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 “Angolanate” 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 always there that a drain of 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 uninvited civil servants, paid according to seniority rather than merit. Decampers, serious discussion of scientific, philosophical, 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. Parents must pay in full—a paradox in everything—from pay-per-view to schooling, from universities due to imperialism, they are openly encouraged educational diversification. Namibia must, therefore, introduce a huge reform effort, much of which involves copying 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 channelled 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. dominancy and 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 & 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. I remain -signed-alberteus aosamuh Namibian 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.

LEARNING THE HARD WAY IN NAMIBIA

By Josephat Sinvula

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Director General: NBC

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Military Hospitaler Order of StJohn of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta

In the picture, the Roundtable Guys at AlGami with Standard Bank Namibia MD Muyamkangomo, 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 Namibian 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 the imperiled, they are open to all 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. Those who are open to that spirit are welcome to the Sovereign Military Hospitaler Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta - Ms. Francesca Annese, and Mrs. Cheryl Fullard (representing for the Cancer Association of Namibia.)