



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

BUDGET SPEECH

FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/4

VOTE 32

Honourable Dr. Itah Kandjii-Murangi, MP

Minister of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation

28 March 2023

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

I rise to motivate and seek approval from this August House, for the Budget Vote 32, of the Ministry of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation (MHETI) for the Financial Year 2023/2024.

Globally, many countries transform their economies through targeted investments in the development of critical mass of knowledge-workers; technically and vocationally skilled personnel; establishing robust national system of innovation and research, and also, by harnessing the services of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics process automation (RPA), Internet of Things (IoT), an integral part of higher education, training and innovation, to accelerate development.

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

New developments and discoveries of green hydrogen, oil and gas, in Namibia, offer unique opportunities to jump start industrialization, and effectively roll out the growth at home strategy. Namibia's vast renewable energy resources have the potential to make our country achieve large-scale and low-cost renewable energy development; design models to optimize fiscal revenue in a sustainable manner; and make crucial contributions towards decarbonising the economy.

The attainment and accrual of the foregoing possible benefits and advantages will depend, to a large extent, on building the right mix of local human capital and institutional capacity at our universities, TVET and other Colleges. Equally important, is the strategic alignment our National Education System, particularly the higher education and training sector, to respond to new and future developments and discoveries.

It is at the tertiary education level that educational and career pathways become clearer. Also, it is at this level that TVET and other Colleges, as well as University students are taught to acquire and deepen their technical, digital and academic knowledge and skills, to lay the foundation for diverse requisite skillsets that are set to meet the demands of the economy.

Special attention is therefore needed to attend to the demands of the emerging economic niche areas, through targeted relevant technical, digital, and academic programmes. An adaptive, responsive and properly coordinated higher education and training system, is an imperative for Namibia. One that safeguards and ensures that there is sustainable production of diverse quality graduates, who are versatile and fit-for-purpose.

At this juncture, I would like to assure you, Honourable Members and the Namibian public at large that, the country's public universities, TVET and other Colleges are ready and prepared to educate and train in different academic programmes and technical trades, needed for the emerging fields. I can report further that the majority of the green hydrogen Master's Level scholarship recipients will study locally at NUST and UNAM. It is also true that the majority of those awarded to study at the technical level will study locally at some TVET Colleges. Local universities and technical colleges will work in partnerships with identified universities and technical institutions across the globe, to deepen requisite theoretical and practical knowledge, competences and skills for well-grounded specializations.

Namibia has a youth population dividend of more than 65% of the country's population, providing a gateway to transforming this demographic dividend into an economic opportunity through provision of relevant quality education and leveraging on digital skills with a specific focus on AI technologies, to optimize opportunities for sustainable exploration of the country's natural resources, job creation and overall development.

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc in all spheres of human life, but has also propelled the nations of the world to a threshold of new trends and norms; to the verge of new innovations and inventions. The higher education and training sector has successfully transitioned to a blended mode of education and training provision, including using simulations for technical and vocational programmes. However, there is still more work to be done in the space of Online Education, Simulations and overall Computer-aided-teaching and learning.

It is on the backdrop of the many apparent economic challenges, sluggish economic growth and the negative impact on the higher education and training sectors, that the Minister of Finance and Public Enterprises crafted and presented a budgetary provision for the Higher Education, Technology and Innovation sector of **Three Billion Eight Hundred and Thirty-Seven Million, Six Hundred and Forty Eight Thousand Namibian Dollars** (N\$3,837,648,000.00). Of which, the total allocation of N\$995 million is earmarked for UNAM, N\$509 million for NUST and N\$1.6 billion for NSFAF. I would like to thank the Minister of F&PE, the DG for crafting this budget.

The higher education and training sector has been experiencing an exponential growth in student numbers, which stands at about 70 000 for universities and 36 000 at TVET Colleges. In addition, a number of new programmes, such as dentistry, veterinary medicine, the introduction of agriculture at TVET Colleges, require staffing and new subject-specific infrastructure, laboratories as well as operational materials.

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Hon Members,**

Notwithstanding these challenges, there has been unrelenting efforts to sustain quality in higher education through programmes' accreditation and institutional

registration, among others. The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) conducted an external review of seventy-two (72) programmes for accreditation purposes, during the year 2022/3. The majority of these, sixty-four (64) programmes are from UNAM.

The massive accreditation at UNAM is prompted by the academic programmes' audit drive that overhauled the institution's curriculum framework, to response to the needs of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the labour market needs. Besides the production of competitive graduates, accreditation also inspires confidence in higher education higher education institutions, staff, sponsors and industry.

The stark reality of the impact of Covid-19, is that, many parents lost their income, while the demand for student funding has significantly increased. As a result, during the past academic year (2022) the Namibia Students Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF) awarded loans to 41,444 Namibian students at a cost of N\$ 1.5 billion.

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

The primary challenge facing UNAM and NUST is the reduced subsidy to meet the persistent increasing need for access to equitable quality higher education. It is through adequate resourcing of our public universities and TVET Colleges that quality higher education and training education can be maintained.

The delivery of education and training is a shared responsibility, and thus our Private institutions contribute to the expansion of students' access to higher education. As such, two institutions were registered as private higher education institutions during 2022. However, a challenge is that the majority of the private higher education institutions are concentrated in a specific region, mainly Khomas, with a skewed focus some specific disciplines, notably education; business and commerce, as well as nursing.

In recent times, we have observed with great concern an increase in unregistered private higher education institutions trying to operate unlawfully in Namibia. The Ministry in collaboration with regulatory, quality assurance and professional bodies, such as the National Council on Higher Education (NCHE), Namibia Quality Assurance (NQA), the Health Professions Council of Namibia (HPCN) and others, have in many cases stopped and cancelled the operation of these institutions, sometimes through enlisting the support of law enforcement.

Despite the very difficult environment we are working in, credit should go to our staff, including those at our public enterprises, led by the Executive Director, Dr Alfred Van Kent who continue to seek innovative solutions to deal with the many issues of the sector as far as it is practically possible.

Bold steps are being taken to address the infrastructure challenges at our various institutions across the country. The effective utilization of the allocated N\$ 87 million for capital projects will see the completion and start of some projects. The Ministry secured the necessary vacant land and will begin planning for the construction of the Student Village/Accommodation. Planning has also commenced to enlist the services of a potential investor that is expected to come into operation during the current Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period. The student village project will incorporate clean energy, green technologies and affordable residential units for students.

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

It is evident that the Government of the Republic of Namibia is committed to ensuring that our people have equal access to quality education. Last year the NUST Eenhana Campus was realized. In the near future NUST will formally its presence by establishing campuses in the Karas and Otjozondjupa Regions.

As the momentum for green solutions and clean energy intensifies, NUST's future focus is primed on using technology to address fundamental basic needs for the local and global contexts.

In this respect, NUST has committed to the following:

- a) International collaboration on Food, Energy, and Water Security-strengthening. Cooperation between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Africa will increase access to quality education and will encourage and enable African students to undertake postgraduate studies in the African continent in the area of Food, Energy and Water Security.
- b) Flagship programme in Integrated Water Resources Management - the first-ever Southern African Science Services Centre for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management (SASSCAL) Graduate Studies Programme in Integrated Water Resources Management was established in the Southern African Region recently, with NUST as the host institution.

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

The National Commission for Research, Science and Technology is implementing the second National Programme on Research, Science, Technology and Innovation as well as implementing several science promotion activities at regional, national, and international levels. These programmes will include National Innovation Survey, National Innovation Challenge for Women, National Mathematics Olympiad, Journal Accreditation Policy and National Science Week.

In the TVET space, new programmes including solar energy, mechatronics, leather works with workshops at seven Public TVET Colleges were completed. These include, the Khorixas and the Kai//gaxab TVET Colleges that were developed and upgraded respectively and will become operational, this year. We also expect that the Keetmanshoop and Nkurenkuru and Okakarara TVET Colleges will be completed by December 2023.

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

I, therefore, request this august house to support and approve the total budget of Vote 32 of **Three Billion Eight Hundred and Thirty-Seven Million, Six Hundred and Forty Eight Thousand Namibian Dollars** (N\$3,837,648,000) for the Ministry of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation for the 2023/4 financial year.

I so submit.