



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

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SPEECH BY HON. JOEL KAAPANDA *MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY* AT THE LAUNCH OF THE POLYTECHNIC LAPTOP PROJECT VENUE: POLYTECHNIC HOTEL SCHOOL, 03 MARCH 2011.

Master of Ceremonies,

The Rector of the Polytechnic, Dr. Tjama Tjivikua

Polytechnic SRC President, Mr. Ashwell Forbes

Esteemed Administrators and Scholars of the Polytechnic

Dear Students

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to have been invited to officiate at this event whose sole aim is to advance further Namibia's resolve to become a prosperous and winning nation by taking full advantage of information and communication technology (ICT). What we will be witnessing today forms one of the tiny steps our nation needs to take to realize the giant leap to becoming a knowledge based society by 2030. Given this reality, the Polytechnic of Namibia therefore deserve to be supported by all stakeholders in its efforts to produce the requisite human capital needed to drive and service the ICT industry.

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Today ICTs have become commonplace virtually in every aspect of our lives and its presence is also felt within the education sector. In the past it was believed that successful educational outcomes were factors of a teacher's teaching skills and ability to communicate with his or her learners or students but with the introduction of ICT the focus is now on student-oriented learning.

In the ICT-driven educational scenario, a "good" teacher or lecturer is less of an **actor** occupying centre stage in the classroom. Instead, he or she has become more of a **stage director**. One of the main consequences of these developments is that a lecturer or teacher no longer needs to be a walking library but rather be a good guide, able to point students to the countless sources of information they can access on the internet if the hardware and software are available and accessible.

The marvel of e-learning and teaching is another radical transformation available today through information and communication technology. Having just won an international award for excellence in distance education through its Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning, the Polytechnic, will know very well that e-learning is vital for quality distance learning programmes.

In order to breach the gap that existed between the old school of education and the new way of learning ICT should be an integral part of the education system starting from pre-primary, primary, secondary through to tertiary/higher education.

Today, it is imperative that we train graduates to become a workforce that is able to display appropriate level of information literacy. Information literacy provides the ability to locate, identify and evaluate relevant information in order to make an informed decision.

Director of Ceremonies,

Let me now address the issue of the new Student Laptop Initiative. The Polytechnic's phenomenal achievements are all driven by new paradigms with an exceptional commitment and passion for ICT. This is evidenced by its adoption of technically advanced teaching and learning resources such as high-tech lecture halls, multiple computer-, engineering-, science- and simulation laboratories with the latest being on-line research, teaching and learning support systems.

I am informed that these systems, as well as many administrative functions and facilities, are supported by a modern fibre-optic backbone and a computer network which soon will offer wireless connectivity almost anywhere on the Windhoek campus and its regional centres throughout Namibia. In this respect, Namibia as a country will soon reap the benefits of the West Africa Cable System (WACS) Project that will guarantee sufficient bandwidth for independent, more affordable and faster internet connectivity.

With these words, Director of Ceremonies, it gives me great pleasure to launch the Polytechnic's Student Laptop Initiative. I have no doubt that with sufficient goodwill from industry, the initiative will succeed.

I thank you

I am also informed that the Polytechnic's state-of-the-art library now offers students, staff and even visitors free access to thousands of online journals and periodicals. Likewise, the institution will shortly boast an impressive computer: student ratio of about 1:5, including the new laptops to be distributed through the new laptop initiative being launched here today. This outstanding commitment needs to be commended and I call upon other institutions of higher learning to emulate this good example.

I have no doubt that this initiative will further upgrade the level of computer literacy amongst graduates, thus affording them excellent reception in the job market. Notwithstanding these developments however, given the institution's rapidly increasing student enrolments, the Polytechnic has been struggling to provide enough computers for all students to browse the Internet, access the Polytechnic's numerous e-resources, and write assignments. Apart from a shortage of space for new computer laboratories, their cost (more than N\$35 000 per computer workstation on average) has been the largest deterrent. I am therefore appealing to the private sector to augment the Polytechnic efforts because in the end they are the ones to reap the fruits of quality education and training interventions. Sustained private sector support will enable the Polytechnic to equip 60% of their student population with their own laptops by 2013 as stated in their third Strategic Plan.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage students, Parents and sponsors to take advantage of this amazing opportunity. Those who do so will be putting themselves in the fast lane to information literacy, high academic performance and the superior career benefits. I have no doubt that this excellent laptop offer is available at less cost and if maximised can unleash our students' potential to realise their dreams!