



**POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA**

WELCOME REMARKS

BY

**PROF TJAMA TJIVIKUA**

***RECTOR OF THE POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA***

ON

THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 13<sup>th</sup> ITS USER  
GROUP CONFERENCE

11 MARCH 2013  
08:30

**SAFARI HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTRE  
WINDHOEK**

Director of Ceremonies

Honourable Stanley Simataa, Deputy Minister of ICT

Chief Executive of Adapt IT, Mr Sbu Shabalala

Managing Director of ITS, Mr Derick Jordan

Marketing and Sales Director of ITS, Christo Christowitz

Chairperson of the ITS User Group Executive Committee, Mr  
Noel Knickelbein

Members of the ITS Executive Committee

Vice-Chancellors / Rectors / Presidents of Universities present

Chief Executive Officer of Ehlanzeni Further Education &  
Training College , Mr Simon Mlangeni

Pro-Vice Chancellors, Vice-Rectors, Senior Managers, Managers  
ITS Users, Colleagues from SA, Botswana, Ghana, Ireland,  
Lesotho, Namibia and Uganda

Exhibitors and Sponsors

All Esteemed Invited Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed an honour for Namibia in general and for the  
Polytechnic, in particular, to be hosting you on this esteemed  
occasion. This is indeed the second time that the **ITS User**

**Group** is hosting its **annual conference** in Namibia, and the Polytechnic of Namibia is indeed proud to be the modest host.

I extend a warm Namibian welcome to all of you all, welcome to the “Land of the Brave”. I hope the few days you will be spending here in Windhoek will be enriching not only academically and professionally, and will also allow us share with you some of the fantastic Namibian features and culture.

At this Conference you will debate and discuss **strategic issues relating to the ITS system**, specifically the **Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system** that is used today by the majority of universities in the SADC region or 38, and 41 in Africa. Of note, this system is also used by universities as far away as Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, New Zealand and the Republic of Ireland, which shows its mettle. To be sure, **ERP** automates and facilitates the flow of information between all business functions inside an organization and manage the connections to outside stakeholders, with an integrated [software](#) application.

I must point out that the Polytechnic of Namibia has a very special relationship with ITS. The first ever installation of the ITS system was done in the **Data Centre of the Namibian Academy for Tertiary Education** back in 1987. Eight years later, in 1995, the Academy went through a transformation process which spun off the Polytechnic of Namibia, and as the newly appointed rector, I signed the cooperation agreement in August of that year.

Today, slightly more than 25 years after this first installation, the same physical data centre, which has undergone tremendous transformations of its own over the years, is still hosting the ITS system; in fact it is our Computer Centre.

**Change and transformation at our university are constants; constants that bring new developments for a better institution.** As you may know, our relentless pursuit of a new name, through our application to government, has yielded sweet fruits. And so, soon we shall be to become the **Namibia University of Science and Technology**. We are very excited and already immersed in deep transformation to build a sustainable future for our university. Surely, one of our main goals is to advance technology in the workplace as we are in the classroom, and in society.

The **advent of the digital age** has brought about a number of economic, political, and social shifts in the world which have manifested themselves in different ways. These are advances in social networking and telecommunication technologies have influenced the way that we interact as individuals and communities; advances in data mining, interrogation and visualisation, and the creation of communication channels between groups, agencies and devices have impacted on how organisations and nations build greater efficiencies, make smarter decisions and provide new services; and, of course, the tyranny of distance has been overcome.

In a similar fashion, ITS went through tremendous transformations, a major one being the implementation of a **GUI (Graphical User Interface)** which comes with **more and better features and functionalities**. This was followed by the empowerment of users with the adoption of the **I-systems**. Of note, the Polytechnic of Namibia has been **ahead of the curve**, thus **requesting and adopting new systems and features**, to the joy and despair of our users, and the trepidation of our CIO, CFOs and the CEO.

Regardless, our university has embraced ITS fully and has benefitted enormously therefrom. And that is because ITS did indeed adapt to the needs of users, some very difficult ones like our university, the Polytechnic of Namibia.

With ITS, all new systems are developed in a **tripartite partnership** between three entities: **First**, our **own ITS department**, **second**, **our ITS users** and **third**, the **ITS company itself**.

In what I consider a unique partnership, **most enhancements and new features** that do not fall under local software are, after their adoption by the demanding institution, **offered to all ITS clients**, unlike several other systems I shall not mention in which enhancements remain local.

But we live in a world defined by **explosive data generation** – it is estimated that **90% of the world's current data** has been created in only the **last two years**. This kind of data is everywhere around us and as universities we are also contributing to this phenomenal growth of data. It is thus imperative that as **universities rapidly develop excellent and robust information management systems** in the areas of **data**

**storage, data mining and data visualisation** aided by **technologies such as virtualisation and the Cloud**. It is a given that such systems need **requisite expertise** to manage the system, and this thought is at the forefront of universities.

We cannot **manage our universities efficiently and effectively without good management information systems, and subsystems**, it is this space that needs good management; it needs to **develop and attracts expertise, and to make good business sense**.

Therefore a good management information system is at the centre of university management; to manage **three primary components: technology, people (individuals, groups, or organizations), and data (information for decision making)**. In fact, **MIS is at the centre of analysing and facilitating strategic and operational activities** in a fast-evolving technological environment, and **ERP** is the engine. Those who desire to do business in such a fast-moving environment need to appreciate advantages provided by the ability to understand and manage this growth in data and thus derive benefits accruing from prudent utilisation of data and information. This understanding, together with meeting the huge demand for highly skilled ICT

practitioners, teachers and researchers, will aid our countries to fast track the their transition into technological economies.

The theme for the ITS user group this year is ***“Mobility solutions: Expanding the use of information and analytics”***. Today, **mobility is at the core of the IT revolution**. This because IT has **moved away from being device-centred to becoming user-centred**. And what does that imply? IT until recently was about hardware and software applications, and the acquisition of new equipment was the major event.

However, times have changed: The proliferation of devices, laptops, tablets, pads, and smartphones is stunning. Behind the marketing geniuses managing to sell countless devices to everyone of us, is the need for productive employees to be not only reachable, but always “switched on”, using whatever devices at their disposal and expecting to access their data and information from anywhere, anytime.

The 1990’s brought us **“reachable at all times”**, and the current decade brings us “available at all times from wherever”. Why did we get there? The answer lies in collaboration. Projects nowadays are more collaborative than ever because of increased

work specialisation. Our Director of IT could, 15 years ago, fix ITS system problems, fix network problems, attend to server and desktop problems; and he could create statistical reports, etc. He was a kind of **Renaissance man**. Today, he has to rely on dedicated expertise in ITS in Networks, in Data Centre management, in Desktop management and basically, in all areas of IT. The world went there because ICT became extremely pervasive, it permeated our work and our private lives, its footprint became so large and widened so much so that **dedicated ICT expertise has become the norm**.

**Mobility is not only a human challenge; it is also infrastructural.** When a user sits behind a desk at all times, security is relatively easy to enforce. Looking back at the **old times of client server**, a client would connect to a server, extract data, process and store it on his computer. Such an approach is no more viable. A mobile user utilises a wireless connection of some kind that requires strong encryption; his/ her data is stored somewhere in the famous cloud, not because of storage limitations but because of security.

**Making mobility possible is complex in a world populated with cloud storage, encryption, massive security, firewalls,**

**advanced networks, massive computing capabilities, storage devices whose capacities are expressed in petabytes.** All these elements interact transparently and behind the scenes for us, the users. In this fast moving world, a world leader one year can be outmoded the next and bankrupt after two years.

In this fast moving world, I hope that **ITS will continue to focus on its innovation thrust** to ensure that it remains a preferred service or solutions provider. ITS, as an African invention, should continue to lead universities as an excellent management information systems.

The **universities consortium model** is an ideal platform and has been a success story, and the African renaissance will dawn on us with the creation of products and services not only for us, but for the world. African universities and corporations should lead the ICT revolution.

In this light, the Namibia University of Science and technology, for the time being the Polytechnic of Namibia, is committed to be a leader in IT management and services, and in ICT education. I have no doubt that this conference is another step in that direction and I wish you fruitful deliberations.

I thank you.

- ***ENDS.***