

LEARNING THE HARD WAY IN NAMIBIA

By Josephat Sinvula

Money problems loom large at both the University of Namibia and the Polytechnic of Namibia. Indeed, a single problem encountered by administrators is relying almost exclusively on government funding almost 21 years after independence.

The bottom line is that when that funding is cut due to budgetary pressures now endemic to a developing country such as Namibia, educators have trouble finding other ways to pay the bills—the institution's as well as their own. Budget cuts also mean less pay for professors and administrators: some students say many have turned to bribery to "supplement" their salaries.

We all recall the so-called "Angolagate" scandal at the University of Namibia a couple of years ago whereby some Angolan students with fake qualifications were admitted to pursue courses and some staff members who squandered huge amounts of funds from the university coffers. And it does not end there. It is alleged that every year, some students of certain higher institutions of higher learning bribe their lec-

tures to pass their term examinations. The practice is so widespread that there is almost no risk of getting caught: students prefer guaranteed marks to exposing corrupt lecturers and professors.

Even the Polytechnic of Namibia, widely regarded as Namibia's finest, has been caught in the money mess. "Confused, bewildered, underfunded and angry" is how one of the senior lecturers describes the current state of the system. In the past 21 years, the number has quadrupled whereas public spending has declined considerably. Many in Namibia worry about able students from impoverished backgrounds being shut out due to the ever rising fees and inadequate bursaries.

Faculty salaries are also considerably below the national average, which has meant a drain of some of Namibia's best brains. Inadequate funding turns off academic stars in other ways as well. Much more important are research facilities—that is, state-of-the-art research facilities which are lacking at such institutions.



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Government control can be a burden even when the money keeps flowing. With the Ministry of Education acting as "Big Brother", the Namibian education system does not allow enough flexibility in everything—from paying tuition to choosing classes. Parents must pay in full—a particular burden since tuition has risen tenfold since independence. Academic rigidity turns off some of Namibia's best students, who are forced to pick majors while they are still in Grade 12. There is no

room for intellectual experimentation.

Most of us who had the privilege of acquiring education from some of the best Universities elsewhere are even more outraged about the sorry state of Namibia's university which can be described as "intellectual rubble". That may sound harsh but few Namibian academics would disagree. The problems are many: a dearth of qualified, students ill prepared by a dismal public education system, an often incompetent university bureaucracy and blatant government intervention.

Professors have been turned into unmotivated civil servants, paid according to seniority rather than merit. On campuses, serious discussion of scientific, philosophic, social or political issues is virtually non-existent. It is difficult to imagine a system in the modern world which has a greater antipathy to intellectual inquiry than the one which currently exists in Namibia.

Namibia must, therefore, introduce a huge reform effort, much of which involves copy-

ing the United States of America. The first step is to give the University of Namibia and Polytechnic of Namibia more autonomy, while avoiding outright privatization, so that each institution can do its own fund-raising and pick its own students, raising quality. The rest should be channeled into Vocational and Trade Colleges. More and more professors and lecturers should be paid on merit.

It is ironic that at a time when so many are decrying U.S. imperialism, they are openly copying America's educational system in order to keep their talent at home.

At the University of Namibia and Polytechnic, professors and lecturers teach and you take notes. At American universities, there is more communication between students and professors. Students sit and brainstorm. You can even tell jokes (Socratic Method). No wonder students from all over the world flock to American universities due to America's tradition of academic freedom and its stellar

research facilities.

As higher education becomes more of a global commodity in the next few decades, it is crucial that Namibia's institutions of higher learning learn from the American example. Unlike most countries, the United States has always encouraged educational diversity, some kind of free-market approach. As Barmak Nassirian of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers eloquently put it, "We let folks decide for themselves". In other words, let the best ideas win.

Josephat Sinvula holds a B.Sc. in Urban Studies & Planning from Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, USA, MPA from Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA & is a Ph.D Candidate in Political Science. He is currently employed as Director of Human Resources, Finance & Administration at Oshana Regional Council in Oshakati, Oshana Region. The views expressed in this article are his personal views.

LOCAL TENDER BOARD

FOR THE CITY OF WINDHOEK



Expression of Interest

Tender No: TRA 137/2011

Title: REPLACEMENT AND OPERATION/MANAGEMENT OF A NEW PARKING METER SYSTEM FOR THE CITY OF WINDHOEK

Description: The CITY of Windhoek hereby invites capable and competent service providers to submit proposals for the replacement and management of new parking meter system in the City. Presentations will be requested. Based on the proposals received, the City will invite selected bidders to make further presentations/submissions to the City.

A compulsory **Clarification Meeting** shall take place with the City representative(s), on 24 March 2011, at 11:00 at CCC.

Scope:

- Replace existing parking meters with new parking meter system. 1 200 parking meters to be replaced.
- Comprehensive proposal on the management thereof.
- Comprehensive technical proposal on the system.
- Operational requirements (management / maintenance)
- Detailed financial proposal.
- Company Profile
- Proven implementation of the proposed concept / system at other local authorities, and relevant references.

Closing Date: Friday, 08 APRIL 2011 AT 11:00

Briefing Documents: N/A

Briefing: A compulsory **Clarification Meeting** shall take place with the City representative(s), on 24 March 2011, at 11:00 at Customer Care Centre, Rev Michael Scott Street, Town House

Levy: N/A

Enquiries Technical: Mr. H Lisse

Tel: (+264-61) 290 2468

Fax: (+264-61) 290 2060

E-mail: hli@windhoekcc.org.na

Enquiries Procurement: Mrs. A. S. David

Tel: +264-(0) 61-290 2270

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Notice No.13/2011

NBC

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and reason to be proud of this great country. We need applications from all qualified Namibians to fill any vacancy at NBC without fear or favour and it is a fight I and the NBC board are prepared for. NBC WILL reflect the national demographics and the cultural diversity of Namibia very soon and even the "Concerned members of the NBC Family" can bet on that one.

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In conclusion, may we inform all progressive

Namibians that the honeymoon is over at NBC and we are all going to be working very hard to build a multimedia public broadcaster of choice in Africa. Those who are opposed to that vision are at liberty to jump off the train before it leaves the train station.

I remain

-signed-
albertus aochamub

Director General: NBC

Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta



In the picture, the Roundtable Guys at Ai/Gams with Standard Bank Namibia MD Mpumzi Pupuma, doing there part in supporting cancer in Namibia!!

Speaking at the donation hand-over of medical supplies and clothes, representative Ms Francesca Annese, on behalf of the Ambassador Prof. Dr. Marcello Bandettini, said that they would like to in future be more involved with humanitarian assistance through awareness campaigns for the Cancer Association in

the rural areas of Namibia. The Orders mission is to be at the service of the poor, the sick and those who are on the fringe of society. It has 12,500 members, 80 000 permanent volunteers, supported by a further 11 000 people, among them, doctors and nurses.

She mentioned that there was a growing need for all of

us to become more aware that Cancer is becoming a World wide disease to be recognized with. The representative of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta - Ms. Francesca Annese, and Mrs. Cheryl Ferreira (representative for the Cancer Association of Namibia.)