



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

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**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

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**REMARKS**

**BY**

**RIGHT HONOURABLE MR. NAHAS ANGULA**

***PRIME MINISTER***

**AT**

**PRESS CONFERENCE TO ANNOUNCE THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING (COL)**

**AWARD OF EXCELLENCE FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDED TO THE**

**POLYTECHNIC'S CENTER FOR OPEN AND LIFELONG LEARNING (COLL)**

**POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA (LIBRARY FOYER)**

**WINDHOEK**

**15H30**

**21 FEBRUARY 2011**

Page 1 of 15

All official Correspondence must be addressed to the Permanent Secretary

Director of Ceremonies, Dr. Andrew Niikondo  
Dr. Tjama Tjivikua, Rector of the Polytechnic of  
Namibia  
Management and Staff of the Polytechnic of  
Namibia  
Distinguished invited guests  
Members of the Media  
Dear Students  
Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to celebrate with the  
Polytechnic community and the entire Namibian  
nation this phenomenal achievement, namely  
the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) Award of  
Excellence for Institutional Achievement which  
the Center for Open and Lifelong Learning  
(COLL) of the Polytechnic received in

November 2010. This Award was developed to recognise achievements by institutions throughout the Commonwealth in the innovative and effective application of appropriate learning technologies. It was presented during the Sixth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning held in Kochi, India, which was held from 24 to 28 November 2010.

The Polytechnic's COLL was selected as it clearly demonstrated its long-term and on-going success of making learning opportunities more accessible to students who might otherwise not have participated in the learning or training experience. The Centre was one of three Commonwealth institutions selected by an Adjudication Panel of experts to receive this

Award, out of the nineteen applicants worldwide.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The following achievements and facts confirm why COLL won the Award of Excellence for Institutional Achievement:

As a dual-mode institution, the Polytechnic's Center for Open and Lifelong Learning (COLL) has grown from an Administrative Center in 2002 with a staff complement of four to a professional Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Center of 20 full-time staff members,



operating on the four interrelated subsystems of: (a) Courseware Development; (b) Student Support; (c) Research; (d) Monitoring and Evaluation; and (e) Administrative Support.

The part-time staff complement includes 272 tutors, 57 research supervisors, 49 course writers, 42 content editors, three instructional designers, three language editors, four radio producers and one DVD producer. One hundred and eight (108) face-to-face tutors spread across the country provide tutorial services at the nine Regional Centers, while 168 face-to-face tutors were appointed to provide weekend tutorials to the Windhoek-based distance education students.

Since 2002, student enrolment for the distance education mode of delivery has increased by more than 200%, now standing at 2 371 students, while the course enrolment of 31 152 increased by more than 150%. The course enrolment is a clear indication of COLL's delivery of flexible learning to many residential students who also register for some of their courses on the distance education mode of study, classifying the Polytechnic as a dual-mode public tertiary institution in Namibia with the highest enrolment of distance education students and an institution that offers flexibility and blended learning, which is in line with trends at institutions of higher learning worldwide.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has taken center stage in development at the Polytechnic, being fully incorporated into all qualifications and services with incorporation of radio tutorials, DVD tutorials, and eLearning courses as part of the instructional material for distance education students.

COLL's infrastructure has grown with the establishment of nine Regional Centers across the country where distance education students have access to a full range of administrative and academic support services. The Regional Centers are equipped with the state-of-the art ICTs, including wireless internet connectivity, an increased number of computers and library books, online library issue facilities, direct access to online journals, conducive study



facilities and examination halls, while the centers were renovated, furnished and equipped with resources which are far superior in size, comfort and convenience than previous facilities. The establishment of COLL's own network of Regional Centers provides the ideal infrastructure for the delivery of technology-mediated learning and adequate provision of decentralized student support services. In this spirit, the government of the Republic encourages and fully supports the regional expansion of the Polytechnic offerings throughout Namibia.

In 2007, the Polytechnic's COLL participated in the institutional audit by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council of Higher Education (South Africa), mandated to

Page 8 of 15



assure quality in tertiary institutions through programme accreditation and institutional audits. As part of the outcome of the institutional audit in that year, the HEQC commended COLL for its good quality instructional material that are based on the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) criteria and guidelines which are internationally benchmarked. Particular reference was made to the instructional material being interactive and allowing students the opportunity to direct their own learning while engaging with the content.

As a professional ODL Center, representing 21% of the Polytechnic student enrolment of more than 11,000 students, COLL contributed towards the Polytechnic's institutional

achievement to receive the 2009 award for the best higher education institution in Namibia. This time, the Polytechnic received a much higher accolade when it was awarded the Diamond Arrow Award, a more prestigious award than the previous Golden Arrow Awards, presented by the Professional Management Review (PMR). This is the seventh in eight times that this honour has been bestowed on the Polytechnic.

The Polytechnic's COLL contributes, in modest way to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs 1,3,6,7 and 8) through national development and competitiveness by focusing on education, research and services on national plans and specifically the following national objectives: employment creation; poverty

reduction; economic growth; skills development; food security; and environmental sustainability. The job market demands more graduate and post-graduate qualifications as a function of economic development. As such the Polytechnic qualifications, including those offered through the distance education mode, have a strong presence of applied science and technology to meet the needs of industry.

Namibia projects itself as a knowledge economy in two decades through Vision 2030, of which the main goal is to reach a level of development that is comparable to that of developed countries by 2030. To achieve this vision, it is critical that higher education is given priority and that *science, technology, research, entrepreneurship and innovation* are promoted

as key drivers of the new economy – a *knowledge-driven economy*.

Such an economy requires knowledge workers, able to access, manage and apply knowledge to innovate and create new knowledge, technologies, techniques, systems, products and services. Thus the need for a decentralized and responsive distance education mode of delivery that is focused on creating the desired human capacity and leadership.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Distance education for many around the world is the most preferred medium of education today. This is because many working

Page 12 of 15



professionals and students either do not have time to go to a traditional college or university and attend the classes or do not have enough money to spend on a full-time course. The growing popularity of distance education has brought many changes with it. There has been a lot of development in the way of its presentation and its access.

The distance learning programmes are no more the way they used to be in the past. Historically, course materials were sent by post or by courier but now in developed systems, these materials are sent online to a candidate's mail box directly. The course materials may be Microsoft word document, power point presentations or PDF. Moreover, in such online learning there are many benefits that a student

can avail. There is a great flexibility of time and space. A student can access the course online from any place and at any time. Online classes are also given, that is virtual classes are arranged where a student is provided with a user name and password. Using this username and password, a student can log into the website of the university or institution that offers such distance education.

Therefore, distance learning should not be regarded as inferior, but rather as an alternative, and in many cases the more convenient and flexible mode of delivery.

Once again, congratulations to the Rector of the Polytechnic, the Deputy Registrar of COLL and the entire Polytechnic community for a job well

done. You did the nation pride by scooping this prestigious award out of many competitors from different Commonwealth countries.

I thank you.

- End

