



**SPEECH**

**BY**

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**AT**

**THE EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP IN AFRICA (EPA) CLOSURE  
FUNCTION**

**04 NOVEMBER 2010**

**WINDHOEK**

Honourable Ministers present here this evening

Mr. Tom Alweedo, *Director General of the National Planning Commission*

Your Excellency, the British High Commissioner, Mr. Mark Bensberg

Mr. Ronnie Mecallif, Country Director: British Council

Your Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Chief Executive Officers of Financial Institutions

Captains of Industry

Distinguished Invited Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

What brings us here today is the conclusion of a partnership that started some 18 months ago. But it is also a celebration of the successful implementation and conclusion of the Education Partnership in Africa (EPA) project 2.06 – “*A Partnership for the Development of Curriculum for Enterprise, Leadership and Innovation Skills in Higher Education*” between Leeds Metropolitan University (UK) and the Polytechnic of Namibia. This partnership was sponsored by the Department of Business Innovation and Skills and the British Council. This occasion therefore marks the successful conclusion of a funded partnership but the continued of the programme in Namibia.

The EPA aims at supporting English Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) institutions to engage in partnership with sub-Saharan African universities as well as education and training institutions by providing pump-prime funding to build institutional capacity with the aim of delivering employability skills in collaboration with local employers and social enterprises. Over the period January 2009 to March 2011, a minimum of 72 partnership projects have been supported in Africa by EPA. I am therefore very pleased that the Polytechnic of Namibia is one of the very first institutions in Africa to attract this support from the British Council.

Whereas EPA projects are intended to support institutional capacity building over a short span of time it is assumed that such projects, after the initial boost will have built enough support and momentum from the stakeholders to enable them continue

thereafter successfully. This explains why we considered it necessary to walk hand-in-hand at the same pace with our stakeholders.

In line with Vision 2003, Namibia's focus should be on high value-added services with specialists in services, specialised industries, communications and information technology. The achievement of these goals requires the transformation of Namibia into an innovative, knowledge-based society, supported by a dynamic, responsive and highly effective education and training systems. In this respect, the role of Higher Education in providing relevant certification, continuing professional development, research and consultancy is fundamental.

Whereas the official Vision 2030 document has enumerated categorically the areas that require major inputs in terms of human training, development and capacity building, the existing education and training system is still not able to meet that clarion call to excellence or to amplify clearly its contribution, and therefore the realisation of the national development agenda.

Several analyses have point out that one of the key impediments to productivity growth in Namibia is the shortage of skilled workers of various levels and types. There is a recognised shortage of managers, researchers, and others experts required to provide technical leadership in the country's quest to intensify the creation and application of knowledge and improve overall productivity and competitiveness. Yet there are few tertiary education and training institutions in Namibia offering graduate studies in a wide range of academic disciplines. The relative lack of postgraduate and executive education in Namibia has over the past years and has necessitated many Namibian students to study in South Africa beyond the Bachelor degree level. Many of the students taking this option express dissatisfaction at the considerable amount of time and costs associated with going down this route, but accept that it is currently the only option available to them.

Recently the unemployment figures in Namibia stood at 51.2 according to official statistics. Clearly Namibia needs both dynamic corporate executives as well as innovative entrepreneurs who will create employment and enrich the country and its citizens. In this respect the EPA project 2.06 has created for us a window of opportunity for us in higher education at the Polytechnic. We emphasize instruction programmes

that are aimed at meeting the needs of industry by means of technology, which is the driving force of the Namibian economy.

The EPA project commenced in June 2009, and comprised staff visits from both institutions to both locations for the purpose of curriculum, skills and competency development. The key was the engagement with a sample of Namibian employees (industry, commerce, Government etc) right through the whole process of competency, skills and certification identification to curriculum and CPD development and testing. This unique three-way dialogue of industry and two academic institutions ensured that the curriculum developed is relevant to the needs of enterprise and help prevent the migration to other parts of the region in order to obtain these skills.

Over the period, the EPA project realised the following outputs:

1. Two Graduate School staff received training in Curriculum Development at Leeds Metropolitan University and visited UK professional bodies in 2009/10;
2. Fourteen staff at the School of Business and Management were trained in Curriculum Development by the two Polytechnic staff who visited Leeds;
3. Three Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses developed with stakeholder feedback in Namibia on Effective Teamworking, Creative Problem Solving and Enterprise and Initiative. Two others have also been developed on Effective Presentations (media relations) and Effective Project Management. All these have been aligned to the Chartered Institute of Management, UK, a criterion for accreditation and Certification;
4. MSc Leadership and Change Management was launched in 2010 with 27 students at the Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business;
5. Three CPD courses: Effective Teamworking, Creative Problem Solving and Enterprise and Initiative have been offered in November 2010 on a test market basis of 42 Namibian stakeholders;
6. An Executive MBA programme is currently under development;
7. Poster presentation on the project at Going Global Conference in April 2010 in London and the same planned for Hong Kong April 2011 for global dissemination of the project;

8. Two papers are planned for publication on the project in learned journals and Conference in Split run by Business and Economics International in July 2011. And one paper to be presented about the project in a SADCC country; and
9. Strategic Plan for the Graduate Business School as well as a sustainability plan for short courses were developed.

We therefore see a strong synergy between Education Partnership in Africa (EPA), the Namibia Vision 2030, and our mandate as a higher learning institution to the Namibian society. The EPA project has empowered the HP-GSB to develop a firm foundation and the capacity both physically and intellectually to design and provide relevant Masters Programmes, professional programmes like (CIPD), research and consultancy skills to address some of the training and skills challenges in Namibia, within the 18 months project period. With support from stakeholders, the HP-GSB will go on to implement the designed programmes and constantly measure, improve and communicate its progress to meet national development objectives. Therefore to this end the HP-GSB will still require the support of an Advisory Committee composed of a wide representation of stakeholder groups.

Once again may I take this opportunity to thank you all for your support over the last 18 months. Because the future and our collective success rest on the joint effort, may I lean on you for more support in the future.