

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INNOVATION:

MINISTER'S RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS POSED IN PARLIAMENT

ON

The Merger of the Four (4) Colleges of Education with UNAM

Honorable Speaker, Honorable Members,

Firstly, I wish to thank the Hon Smit for the three questions asked.

However before I venture into answering the three questions (3) asked, allow me to give a brief background to help contextualize and establish the rationale for the merger of the four (4) Colleges of Education, with the University of Namibia (UNAM).

The Advisory Council on Teachers' Education and Training (ACTET) started to review teacher education and training in 2006.

ACTET was primarily established, among other things, to advise the Minister of Education on the direction of the teacher education and training at the then four (4) Colleges of Education at Ongwediva, Rundu, Caprivi and in Windhoek.

This Advisory body, the ACTET undertook the Teacher Education Reform Programme, which recommended that the four Colleges be merged with UNAM's Faculty of Education.

A number of studies were conducted and highlighted challenges in the education system and the findings revealed then that, the General Education system was not effectively preparing learners to contribute meaningfully to Vision 2030. For instance, it was found that learners at both Upper Primary and Junior Secondary School levels had poor numeracy and literacy skills.

Moreover, The Basic Education Teacher's Diplomas (BETD) was found to be lacking sufficient content, and with no well-articulated progression path, for those who needed to study further.

Furthermore, for many years the Colleges struggled to establish an identity for themselves as tertiary institutions within the structure of the Ministry of Education in terms of Management; Funding; Support Services and Quality Assurance.

These problems and others pointed squarely at the inadequacies in teacher education in the country.

Honorable Speaker, Honorable Members,

An improved and quality education system was identified as the fundamental vehicle for equipping citizens with requisite knowledge, competencies and skills, to support the knowledge economy, reduce unemployment and to ensure long term sustainable development in the country.

The Advisory Council on Teacher Education and Training (ACTET) under the able Chairmanship of the late **Dr. Mose Penaani Tjitendero** the founding speaker of this august house (May his soul continue to rest in peace and rise in glory) made credible recommendations which were implemented on April 1st, 2011. The four Colleges of Education were merged with UNAM's Faculty of Education. Subsequently, the BETD was gradually phased out and replaced by the Bachelors of Education (B.Ed.) degree.

The benefits of the merger are evident to all:

- Quality assurance mechanisms are in place
- Improved qualifications of teacher educators with Bachelor's degrees; Masters and Ph.Ds *abound*
- Research output has increased.
- Efficient use of resources are applied.
- Proper governance structures with clear support structures are in place.
- Improved infrastructure such as – libraries resources, laboratories and ICT centers have been built or upgraded.
- High standards of assessment have been put in place.
- Lower Primary phase improved, in the teaching of literacy and numeracy – Teacher Education specialization in Pre- & Lower Primary now focus on effective teaching of literacy and numeracy.
- Proper Articulation mechanisms which are clearly mapped out from one level to the other are in place to ensure continuity for further studies.

I would also like to state that, the merger was aimed at Quality rather than Quantity. Nonetheless, the merger in itself did not cause or bring about the shortage of teachers in the country but to enhance Quality.

It is true that there was shortage of teachers even before the merger and there are still. Having said that, the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation (MHETI) concurs with other stakeholders that the critical shortage of teachers need urgent attention and interventions. There is clearly room for improvement in this respect, and we as the Ministries responsible for Education and Training are having our hands on deck to ensure that this critical mass of educators is put in place for adequate qualitative and quantitative education provision throughout our beloved country Namibia.

Now to answer the specific questions as asked, I would like to answer as follows:

QUESTION 1

Does the Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation (HETI) agree with the statement made by the Minister of Education, Arts and Culture (EA&C), and if so what is the Ministry doing in this regard?

Looking at the quality of teacher education and training in our country today, I speak with pride and confidence when I say the merger has transformed and set teacher education on the right path.

It is in the interest of Namibia and all her citizens to unconditionally enhance quality in Teacher Education and Training as we explore and venture into accelerated approaches to address the quantity question.

In 2014, the first batch of over 120 students, graduated with B.Ed degrees from UNAM – well-grounded in their respective subjects of expertise and pedagogical methods suited for Lower and Primary School levels.

The merger was effected 4 years ago and need to be allowed to consolidate to reach its full momentum and intended impact.

QUESTION 2

If the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation (MHETI) does not share the same sentiments, will the situation as it relates to teacher education and training remain as it is?

Teacher education and training is key in un-locking, sharpening and harnessing the citizenry's knowledge, competencies and skills for development. Uniformity and standardization are key to this unlocking processes.

All academic programmes at UNAM including the teacher education and training programmes are subjected to curriculum reviews after 3-4 years, and benchmarked on best practice regionally and internationally.

All academic programmes must be registered on the Namibia Qualification Framework (at the right level) of the (NQF) under Namibia Qualification Authority (NQA).

However, one major challenge facing Namibia currently is un-qualified and under-qualified teachers within our school system.

These categories of teachers are receiving attention from both Ministries of Education – The Minister of Education, Arts and Culture (EA&C) has already sent a word to the regions to identify teachers who fall in these categories so that their upgrading can take place.

A Joint Committee of both our Ministries is in place, to work out modalities of running a teacher upgrading programme without disrupting the teaching schedules of the affected teachers.

The two Ministries of Education are thus hard at work, to put in place a programme to reduce the number of unqualified and under-qualified teachers in the school system. University of Namibia (UNAM) and

National Institute of Education Development (NIED) are fully involved to work out the detail modalities on how best to tackle this problem.

QUESTION 3

What plans are in place to improve the quality of teacher education and training and what is Government doing to address the critical shortage of teachers?

To a certain extent, answers to questions 1 and 2 above address this third question. Nonetheless, May I buttress the fact that the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation (MHETI) is aware of its mandate to educate; to train to quality and to innovate.

The MHETI is seized with this matter and we are currently looking at an earlier submission by UNAM's Faculty of Education to the then MoE to find a common ground on how best to make forward on this critical issue that is at the center of our core business as a Ministry.

Hon. Speakers, Hon. Members, and specifically Hon. Smit, May I assure you that as soon as a common understanding is reached and resources found, we will respond to the problem of teachers' shortage, head on. The idea is to institute this as early as next year (2016).

Thank you Hon. Speaker.