



POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

SPEECH BY

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AT THE

16TH GRADUATION OF THE POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

“Towards Sustainable Innovation”

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WINDOEK

Master of Ceremonies and Rector of the Polytechnic, Dr. Tjama Tjivikua;
Your Excellency, President Hifikepunye Pohamba;
Honourable Dr. Abraham Iyambo, *Minister of Education*;
Distinguished invited guests;
Candidates;
Ladies and Gentlemen;
All Protocol observed:

On behalf of the Council of the Polytechnic, I wish to warmly endorse the welcome that the Rector, Dr. Tjama Tjivikua, has already extended to our guests, especially to His Excellency, President Hifikepuye Pohamba.

I would like to start my intervention by commending the Rector and his management team for their exemplary leadership of this institution. I also want to thank all the deans, professors and lecturers for the excellent job they are doing. Your collective efforts are the primary reason why this institution has always done more than fulfil its mandate despite modest resources and many challenges. It is also the reason why the Polytechnic's standing continues to grow in leaps and bounds, both locally and internationally. It is an open secret that "*Poly graduates*", as they are fondly referred to, are able to continue their studies almost anywhere in the world, if they choose to study abroad. If not, they have the luxury of knowing that they are sought-after in the local labour market: the highest endorsement any Higher Education institution could wish for. For this, every Polytechnic graduate, past and present, owes you a great debt of appreciation.

Council is also very pleased with the Polytechnic's continued growth in almost every respect. While the total number of students studying at the Polytechnic this year showed no increase compared to 2010 and remains at around 11 000, applications for first-time admission, mainly from school leavers, grew by almost 30% to 15 000, reflecting unprecedented demand for places at the Polytechnic. In the end, only about 5 000 new applicants were admitted, a critical lack of space at the Polytechnic being the main constraint.

The demand is also evident in the Polytechnic's distance learning programmes, which already contribute more than 20% of the Polytechnic's total enrolments. This growing demand recently forced the institution to open its 10th regional office in Outapi, in the Omusati region. This proves that the institution is succeeding in its aim to broaden access to higher education in rural areas, which is a key national development objective. In this respect the international experts agree because the Polytechnic's Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning (COLL) was one of only three recipients to receive the prestigious 2010 Commonwealth of Open Learning Award of Excellence for Institutional Achievement in Distance Learning.

The Polytechnic's serious intent to broaden rural access to its services is evident in its current consultations with the Hardap, Karas and Omusati Regional Councils about the possibility of establishing Polytechnic satellite campuses in these areas.

Your Excellency, ladies and gentlemen,

Council is also truly proud of the extent to which the Polytechnic has engaged with critical national development needs and priorities outside of the lecture theatre or laboratory. The speed with which the Namibia Business Innovation Centre (NBIC) has become almost fully operational, less than a year of its establishment, is a particular source of pride. NBIC was established as a national centre of excellence and resource centre fully engaged and a key player in the promotion of business and technological innovation, research and development in Namibia. Innovation and technology are widely recognised as the key drivers of a knowledge-based economy, the globally preferred economic model for development today. Namibia, too, has set its sights on adopting this model for Namibia, as can be seen in Vision 2030. I am pleased to mention that the NBIC's *Innovation Marketplace* initiative has already reached and inspired thousands of young people in many parts of Namibia to establish their own enterprises, and put in place the mechanisms for supporting them in this endeavour.

The Polytechnic's participation in the Southern Africa Innovation Support (SAIS) project, a €6.24 million (or N\$ 62 million) initiative funded by the government of Finland, is a related example of its commitment to the promotion of innovation, this time in the sub-region. Botswana, Mozambique and Zambia are the other SADC partners involved in the project, and we are grateful that the Polytechnic has been chosen to host this important project.

Several other Polytechnic centres of excellence are equally worthy of being mentioned today, were it not for the time constraints that we have to contend with. It would nonetheless be remiss of me if I did not at least mention some of them and reminded the audience that their achievements can be reviewed on the Polytechnic website. They are the Centre for Entrepreneurial Development (CED); the Namibian-German Centre for Logistics (NGCL); the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Institute; and the Integrated Land Management Institute (ILMI). All support key areas of national development.

Master of Ceremonies,

Lest our audience begins to think that the Polytechnic has lost its compass or "marbles", as young people might prefer to say, and has forgotten its academic remit, let me hasten to reassure them. The reality is that the centres of excellence are an integral part of the Polytechnic's academic development and institutional capacity building programme. Both students and staff in the relevant Polytechnic Schools work closely with the Centres, the former as interns and project casuals, the latter as researchers and consultants to the centres.

In the meantime, the Polytechnic's academic programmes continue to evolve in response to national and industry needs and National Qualifications Framework (NQF) requirements. Indeed, the Polytechnic now offers 118 programmes by either full-time, part-time or distance study modes. These programmes can lead to certificates, diplomas, bachelor, bachelor honours and master's degrees. The Polytechnic's innovative orientation is evident in the variety of new qualifications now offered, including a Bachelor of Architecture Honours, Bachelor of Entrepreneurship Honours, Bachelor of Logistics and Supply Chain Management, Bachelor Honours in Logistics, Bachelor in Criminal Justice, Professional Bachelors in Civil, Electrical, Electronic, Mechanical and Mining Engineering, Bachelors of Bio-Medical and Environmental Health Sciences, and Master in Integrated Water Management, Transport Engineering, Information Technology.

The launch of the Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business has allowed the Polytechnic to introduce several world-class post-graduate and executive training programmes in leadership and business management, such as Masters in International Business and in Leadership and Change Management respectively.

It should be clear that the Polytechnic remains very much in touch with its academic mandate. The fact that it is the second most-highly placed institute of science and technology in the latest Webometrics ranking of African Universities and ahead of all South African Universities of Science and Technology shows, in fact, that the Polytechnic is perceived to be have joined the very elite of African Higher education institutions. We are immensely proud of this achievement and hope our graduands are, too.

Before I conclude I'd like to express the Polytechnic's deep appreciation to our Government for its ongoing and budgetary support. We are very grateful for the substantial increase in this year's budget allocation to the Polytechnic. However, we renew our appeal to Government to introduce the long-awaited funding formula as soon as possible to ensure equitable and principled allocations to all public Higher Education Institutions, not forgetting capital and other subventions.

Master of Ceremonies,

To conclude, I'd like to congratulate our graduates on behalf of the Council of the Polytechnic. Dear students, you are privileged to have received a unique form of Higher Education, one that has taught you more than theory and gave you more than a qualification. In addition to the knowledge and skills that you will need in your chosen professions, you also have been taught an impressive set of meta-skills. These include creative thinking abilities, an innovative mindset, and the knowledge to start your own businesses if you so wish - all honed and cemented in the years you spent at the Polytechnic. You are all set for success then, it seems.

However, before you go out there and conquer the world, consider a comment from someone I am sure you know well, even if not personally. He is Bill Gates - maybe the world's best-known university drop-out but definitely its biggest philanthropist. At this stage it is estimated that Mr Gates has donated more than US\$27 BILLION or more than 40% of his personal fortune to charity and upliftment projects throughout the world - with much more to come. No other philanthropist comes close. You may well ask: "Why?". A pointer to the answer lies in a quote from a speech he delivered.

Speaking at the 2007 Graduation Ceremony of Harvard University where he received an honorary doctorate, he made the following statement:

*"I learned a lot here at Harvard about new ideas in economics and politics. I got great exposure to the advances being made in the sciences. But humanity's greatest advances are not in its discoveries - but in how those discoveries are applied to reduce inequity. Whether through democracy, strong public education, quality health care, or broad economic opportunity - reducing inequity is the highest human achievement."*ⁱ

Think about it - what have you set your sights on, as the ultimate achievement of the career you plan to have and the life you plan to live?

I thank you.

ⁱ <http://www.zhoto.tistory.com/attachment/dk23.txt>