

Public service

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bound.

I recall a personal experience that would serve a perfect example of the distinction between outcome and output. I had asked a senior civil servant to inform a minister that I would like him to attend a meeting with me the next day at 10am. The civil servant efficiently sent out an email to the minister. However, he did not confirm if the minister got the email. The next day, the minister did not come to the meeting because he did not come to the office until

11 am. If the civil servant had followed up on the e mail, we would have had a much better outcome – output 100%, outcome 0; efficiency 100%, effectiveness 0.

We also need a newer mindset in this information age. In today's knowledge society, the primary distinction between success and failure is how good you are at securing, harnessing and using knowledge. We largely have a fixed mindset.

For us, the word "permanent" in permanent secretary is a guarantee of a life time job.

Some even boast that ministers come and go, but permanent secretaries would always

be there. This mindset needs to change. We need to emphasize service, performance, effectiveness, and outcome oriented thinking. I have been advocating the need of performance based appointments for a fixed period.

Fair play is an essential ingredient of good government. Yet, we find perceptions of wrong doing and of corruption.

In order to address the grievances of the citizens against government representatives, we established the office of the ombudsman. We also established an anti-corruption Commission. Perceptions of corruption impact us negatively.

However, I would submit that we have petty corruption, but not systemic corruption. I ask you to tell me if we have systemic corruption in Namibia. Is there anyone who had to bribe someone in the government to get a passport or a national registration card, or any other service? This is not to deny that a poor civil servant who is offered a bribe might be tempted.

But I do not think that in Namibia you can only get things done if you bribed someone. I cannot imagine that a person will bribe every member of the Tender Board

to secure a tender.

Tell me, how would it work? I again submit that we do not have systemic corruption but let us keep those red lights flickering, so that we will always be vigilant.

All sectors of society working together is another aspect that is vital for national development.

In countries like Singapore and Malaysia, and elsewhere, the business people and the politicians are from the same historical and cultural background. They went to the same universities – some became businessmen and women and some civil servants. Not so in

Namibia. In Namibia businessmen and women are largely white and politicians black. Business people's perception is often at variance with the fact. We have tried to hold hands but every so often we come across bigotry.

Recall the German who told Karonda, the Secretary General of the NNUNW – telling him that it was the Germans who had built the country.

Attributing such wild claims to a race – well that is Namibia for us after 20 years.

Accountability requires continuous surveillance by the media and the civil society. These, fourth estate institutions are the mirror of the society. The state must provide room for them to function properly. Namibia has a good record of providing this space.

How relevant the media and other civil society institutions remain over time depends on their conduct.

What the readers want is not speculation but accuracy, not rumours but facts. Ronning¹ correctly argues that the new type of sensationalist newspapers "are highly critical of government, both the new and the old, which personalise political issues, run campaigns against officials and politicians, expose scandals of economic, political and private character ... which often shows poor journalistic judgement and oversteps unwritten, but internationally accepted ethical rules."

The media's obsession with sensationalism weakens the interpretation of journalism as the great leveller, a righter of wrongs, a humbler of the mighty, a watchdog against the abuse of power, an agent to 'comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable,' which is very much in question today.² "One venue of critique sees journalism as having shifted from watchdog to mad dog, mindlessly attacking authority (especially governments), avoiding 'serious' news about public affairs in favour of scandals, celebrities and 'infotainment.'"³

However, we can claim that civil society in Namibia is vibrant but many challenges remain. Women are not integrated in the political and economic life of the country. Unemployment is high. But it is certainly not as bad as that in many other parts of Africa. Recently ETV pointed out that unemployment in South Africa is 50%. South Africa is also the most unequal places in the world, replacing Brazil. In Namibia, too, there is great inequity with high gini coefficient.

That is what happens in racially stratified societies. Yet, this is the challenge that we, that is, the business and the government must meet together.

The biggest challenge, however, was the transformation of the civil service which was controlled by whites. Key to our problems of unemployment is – Education and Training, Skills development or Multi-skilling.

We have still lots of problems. But Namibia is still the place I want to call my home.



20th

Independence Anniversary

The Board of Directors, management and staff of Agribank wishes the Founding Father of the Namibian Nation, Dr. Sam Nujoma, his successor, His Excellency, President Hifikepunye Pohamba and the Namibian Nation at large, a Happy 20th Independence Anniversary.

Celebrating 20 years of Namibia's Independence is celebrating freedom, peace, unity and prosperity which are the pillars for socio-economic development.

On this auspicious occasion, Agribank pledges to continuously contribute towards the promotion of national food security, thereby accelerating the attainment of Vision 2030.

“Continuously preparing the Namibian nation towards food self reliance”.



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