from the compositions and numerical strengths of Cosatu affiliates.

On the one hand, the affiliates that fully supported the federation's CEC and its activities. On the other hand, those affiliates that had boycotted the federation's CEC meetings and other activities.

The results were and shall forever remain in sharp contrast to a right-wing liberal interpretation that dominated much of the media regarding the character of progressive trade unionism and its democratic processes, especially Cosatu. Vavi and the leadership clique that surrounds him were partly responsible for that right-wing liberal distortion. The biased media also produced editorials and selected or commissioned opinion pieces in favour of Vavi and his ilk.

Contrary to the individualism of liberal-



DISMISSED: Vavi's popularity was more the product of Cosatu's collective struggles than his personal engagements. PICTURE: GALLO IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

ism and its reliance on disunity (in this case within Cosatu and its individual affiliates), in the progressive trade union movement once a union decides on a mandate and representatives to carry that mandate forward they are required to uphold it.

In Numsa, for instance, those delegates, officials and elected leaders who depart from the union's mandate are characterised as sell-outs, and face a variety of subtle or blatant consequences or victimisation.

The embedded media, and of course in favour of their man, Vavi, and as he says it himself, continue to bombard us with their right-wing liberal and divisive propaganda,

that the majority of delegates at Cosatu special national congress did not support their own mandates and unions.

The results of that congress, which some sections of the media marginalised in reporting, are there for all to see for themselves.

During the second round of voting, on whether Vavi should be an item for consideration for reinstatement by the special national congress, about 1420 delegates voted no, only 23 voted yes, 160 abstained, and others had decided to leave in order to attend to other priorities. Their apology was presented after the vote, and was accepted by the congress. The mood among delegates suggested that

Key points

- » Vavi was dismissed by Cosatu for multiple counts of misconduct
- » The federation announced his expulsion in its CEC statement on 8 April 2015
- » Vavi, a man who likes people to believe that he has a high moral ground, convinced himself that he was popular
- » This is configured in such a way that what goes up comes down
- » It was made clear that Vavi will remain dismissed

Vavi's popularity, which was more the product of Cosatu's collective struggles than his private personal engagements, had passed its climax.

Plenary discussions, especially on the abuse of women by their male bosses at work, did not work in favour of Vavi either.

A factional pamphlet was delivered and circulated to the congress in an entryist manner to deepen disunity and influence delegates in support of Vavi. The pamphlet bore the logos of eight Cosatu affiliates and one expelled affiliate, Numsa.

Cosatu affiliates whose logos were used took to the microphone to distance themselves from the pamphlet. They condemned the unauthorised use of their logos. The Communication Workers Union (CWU) was the first. The union further said it will consider legal action.

Shortly after the congress, a letter circulated from the union went viral in social media. It stated that CWU was withdrawing from the so-called nine-plus unions, including Numsa, whose leaders had organised counteracting parallelism against Cosatu's CEC and the federation's activities. The letter stated that CWU was rallying behind the decisions of the special national congress.

The congress' robust discussions saw it on its last day unanimously adopting a declaration.

What was Vavi's reaction?

The man who said the owners of the federation will speak at its special national congress, reacted by referring to the delegates as "sycophants" (Sunday Times, July 19, pg 10)

A lot is yet to be written about the role played by the media and media practitioners in fuelling divisions within Cosatu and covering the federation in a factionally motivated or biased manner.

Mluleki Dlelanga is Young Communist League of SA national secretary

New criteria needed for student teachers

Analysis
MAUREEN ROBINSON

FOR some student teachers, the compulsory practical period they spend in a school before qualifying is the highlight of their degree.

During this practicum period, which accounts for about 25% of student teachers' time during their degree, they observe practising teachers and teach their own lessons.

They get involved in school life. They experience the joys and tribulations of working with young people.

It can also be a stressful and negative time. Student teachers may receive inadequate mentoring and support or see other teachers acting as less-than-positive role models. These student teachers can become demoralised and even give up on the profession entirely.

Enrolments into teacher education programmes have significantly increased in recent years. But research suggests that teacher shortages are still looming in some school phases and disciplines. How can the practicum period become such a universally positive experience that the profession doesn't lose teachers where they are needed most?

Creating new criteria

Schools in South Africa operate in hugely varied socioeconomic and educational conditions. Teacher education must prepare student teachers for all of these contexts. Many student teachers use their placement time to market themselves for a future post.

Placements in different kinds of schools will ensure that young, enthusiastic teachers apply for positions across the social and geographical spectrum.

But the reality is that not all schools can offer the same quality of teaching and learning to their own pupils, nor the same quality of mentoring to student teachers. It becomes necessary, then, to identify criteria that universities can use for student teacher placements.

Research by the Department of Higher Education and Training has outlined what these criteria might be. The researchers interviewed school authorities, university academics and provincial departments of education in five of the country's nine provinces to create this list of criteria.

1) **Leadership and vision** – includes char-



TEACHER SHORTAGES LOOMING: Student teachers seldom get the support and mentorship they need. PICTURE: GETTY IMAGES

acteristics like a positive ethos, a culture of teaching and learning and a caring, welcoming environment

2) **Professionalism** – this manifests in teachers who share knowledge and skills and are willing to learn

3) **Functionality** – includes a good work ethic and ethos, good internal and external channels of communication and an infrastructure, which ensures that teaching can actually happen

4) **Good teaching and learning** – knowledge of the curriculum, positive learning outcomes and practices and processes that support learning and

5) **Resilience** – the ability to prepare student teachers for different contexts and most importantly, a commitment to ongoing teacher, pupil and student teacher growth.

This list offers a good starting point for selecting schools where student teachers can be placed.

But the promotion of positive and diverse school experiences for student teachers also depends on factors beyond the school gates.

Room for improvement

Many schools complain that university education faculties don't sufficiently communicate their expectations about student teachers' responsibilities. They also don't always explain what is required from the teachers who will act as mentors.

Where communication does exist, it very rarely offers opportunities for genuine and sustained dialogue between teachers and university lecturers. They have no chance to discuss things like the purpose and design of the teacher education programme or how to judge the professional competence of a novice teacher. This minimises the chance for teacher education to combine insights from theory and practice in mutually productive ways.

Schools and universities have a strong, impressive history of being willing to support student teaching. But a range of broader policies and strategies could facilitate even more positive relationships between schools and universities. This will ultimately help to promote diverse experiences for student teachers.

These policies could include norms and standards for proper school infrastructure and interventions designed to improve the levels of

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safety and security in all communities.

Time must be set aside in the crowded school timetable for mentor teachers to meet with student teachers rather than the often rushed way in which such engagements happen.

Designated funding for transport and student accommodation would also enable students to travel beyond the comfort zones of their own neighbourhoods, or the neighbourhood of the – usually urban – university.

We need novice teachers to feel supported and enthusiastic about the professional path they have chosen.

They have to appreciate the complexity of teaching and understand what it takes to be a teacher in urban, rural, rich or poor contexts.

By building the capacity of schools and universities across the spectrum to engage actively and positively in teacher preparation, we will be making an essential contribution to a quality education system for all in our country.

Author's note: This article is based on research commissioned by the Department of Higher Education and Training as part of a national strategy to improve the quality of education in the country. The full report – Teaching and learning together: the establishment of Professional Practice schools in South Africa can be obtained from Ms Abigail Nkoe on Nkoe.A@dhet.gov.za
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THE NEW AGE

Online COMMENTS

LETTER
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We need to invest our energy more wisely

OUR country is where it is today because its people invest their energy in things that contribute less or nothing to their future.

The recent xenophobic attacks are an indication of how we fail to focus on matters that have a positive impact on our future.

The sporadic attacks are a clear definition of the state of our country. We see our youth invest more in partying than in their studies, which again proves that they are in love with time-wasting things.

We need to stand together as a country and invest our time wisely by concentrating on things that are likely to change our lives for the better.

We live in a generation where people protest for houses instead of stable jobs that will help them build the property they seek.

Let's all wake up and invest our energy and time wisely.

Meshack Mathe Vosloorus

TWEETS
@The_New_Age

Volcanic ash forces airport closures in Colombia

@Zee76036130Zee: Jesus Christ is coming back very soon ppl lets come back to Lords arm so that we can not perish #Lord have mercy.

US President Barack Obama lands in Ethiopia

Boipelo Jarvis @BoboJarvis: Dr. Zuma will take care of business osmund Amos Majozi @AmosOsmund: any chance of meeting the chairman of AU over there? Or the chairman has no visa for Ethiopia?

Malema urges Vavi, Jim and Mathunjwa to form a new federation

@pjdlovu: what does Malema know about workers politics for which boss has he worked for I think he's an opportunist stop confusing us.



Daughter of late global music icon Whitney Houston, Bobbi Kristina Brown has died

Adv Senzo Khumal Vhd @SenzoKhumal082: may she rest in peace RIP #BobbiKristina

The ANC will today brief media on the outcome of its lekgotla which wrapped up over the weekend in JHB

Unathi Kwaza @Unathi_Kwaza: we expect nothing new as usual

DA eyes Union Buildings Donald @donscotk: hahahahaha