

## **Gary Shearer| CEO, The Saville Foundation**

I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the transformative power of the work of Maharishi Invincibility Institute in South Africa. I have also had the honour of knowing and working closely with Dr Taddy Blecher, the visionary leader behind the Maharishi Invincibility Institute (MII), for close on 20 years.

Dr Blecher's unwavering commitment to youth education of the highest standard is nothing short of inspirational. He has dedicated his life to empowering disadvantaged young people through education, providing them with the tools and opportunities to break the cycle of poverty and achieve their full potential.

MII's innovative and scalable education model, along with all the other institutions Dr Blecher has co-created, has already changed the lives of over 23,500 unemployed young people, with 21,000 successfully placed in high-quality jobs, all with long term sustainable potential. These graduates are expected to earn over R59 billion (\$3.3 billion) in their working careers, contributing significantly to the South African economy and uplifting their families.

What makes MII's achievements even more remarkable is that they have been accomplished without the traditional government support and never more than \$11 per month from students. This is a testament to Dr. Blecher's unwavering commitment to accessibility and affordability in education.

MII's demand-driven education model is truly world-leading, maintaining a 95% job placement rate consistently into quality jobs for students who would otherwise have been denied access to such opportunities. The institute's focus on scarce and critical skills ensures that graduates are well-prepared for the workforce and can contribute meaningfully to the economy.

But Dr. Blecher's vision extends far beyond job placement. He understands that education is not just about imparting knowledge and skills; it's about unlocking the hidden potential within each individual. MII's holistic approach, which combines academic rigour with a focus on self-development, mental health, and well-being, empowers students to become not just skilled professionals, but also confident, resilient, and compassionate leaders.

The Institute's remarkable results in reducing depression, post-traumatic stress, and other disorders among its students are a testament to the effectiveness of this approach. By addressing the mental and emotional needs of its students, MII has been creating a generation of young people who are not only equipped to succeed in the workforce but also to thrive in life.

Dr. Blecher's contributions to education in South Africa extend far beyond MII. He has been a driving force behind several other free-access educational institutions in South Africa, and now Zimbabwe and Zambia, a national movement for free higher education, and national teacher training initiatives, which has reached over 700,000 teachers and teaching assistants in South Africa. His tireless advocacy for educational reform and his commitment to building a brighter future for South Africa and our continent are truly exemplary.

In recognition of his outstanding contributions to education in Africa, and as an engaged witness to the whole MII journey, I wholeheartedly endorse Dr. Taddy Blecher for the Africa Education Medal. He is a visionary leader, a tireless advocate for education, and a true inspiration to us all. His work is not only deeply transforming the lives of thousands of young people, but also shaping the future of South Africa.

*Born and schooled in Johannesburg, South Africa, Gary Shearer has a rich full-spectrum business experience in the IT wave of the '70's and '80's, including being a founding management team member of the now global Datatec Group. He also co-founded the award-winning New York based wine trading entity, Cape Classics Inc. He benefits from more than two decades of tough but creative and stimulating challenges growing the business from the ground up.*

*In 2006 he sold his shares to participate in the realm of social change. He is currently the CEO of The Saville Foundation, where he works around the globe within education and enablement of individuals and communities.*