

Poly now officially a UNIVERSITY

The Polytechnic of Namibia has officially become the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). The announcement was made by the Honourable Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation, Dr Itah Kandjii-Murangiri, by Notice in the Government Gazette of 16 November 2015.

A happy Vice-Chancellor of the Namibia University of Science and Technology, Tjama Tjivikua, informed an auditorium packed to capacity by administrative and academic staff, students and visiting scholars from partner universities, that the Namibia University of Science and Technology Act, Act 7 of 2015 had come into operation with immediate effect on the above date.

"The gazetting has shown that anything is possible and now it is essential that we move to the next stage. We must turn the page," Tjivikua told the assembly.

He extended his gratitude to the university community and all other NUST stakeholders who have contributed to the success of having the institution transformed to a university. "This is a journey that started some two decades ago when I came on board and today, we celebrate a unique moment that sets the tone and pace for the future. All of us owe one another a debt of gratitude and compliments for having dedicated ourselves to this good cause and having developed this institution to what it is today."

In a brief interview after the meeting, Tjivikua described the achievement as only one step along a very long path. "It has been a long rocky road; it was never smooth. We encountered a lot of opposition from within and outside the institution, but we knew that



Vice-Chancellor, Tjama Tjivikua

change is not easy for some people. In the process, we have learnt to do things better and we have learnt to make peace with the outcomes when we did not get what we wanted, and we also learnt to deal with victory.

"We did everything possible to create a respectable university because we had a great vision. This dream lives on; we cannot become stagnant, because then we will become irrelevant," the Vice-Chancellor said.

"I'm elated. I'm satisfied that it has finally happened and I am fortunate to be in charge of the newest university globally. We worked hard to take it to this level. It's about the future of this nation, creating new possibilities, not only for Namibians, but for others, for the world. It brings prosperity and prestige to the country.

"It brings credibility to our education system. It takes to the world and brings the world to Namibia; it is important to bring other academics and scholars to your country. We are taking Namibia to the next level.

"Let us celebrate this victorious moment together, let us take this moment as a springboard for future growth and prosperity of this institution. You cannot have a prosperous nation with failing institutions - the two must go hand-in-hand. Human Capital and institutions are the foundation stones of a nation," Tjivikua said.

Quoting a popular idiom, he concluded: "Nothing can stop a dream whose time has come!"



German efficiency impresses students

Two students from the Department of Informatics, Naemi Sakaria and Pombili Nghihalwa, recently returned from a visit to Flensburg University of Applied Sciences in Germany where they participated in the university's Autumn School.

The two students participated in a workshop titled "Business Scenarios for Cargocopters in Africa," and were also contestants in a "Supply Chain Simulation Game" together with their counterparts from Kenya, Cameroon and their German hosts. The two Namibians also visited a number of industries in the Flensburg region that included Intershalt (software), Krones (manufacturing), TNT (warehousing) and Flensburg Brewery (processes), and also undertook excursions to the Port of Hamburg and a trip to neighbouring Denmark.

Sakaria said she was impressed with Germany's work ethic which is characterised by passion for quality, reliability and integrity that have made the country a technological and economic powerhouse.

Nghihalwa added: "Germany is a magnificent and diverse country, yet so organised and time-conscious, which enhances predictability and management of both human and organisational growth."

Their lecturer, Josphat Mukabi, who is also the Deputy Head of the Informatics Department, accompanied the students on the trip,

and said: "The international and cross-cultural interactions enabled the students to embrace innovative and divergent thinking, which is needed in tackling both local and global challenges."

The visit was sponsored by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and covered all costs, including travel and accommodation.

Right: Josphat Mukabi (second from left, front row) pictured with the students, Pombili Nghihalwa (third from left, front row) and Naemi Sakaria (second from left, second row) at Flensburg Harbour, Germany.



Michael Nauta, left, was one of the entrepreneurs who displayed his invention at the Mini-Maker Fair. He is pictured showing off a drone that he built to Noritz Schroeder, Himeezembi Kahorongo, Gabriel Nampila and Mark Mushiva.

Skills honed on wheels

A group of emerging young business people from more than five countries embarked on a seven-day entrepreneurship boot camp on a bus, courtesy of Ampion, a Berlin-based accelerator and advisory firm that promotes technology entrepreneurship in Africa.

The Ampion bus crew was hosted by the Poly's FabLab Namibia, an advanced manufacturing, prototyping and design laboratory.

The Ampion Venture Bus programme entails four buses with over 200 entrepreneurs and their mentors, touring the continent. The topics covered on the buses range from e-health to hardware and agriculture, depending on what is applicable to a specific region. Computer hardware and agriculture were selected for the Southern African tour. Ampion scouts talented individuals who strive to enhance their skills, grow their international network of entrepreneurs, business partners and investors and are determined to build a new company.

FabLab used the opportunity prior to the bus trip to host a Mini-Maker Fair where NUST students and members of the public showcased their inventions and innovations, creating an ideal networking platform for the group.

The participants include students in various programmes such as Psychology and Environmental Studies, but who all have a passion for business.

Craig Dube is a 22-year old Psychology student at the Midlands State University in Zimbabwe and part of a start-up that promotes companies via the Internet. He said: "At this point in time, I am not too focused on the financial benefits that can be presented by this opportunity, but more on the knowledge I am going to walk away with."

The co-founder of Ampion, Iteanyi Oteh, also speaking at the Mini-Maker Fair in Windhoek, said: "We need viable solutions to relevant problems. If you invent a spaceship and no one wants to go to space, it means you need to find another idea, a practical one."

From Windhoek, the entrepreneurs travelled to Botswana, then South Africa, making stops in various cities for networking purposes. During the trip, the participants were expected to come up with innovative business ideas which would eventually be pitched to potential investors at their final destination in Cape Town.

NUST is keen to create a platform where students can transform innovative business ideas into tangible products, and centres such as FabLab Namibia are at the forefront of this drive.