



**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**BY**

**HONOURABLE DR DAVID NAMWANDI**

***MINISTER OF EDUCATION***

**ON**

**THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE  
POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA**

**05 FEBRUARY 2014**

**IN FRONT OF EHAUS**

**POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA**

- Director of Ceremonies
- Rector of the Polytechnic, Prof Tjama Tjivikua
- Acting Chairperson of Council, Ms Evelyn Brewer and all Members of Council Present
- President of the SRC, Mr Paulus Nakale
- Senior Management and Faculty of the Polytechnic
- Esteemed Invited Guests
- Students of the Polytechnic
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

A very Good morning! It is both my honour and privilege to be here this morning to welcome you all. Indeed, it is a day that is filled with excitement, joy and happiness, as we have this morning not only the students who are continuing with their academic studies, but also those as new council members who joined the Polytechnic of Namibia family for the first time. A special warm welcome to the new students and I hope you will enjoy to be in

the company of the community of scholars (don't leave with GCE). In addition, a hearty welcome goes to the new members of the Poly Council, new staff members both academic and administrative members. Let me join the leadership of the institution in welcoming you all to 2014 academic year of the Polytechnic of Namibia.

Director of Ceremonies, I want to extend my congratulations to the new students, who have worked hard in their primary and secondary education and it is through your determination that today you are taking another important step of acquiring education and skills at a higher level. I am reliably informed that the Polytechnic received over twenty thousand applications from the 2013 class of grade 12s, but could only admit four thousands of you. Therefore, by being admitted to the Polytechnic you become part of a privileged group. I think I need to elaborate further and illustrate why you should consider yourselves a privileged cohort that will enjoy tertiary education.

In 2013 our Government<sup>1</sup> spent 23.7% of its annual expenditure on education.

This is a huge investment by all standard when one considers that there a number of other competing social issues the country is facing. The Ministry has increased considerably over the past few years' allocation to NSFAF. Given the realisation that there is a growing need to support students who do not have the means for studying at universities. This is a clear manifestation that our government is a caring government, thus wants to train as many Namibians as it possibly can. I know that higher education institutions will continue saying they are not receiving sufficient funding, however that issue is likely to be put to rest with the introduction of the new funding framework. However, the point I would like to underscore is that it is only when one understands the enormous investment government make in providing the higher education infrastructure as well as investments on individual students that one begins to appreciate how

privileged one is in being able to access higher education.

The privilege I have alluded to goes with a lot of responsibility not just on the part of students, but also for all of us as stakeholders in higher education. When a student registers with an institution he or she enters into a legal agreement with the university. While this agreement is extremely important, however, on its own it does not guarantee success in our educational endeavour. Having an official opening of the academic year, is an important event that provides a platform where all stakeholders government, council, management, staff and students come together to enter into social contract that binds us to do everything possible to ensure the institution will succeed in its mission and vision.

To the old and new students, I want you to take note that the image and reputation of a university is greatly enhanced by the products that went through it. By its nature education is broad based,

designed to equip a person with the right attitude and skills for him or her to respond swiftly to any event, no matter how serious or complex it may be. As a ministry we have full confidence in this institution thus convinced that you have made the right choice and shall not regret having chosen polytechnic to mould your future.

May I urge the university to continue strengthening industrial co-operation as research has proved that the industrial experience sharpens and facilitate the education of an adoptable graduate in the shortest time possible?

Making a transition from grade 12 to a university can be quite daunting and requires a lot of adjustments both socially and academically. Failure to make these adjustments quickly might affect adversely the progress you will make in your studies.

But I want to assure you that the university through its staff, who will embark on their task with great

pleasure and enthusiasm, is committed to giving you an education of the utmost quality. The staff members both academic and administrative will lend you the support you need during this period of adjustment and therefore avail yourself to them for counselling whenever you are facing challenges. It is only when all of us are working together as “Team Education” will we be able to achieve the goals that we have set ourselves in the NDP4 and Vision 2030.

I think we all know that education means more than simply knowledge of facts and specific skills. These have to be underpinned by attributes of reflection and critical thought which will, indeed, put you in good stead as a citizen of society this is the holistic education I would like to come out with from the Polytechnic.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would fail in my duty if I were not to comment on some of the critical issues pertaining to the higher education system in our country. Both the speeches by the acting

chairperson of Council, Ms Evelyn Brewer and the Rector of the Polytechnic, Prof Tjama Tjivikua have updated me about the progress the Polytechnic has made towards its transformation to the Namibia University of Science and Technology

The enthusiasm I am feeling or observed since it was announced that polytechnic shall finally be renamed and obtain full university status, is great. I have no doubt in my mind that the polytechnic will intensify the training of our people in order for them to face the challenges of rapid modernisation, competition and globalisation. It is obvious that quality education shall determine our nation's skills level, standard of living and quality of human capital. It is the expectation of our government that this institution being science and technological oriented, instils in student minds that innovation and



acquisition/creation of new knowledge and technologies is the way to go.

As a nation we must be able to effectively leverage on technology inculcate a culture of innovation and competitiveness throughout the country. Therefore, this university is tasked to respond to this challenge with vigour and determination. The university is called upon to realign its self and stump its vision on the economic, social and political land scape of our country. By the very nature human beings are reluctant to change, thus resistant to change is real.

People find comfort in time tested practices and often relay on strict compliance to keep status quo. I hope our educational leaders and students will not fall prey to this habit. I thus call upon everyone

to be part and parcel of this new transformation own it.

As you are hard at work to position yourself, dear Acting chairperson and Rector I have a word of encouragement. Positioning oneself is like a road map. Any road map if followed through to the route, one would always arrive at the destination. I am aware you know where you want to be in few years to come, you have the key to draw the type of people you want to your institution to build its image. Remember your positioning will eventually brand this institution.

It is noted that the Ivy League universities in the States established their reputation for quality by setting very high entry benchmarks; automatically this alone has differentiated them from the rest.

They became the best because they did the right things e.g. They picked the best students and attracted quality professors.

It is up to you to decide how to position yourself, but all you should strive for is to be the best and not second best.

Finally, I would like wish the university the best in its trajectory to become the Namibia University of Science and Technology and also wish the students a wonderful learning experience at this university.

**Thank you.**