



POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

WELCOMING REMARKS

BY

TJAMA TJIVIKUA

RECTOR OF THE POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

ON

**SIGNING OF COOPERATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE
POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA AND THE NAMIBIA STATISTICS
AGENCY (NSA)**

WEDNESDAY, 4 December 2014

POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

WINDHOEK

Director of Ceremonies

Dr John Steytler, The Statistician General

Management and Staff of the NSA

Management, Staff and Students of the Polytechnic

Distinguished Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

It pleases me greatly to welcome you all to this important event. This occasion is a catalyst for better and enhanced collaboration between the Polytechnic of Namibia and the National Statistics Agency (NSA). University-industry collaborations are important factors in strengthening capacity in both sectors and also in the economy as a whole. Both our institutions have key roles to play in the economy, and in particular, technological universities like our own have a unique mandate as a key industry partners. This is especially so in a knowledge economy, that which we aspire to become in less than one generation.

Let me elaborate briefly on our distinctive roles and the synergies that exist and should be exploited, and how we can enhance research and skills development together.

Firstly, global trends dictate that every country must have a credible office, institute, agency or institution dedicated to the management of statistics. This is because statistics is a tool for managing everything in life from a quantitative or qualitative perspective.

In this sense, the NSA is our country's leading body responsible for national statistics. It produces a number of important research studies. These include for instance studies such as unemployment and other socio-economic conditions. Empirical analyses of evidence and statistics allow us to develop a better understanding of our own circumstances and the environment around us. Thus the NSA is responsible for developing new standards, products and services, and for setting trends in managing data and statistics. We cannot manage what we cannot interpret or understand. And we cannot understand what we cannot interpret. And therefore the NSA is important in the national context to provide scientific evidence for better analysis, policy making and governance, and it needs our support and collaboration.

Secondly, as a technological university, the Polytechnic is responsible for teaching, research and service to society. Amongst the many disciplines Mathematics and Statistics are critical factors or academic disciplines in any university or economy, but these skills are often in short supply. It is for this reason that we introduced these disciplines in our curriculum many years ago. Today we boast a strong Math and Stats department with an enrolment of over 1 000 students in both fields since 2008, and an output of about 100 graduates across the various sectors of the economy. It is for these reasons that we need more graduates from universities in these disciplines, and also school leavers with the aptitude and interest to undertake studies in the same fields.

Thirdly, research is a critical component of the overall strategic thrust of the country. For the Polytechnic as a university, research – particularly *applied research* - is one of the main pillars of our mandate and receives adequate attention in its development. Just last week, we held several and wide-ranging research activities involving faculty, staff and students, and culminating in the recognition of the outstanding achievers.

Fourthly, at the Polytechnic, we believe learning by doing, applied learning, is the best way to learn, and so we have been a trendsetter in the Namibian higher education landscape for integrating practical learning, project-based learning, and work-integrated learning (WIL) into our curriculum. This agreement between our two institutions provides specialised skills within the Polytechnic which we shall avail to NSA. This opportunity will provide access to our facilities at both our institutions, and to redress skills development, graduates employability, the quality of graduates and return on investment for the faculty member, student, graduate and society at large. It also provides opportunities for capacity enhancement at the NSA.

Fifthly, let us now reflect on the underlying topics of this agreement, statistical research (SR). SR is not merely a collection and display of numbers or data. We all know that research is conducted in different ways in various contexts and addresses particular issues. And thus it is important to set the parameters and conditions before undertaking research, and subsequently produce an analysis that speaks to the prevailing conditions and predict future trends.

Often we draw conclusions from personal experiences and anecdotes which we interpret as the truth, but which is not based on scientific analyses and conclusions. Thus SR is a function of evidence-based approach to planning and implementation.

‘Statistical analysis involves the process of collecting and analyzing data and then summarizing the data into a numerical form.’ (*Wikipedia*, accessed 02/12/2014). Statistics is simple and easy; statistics is complex and difficult. This all true, depending on the ability or convenience of the user. We all live a life of statistics, a life of complex mathematics, and so it takes ourselves or certain persons to analyse the sums, sizes, proportions, and their relevance to a particular circumstance or other factors.

We will always deal with **descriptive statistics** which involves *methods of organizing, picturing and summarizing information from data*, or **inferential statistics** which involves *methods of using information from a sample to draw conclusions about the population*. Or we deal with **quantitative variables** which have value or *numerical measurements* for which operations such as addition or averaging make sense. Similarly we deal with **qualitative variables** which *describe an individual by placing the individual into a category or group such as male or female*.

Simply put, to make sense of statistics, statistical results should be interpreted by someone who understands the methods used as well as the subject matter.

Thus today is an important day in the relationship between the Polytechnic of Namibia and the National Statistics Agency, for us to develop talent and capacity in Namibia for the benefit of society. Let this be a long-term relationship which will have many spin-off benefits for generations to come.

Finally, I want to extend our profound gratitude to the NSA for partnering with us. This is indeed a value-adding engagement which will go a long way in giving us first-hand insight into the NSA and its valuable work, and also preparing our graduates appropriately for the world of work.

- ***Ends.***