

Education

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Delay in the payment of teachers salaries and service providers

I address teachers and I ask them this question: how many of you have not received your salaries for more than three months? A big number will stand up. What an embarrassment to a Minister! The excuses I get from those responsible are unacceptable. I am again re-iterating my prior directive following my visit to the Regions that we must ensure that teachers get their salaries on time just like all other civil servants.

The delays in the payment of service providers should be avoided at all times. Those responsible, I now direct them from here to go and settle all the outstanding accounts!

Visits to schools and education facilities

We as staff members must be ground soldiers, field marshals sweating at the battle field. We must witness the changing reality continuously, by remaining engaged with principals and teachers!

As I indicated earlier, our core-business is Education! Ensure that our learners and students pass and pass well!

We should not be in a comfort zone and manage everything on remote control or under air conditioned offices.

Think out of the box and wider, think on your feet! Societal ills affecting education quality

Our society is engulfed by a myriad of man-induced ills. Our schools are not an exception. One disturbing issue is the high rate of teenage pregnancy between the ages of 13-17 years. Statistics indicate that 1493 girls dropped out of schools last year due to pregnancy. A total of 31 teachers were recorded to have been responsible for some pregnancies. Current measure to punish those who impregnate learners must be revised urgently and strengthened immediately. We have no excuse to wait. Management must attend to this.

Teachers have a Code of Conduct and must behave accordingly. Be traditional teachers.

Alcohol, drugs and discipline

Alcohol and drug abuse by some learners and teacher is a frightening development. Alcohol and drugs destroy the future of our children.

During the course of this year we will work with the law enforcement agencies to make sure that those who make drugs and alcohol available to learners bear the full wrath of the law. We cannot live in a law-less society. There are too many shebeens that are close to schools and a nuisance to schools. The morale fabric of our society is disintegrating in the full view of our eyes. Fu-

ture generations will judge us heavily if we neglect proper upbringing of our children.

Many of these ills are due to social problems. We should use all avenues. For example, there are broad based programs like the **EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS** which can holistically address these social problems such as stress, alcohol and drug abuse and all other social issues.

The time is now that each region should have a dedicated team of social workers to attend to these social ills at schools. Emotional problems of teachers and learners are real.

Discipline has gone through the window. Values of discipline, respect, commitment, hard-work, positive attitudes in learners and teachers are ingredients for quality education. We need to re-establish **DISCIPLINE**. Without discipline, there will be no education and learning.

The church, faith based entities and traditional leaders regarded as the chief corner stones and embodiments of morals, values and spirituality. Let them reclaim their role as fountains of hope to our children.

ICT, abuse of cell phones and the media

The quality of education is accelerated by using IT intelligently, innovatively and courageously. What we need is to build teachers capability to teach and use IT. Electrification of schools is urgent. We will continue coordinating with our colleagues responsible for electrification.

Schools have been instructed to develop internal policies to regulate the use of cell phones.

Cell phones may be used as a teaching aid but this must be with prior arrangement with the school Principal.

We have reports of learners who indecently film each other and who use cellphones to disturb teaching. Therefore, to the learners, as much as cell phones are used as teaching aids, it should be used with respect and responsibility and purely for educational purposes. I am concerned that some learners use the cellphone language for the school work, even for examination and hence cannot spell and write proper sentences.

The media is a potent weapon in the achievement of quality education. I invite members of both the print and electronic media to continue working with the Ministry. We need you, the learners and students need you! I appreciate your educational work.

Cleanliness and maintenance of schools and Ministry buildings

Many of our buildings are neglected. Blatantly put, many of our schools and Ministry buildings are dirty. Some Vocational and Tertiary Centres also worry me. I see disorder. A circular has been issued instructing that learners should



Job Amupanda, Former Student's Representative Council President at UNAM making a point after the Minister's address. Photo by Anna Nakambale.

clean their school environment.

Every learner should contribute to a clean and healthy school environment. At times I feel nauseated and ashamed by the state of some schools and Ministry buildings. Each Regional Director, each Principal, each Head of any Educational Institution is directed to ensure that schools and buildings are clean. Let each school have a school cleaning plan.

Routine and preventative maintenance must be performed regularly. For example, the cleaning of gutters, the fixing of leaking taps, the unblocking of drains, the paintings of schools, the replacement of door locks and hinges, the repair of broken windows and the replacement of bulbs are minor civil works that any school can do, any Education Institution can do.

The management of the Ministry must finalized the establishment of the engineering Unit within the Ministry and ensure that each region has an artisan equipped with a tool box. We cannot just continue to have good intentions of an Engineering Unit. They say "the way to Hell is paved with best intentions".

Again, I re-iterate my directive to make the entrance to the Ministry's Head Office conducive and attractive to the public and in particularly to the learners/students.

Activities of Namibia Training Authority (NTA)

A skilled work force is a key driver for any economy. We must build more vocational centres. I want a revolution in this area. Build and build vocational centres! I want to see proper-revision of the curriculum with Mathematics and Science included. I want to see the training of instructors. Let us get help from outside. Our friends want to help. Today, NTA has revised its governance structure by establishing industry Skills Committee. A funding model is being developed to fund vocational education on the country. Let the training levy be finalised before July this year.

Activities of Namibia

Qualification Authority (NQA)

NQA is a statutory body with the mandate to establish National Qualifications Framework. In 2010 NQA has quality assured more than 100 different qualifications and about 500 national competence standards for various occupational classes.

A total of 36 institutions have been accredited to offer various courses. NQA has also evaluated about 2500 qualifications during 2010. Let the work of NQA be intensified in all front.

Activities of Life Long Learning and Adult Education

The Ministry has deployed computers and connected 28 public/community libraries to internet for public use

The remaining 35 centers would be equipped in 2011 to 2013. A total of 18 librarians are registered with UNISA to do BA and/or master degree in Information Science.

The Ministry has enrolled 33,000 adult Education learners for literacy programmes in 2010 compared to 20,700 in 2009. During the course of

2011 I would like to see the intensification of the Life Long Learning and Adult Education. We are on the right path.

Activities of Research, Science and Technology (S&T)

Science and Technology will play a pivotal role in the transformation of Namibia from a resource based to a knowledge based economy.

I am concerned that there exist low innovation capacities, poor networks, and low investments in S&T and low number of highly skilled technical and scientific human and institutional capabilities.

It is high time that Management start paying greater attention to the sector of research, science and technology through the following interventions. This year I want to see the creation of the pending National Commission on Research, Science and Technology and the National Research, Science and Technology Fund. These must be adequately capacitated and financed.

Delays in establishing this Commission and the Fund has led to Namibia not having its own Biotechnology and the Agriculture Research Councils as stipulated in the Research, Science and Technology Act of 2004.

The Directorate Research Science and Technology is managing Science and Technology Bilateral Agreements with Countries such as Argentine, Angola, Mozambique, Germany and South Africa with Botswana, Russia, Croatia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zambia and so forth. All these Bilateral Agreements are supposed to benefit the Namibian Research Community. This is however not happening because there is no dedicated research funding from the Namibian side.

Activities of NAMCOL

In total 32,093 candidates enrolled with NAMCOL in 2010. NAMCOL does not

employ its own full time teachers. NAMCOL engages teachers from formal education. In a way, it competes and uses same teachers on part time basis. This situation poses a challenge to both formal schools and NAMCOL. This compromises teaching at formal schools and at NAMCOL. It is worrisome that a number of candidates do not attend contact sessions on regular basis and many children drop out before examinations. They unfortunately join the army of the unemployed. In 2010 close to 2 000 candidates registered with NAMCOL did not turn up to write examinations.

National Conference on Education 2011

We are planning for a National Conference on Education tentatively scheduled for June 2011. As a nation we will come together around the African fire to deliberate on how to continue transforming our Education system. We have done a lot since independence. We must continue that journey.

We will regroup and marshal our forces together to mount the future. We will first have an informed, objective Audit of our education system. Such an Audit will offer us a proper diagnosis of the deficiencies and strengths in our Education system.

Final word

Let Education remain the key to opening doors to a better future. Let Education open doors to those who were denied opportunities not to succeed in life. Let education break barriers. Education is a tool to restore our dignity as a nation. Let us work together as a bonded team.

My words to learners and students "stay focused and disciplined. Work hard and make your parents and the nation proud".

May I also borrow the wise words of a former golf champion (Garry Player) who once said: "the harder you work, the luckier you get"

I pray that we as a Nation work together and succeed!



Part of the crowd that was addressed by Dr Abraham Iyambo. Photo by Anna Nakambale.