



POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

(DRAFT)

SPEECH BY

MR. OLOFF MUNJANU

CHAIRPERSON OF POLYTECHNIC COUNCIL

AT THE

15TH GRADUATION CEREMONY (2010)

“Re-thinking Competitiveness for Socio-Economic Development”

AT SAFARI COURT HOTEL

09:00

Master of Ceremonies and Rector of the Polytechnic, Dr. Tjama Tjivikua
Your Excellency, President Hifikepunye Pohamba
Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament
Honourable Tom Alweendo, Director-General of the National Planning
Commission and our guest speaker today
Governors, Councillors, Traditional and Community Leaders
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Fellow Council Members
Esteemed Administrators and Scholars
Distinguished Invited guests,
Graduates and Students, Families, Guardians and Friends
Ladies and Gentlemen
Representatives of the Media
All Protocol observed...

I am delighted to officiate at the Polytechnic's 15th graduation ceremony which is taking place under the theme **“RETHINKING COMPETITIVENESS FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT”**.

I want to pause here in order to congratulate H.E. President Pohamba and his new team of Cabinet Ministers, Deputies, as well as the Members of Parliament for the new mandate that the people of Namibia handed them last November during the Presidential and National Assembly elections. The fact that about a month ago we also celebrated the 20th anniversary of our national independence, and with it two decades of peace, political and economic stability and social development and redress, we as a nation indeed have much to be proud of.

Director of Ceremonies,

This year also marks the Polytechnic of Namibia's 15th Anniversary, and thus amongst the tens of thousands of universities in the world and even the hundreds on the African continent, we remain one of the youngest. I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on some of the milestones our institution has reached over this short period, reflecting on our achievements and profile entailing a strong record of performance, global recognition and multiple international as well as local awards of excellence.

It is an open secret that the Polytechnic of Namibia, our *national university of science and technology*, has become one of Namibia's prestigious brand names. For eight of the past nine years, about seven thousand top executives in business and the civil service have annually rated the Polytechnic the "Best Tertiary/Higher Education Institution in Namibia" in the Professional Management Review (PMR) survey. Indeed we won the Diamond Award for 2009, what an achievement. In addition, the Polytechnic, its Rector and some staff members have won numerous awards - globally, regionally and locally - that I am sure most of you have read about in the media. On this point, I want to single out the prestigious awards bestowed on our Rector: the Bank Windhoek Communicator of the year Award (2009), the Junior Achievement Service Award, and his induction into the Namibian Business Hall of Fame in 2010. Together, these awards have added further distinction to our already impressive profile, and are an indication that our governance and management systems are in good stead.

Backing up the growth of our profile was an equally meteoric rise in student enrolments. This was due to unprecedented public demand and the popularity of new programmes introduced at the Polytechnic in response to national and regional needs.

Let me briefly reflect on the figures: Enrolment in 1996 was a modest 3 500 students in 1995, of which only about 2 500 were enrolled in post-secondary education.

At the beginning of this academic year, our student population stood at 11 500. Clearly, the Polytechnic of Namibia is fast becoming the University of Choice for the career-minded, discerning student, that is, for the skilled graduate entering the market as the preferred knowledge worker.

The Polytechnic currently offers 105 qualifications in disciplines critical to Namibia's development, and in a state-of-the-art environment. Amongst these are four different Master's degree programmes in **International Business; Information Technology; Integrated Land Management; and Leadership and Change Management**, respectively, and a specialization in the Master of **Water Management**.

The development of these programmes guarantees a steady supply of highly qualified graduates for knowledge-hungry markets. The Master of **International Business** (MIB), and the new Bachelor Honours in **Entrepreneurship**, for example, respond to the demand for business executives and entrepreneurs that are highly capable of continuously bridging theory and practice. We are proud of the fact that they are trained to conduct business and to inform business practice with cutting edge knowledge in entrepreneurship and innovation, upon graduation and long after they have completed their tertiary education.

I am also proud to state that our degree in **Mathematics and Statistics**, as well as the professional **Health Science** qualifications - the **Professional Bachelors of Biomedical Science, Environmental Health and Engineering** respectively, introduced for the first time in 2008, have attracted a cohort of high calibre students.

Likewise, our **Bachelor of Criminal Justice**, which had its first intake last year, has proven to be very popular indeed, not to overlook the new degree programmes in **English, Communication and Journalism and Communication Technology**, in a country so much in need of better said language and communication skills.

While expanding our academic offerings, we have also taken care of the physical infrastructure – against all odds - without which teaching and learning cannot thrive in modern times. Over the last two years, we have seen the completion of the renovation of Elizabeth and Sander House, the Polytechnic's historical centre. We have also witnessed significant upgrading of the physical plant and the completion of the **Science and Technology** building, which among others hosts the **Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business**, thanks to a generous grant from one of Namibia's business icons, **Mr. Harold Pupkewitz**. At the post-graduate level, business education is supported by the Namibia Graduate School of Accounting, a successful public-private partnership.

Other projects in our Physical Development Plan that have come on stream over the last two years are the extension of the **Hotel and Tourism School**, the **Namibian-German Centre for Logistics** and the **Namibian Business Innovation Centre (NBIC)**. Having successfully laid the foundation for outstanding teaching, learning and research facilities, **new teaching blocks and laboratories**, the **Students' Centre, Multi-purpose Hall** and **sports fields** remain our priorities, in order provide a complete teaching and learning environment.

For this purpose, I therefore, once again, wish to appeal to our government to carefully consider and lend appropriate support to these development imperatives, as soon as possible, all of which are essential for our students to develop and excel holistically.

Your Excellence, at this juncture, I would like to thank the Namibian government for the kind support and pledge our support to Namibia's development and prosperity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our theme for this year, *Rethinking Competitiveness for Socio-Economic Development*, simply says that we cannot compete internationally if, according to the latest global competitiveness ranking, our performances on some of the key indicators lag so far behind most nations.

In their book "*Globality*," Sirkin and others argue that "...globality allows little room for choice; companies must join the game on the global playing field or face the possibility of being pushed to the sidelines, perhaps never to return..." and that "...the only way to succeed is by competing with everyone; from everywhere; for everything..." (Sirkin Harold L. et al, 2008:20).

Against this backdrop, one cannot over-emphasize that education is the most important factor in human capital development, and higher education the driver of its systems, innovation and competitiveness.

In addition, the need to strengthen science and technology education and to transform Namibia into an innovative, knowledge-based society, supported by a dynamic, responsive and highly effective education and training system should therefore remain top policy priorities, for Namibia's education system must build a workforce for the global market.

The Polytechnic of Namibia is ready for this challenge, but sadly has to turn away thousands of qualifying applicants every year due to lack of facilities,

space and adequate funding. Nevertheless, the oversubscription of our programmes is a clear sign that the qualifications we offer are in high demand, not only in Namibia but also within the SADC region and beyond. This attraction has much to do with our selection and design of programmes, always conceived in cooperation with stakeholders in industry, government and civil society, and with the support of our national and international partners and curriculum advisory boards.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The selection of achievements and challenges I have touched upon in reviewing our progress over the past 15 years are enough reasons to be proud of being associated with the Polytechnic of Namibia, be it as administrative staff, academics, students or graduates, or even affiliates of this institution. Today, we are very proud of all our graduates. You have successfully mastered the high pressure of studies, the gruelling pace of learning, and the rigorous testing and examinations, often with other, equally strenuous obligations and duties in life. I congratulate every one of you, and thank the government and your family and sponsors for their valuable assistance. We are therefore assured that our graduates will meaningfully contribute to *competitiveness* -nationally and regionally and internationally. And assure each and every one that the Polytechnic will remain your leading university in developing Namibia into a knowledge-based economy.

I wish you all the best in your future endeavours and thank you for your attention.

References:

1. Sirkin Harold L. Sirkin et al, *Globality: Competing with Everyone from Everywhere for Everything*, 2008, The Boston Consulting Group, Inc. p.20