

A nurturing disciplinarian

Brother Donald Madden did not only care about how well one did in school but also in life



Thebe Ikalafeng is among the most respected brand experts in South Africa and beyond. He is also an adviser, an author, commercial and political commentator and a thought leader.

He has founded a range of award-winning companies and initiatives such as the Brand Leadership Group, the Brand Leadership Academy, Brand Africa and Public Sector Excellence.

When he was head of Nike Africa, the company won more than 75 local and global awards. These included 10 Cannes Lions, Marketing Company of the Year, Marketing Services Agency of the Year and the 2011 Rebrand 100 Global Award for Effective Brand Transformations.

He has led a number of rebranding projects for blue-chip clients such as Unisa, Transnet and the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa, as well as repositioning and branding Ghana's ruling party, the National Democratic Congress.

Ikalafeng is vice-president of the Brand Council of South Africa and holds a string of qualifications — a BSc in business administration and an MBA from Marquette University in the United States. He has completed executive leadership education in finance at Wits Business School and Harvard Business School, and is a chartered marketer.

How old are you?

I am 45.

How do you earn a living?

I advise, teach and speak globally on commercial, political, national and personal branding and related matters.

Where did you grow up?

In Kimberley in the Northern Cape.

Where did you do your schooling?

I started primary school in 1978 at St Boniface Boys' High, a Christian Brothers' college. I also did my high-school education there from 1981 until 1985.



Accomplished:
Thebe Ikalafeng
applauds the
selflessness and
commitment of
teachers

And your tertiary education?

I studied at the University of the Witwatersrand but left in 1989 on an Institute of International Education scholarship to study at Marquette University — a Jesuit university in the United States.

Did you have any favourite teachers?

It would be Brother Donald Madden, an Irish Jesuit, who was my English teacher and later became a school principal. He was the one constant teacher throughout my high school.

Why were you so fond of him?

He was a disciplinarian who did not just care about how well I was doing in school but also in life.

What influence did he have on you?

He placed tremendous confidence in my leadership skills and encouraged and supported me to explore and use all my other talents. He was a nurturing teacher.

Do you still have contact with him? And if yes, how?

Rarely. He has retired. I last saw him when I was guest speaker at the 50th anniversary of the school.

What were your favourite subjects and why?

I was excellent in maths and science, but was also an all-rounder and top pupil throughout my schooling.

From your point of view, what are the qualities of a good teacher?

Teachers play the role of guardian in between the time you leave home and return home.

They are the sage guardians who mould very impressionable minds and guide them to know and understand their passions and pursue their goals, as well as giving them the basic tools to be able to make informed choices.

In your view, what are the things a teacher should never do or say?

A teacher is not your parent, but merely a guardian. Although they should be cordial, they are not your friends either.

They cannot make decisions about what direction your life should take, but they should give you the guidance and tools to be able to make informed life choices.

What message do you have for teachers in South Africa?

Considering the great work they do, their profession is the most undervalued and underrated.

In my view, teaching is the most important calling in the world next to the medical profession. Teachers soldier on despite being poorly paid and doing more with less.

I applaud their selfless commitment to the profession, youth and the future of the country.

We all need to do something to raise their profile, increase their resources and thank them. Everybody who is somebody had a teacher in life — formally or informally.

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Green paper open to input

A green paper released by Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande envisages that more than 4.5-million students a year will be enrolled in universities, colleges and other post-school institutions.

According to the green paper, which was released in Pretoria, university enrolment needs to be increased from almost 900 000 at 23 universities in 2011 to 1.5-million in 2030.

The focus in higher education would now be on further education and training (FET) colleges, according to the paper.

The government aimed to have

four million people enrolled at colleges or other tertiary institutions by 2030. "The key area of focus for expansion must be the public further education and training college sector. Strengthening and then expanding the colleges will play a central role in building a larger and more vibrant college sector."

There are 50 multi-campus FET colleges around the country, which were formed by the merger of 152 technical colleges.

According to the green paper, the FET colleges have to become the institution of choice for school-leavers.

The problem with these instit-

utions at the moment is that they lack any real connection to the workplace. According to the paper, "one factor, which has played a role in preventing the strengthening of the college sector has been regular changes in their mandate".

In terms of quality, the universities are the strongest.

Among the issues highlighted were racism and transformation, which Nzimande planned to tackle by forming "a permanent oversight committee" that would submit an annual report to him.

The public has until April 30 to comment on the green paper.

— Sapa