

Responsible leaders can be developed

By John North

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From left to right: John North (Programme Director, Responsible Leadership Master Class), Prof Derick De Jongh (Director, ALCRL), Prof Stella Nkomo (Dept. Human Resources Management, UP), Mteto Nyati (MD, Microsoft SA), Thando Njoko (Anglo Gold Ashanti), Vis Naidoo (Citizenship Lead, Microsoft SA) and Bheki Sibiyi (CEO, Chamber of Mines)

□ Tackling the world's biggest and most complicated problems requires the leadership of great and skilful individuals, therefore leadership must be cultivated. □ This was the message from Bheki Sibiyi, Chief Executive of the SA Chamber of Mines, speaking at a responsible leadership breakfast this week as a prelude to the Responsible Leadership Master Class (RLMC), organised by Microsoft South Africa and the Albert Luthuli Centre for Responsible Leadership (ALCRL) in collaboration with Continuing Education at the University of Pretoria.

The aim of the course is to position the RLMC as an exclusive and internationally recognised short course programme focused on developing responsible business leadership.

The RLMC creates an opportunity for senior executives to critically reflect on the role of business and leadership in society and to challenge those assumptions underlying actions of business leaders. Participants collectively envision an ideal future scenario and develop the mindset and approaches conducive to constructive action. Opportunities for collective and individual positive action are interwoven throughout the programme. The experience is facilitated, rather than taught.

During this course, the philosophical and moral dimensions of the sustainability challenge are emphasised with less focus on the technical challenges. Existing frameworks and contrasted emerging views, such as competitive versus constructive capitalism; ethical versus vulgar sustainability; principal-agency theory and traditional leadership theories are also challenged.

The existing senior executive training programmes focus on either creating awareness about pressing sustainability issues or developing action-based approaches to solving the sustainability challenge. Through its teaching and learning method, the RLMC will employ both awareness and action-orientation approaches. A unique emphasis is placed on the development of responsible leadership qualities and practices, including practical wisdom, critical reflection, moral courage and global inclusivity.

"We at Microsoft consider the personal role an individual plays in his or her organisation as the first step to making a difference in the broader society. The Centre for Responsible Leadership's Master Class is a perfect platform where participants can form a vision of responsible leadership and what it means in the current environment", says Sibiyi.

The course has been designed against the backdrop that society is in need of a fundamental change in business leadership perspective. The course includes discussions across the spectra of industries, such as philosophy, economics, art, natural science and the collective human history.

Prof Derick de Jongh, Director of the ALCRL noted that this unique course encourages courageous and frank conversations during the five-day on-site learning and sharing platform. Participants then go back to their 'normal' lives to practice responsible leadership behaviour, after which they come back and 'report' on their leadership projects and what they've learned from their own projects as well as those of other participants.

To find out more about the Master Class please contact the Programme Director, John North, at the ALCRL on 012 420 3386 or john@hypernorth.com.

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