



**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

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**MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

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**BUDGET SPEECH**

**FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/2025**

**VOTE 32**

**Honourable Dr. Itah Kandjii-Murangi, MP**

**Minister of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation**

**March 2024**

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

**Honourable Members,**

I rise before you today with a profound sense of responsibility and commitment 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 2024/2025.

Many nations around the world, in particular many African States, have committed to transforming their economies from mainly natural resources based to knowledge intensive industrial economies, with high level of outputs of high value goods and services. This transformation requires strategic investment in key sectors such as Higher Education, Technical Vocational Education and Training and STEM areas. In addition, investment in Research and Development, Institutional and Human capacity development are imperatives for informed and evidence based public policy development.

Through these strategic investments, countries nurture a sizable pool of knowledge-workers; foster technical and vocational expertise; and fortify national innovation and research frameworks. In our context, if properly targeted and promoted with sufficient funding, these sectors will assist Namibia to leverage the transformative capabilities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies, like Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics process automation (RPA), and the Internet of Things (IoT). The advantages of these technologies are seamlessly embedded in the higher education and training programs, innovation initiatives, and serve as catalysts for accelerating development and economic growth.

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

**Honourable Members,**

Recent developments and discoveries in Green Hydrogen, oil, and gas have profound implications for Namibia's development trajectory. The emergence of Green Hydrogen as a clean and renewable energy source presents a significant opportunity for Namibia to transition towards a low-carbon economy, while reducing reliance on fossil fuels. Investments in Green Hydrogen infrastructure and technology can ignite innovation, create new industries, and generate employment opportunities. However, the oil and gas sector continues to play a crucial role in many countries' economies, providing revenue streams, employment, and fuel for industrial activities.

The impact of shifting energy trends in Namibia's development, depends on its ability to adapt and capitalize on emerging opportunities while managing the challenges associated with transitioning from traditional energy sources. Forward-thinking policies that promote diversification, sustainability, and innovation will be

essential for Namibia to navigate this dynamic landscape and ensure long-term economic resilience and prosperity.

Going forward, the relevance of Namibia's higher and technical education system will depend on its readiness to adapt and respond to the contemporary and future national agenda; new discoveries and pressing socioeconomic challenges. Therefore, building the right mix of local human capital and institutional capacity at our universities, Technical and Vocational Education (TVET Colleges), and other Colleges is imperative for driving sustainable development and economic growth. By investing in quality higher education and skills training, we equip our youth and students with the knowledge, competencies, and practical experience necessary for them to thrive in today's dynamic job market. Fostering strong institutional capacity ensures that educational institutions effectively deliver relevant high-quality programs; adapt to evolving needs; and embed an insatiable quest to contribute to meaningful innovation and research initiatives. By nurturing a skilled workforce and enhancing the capabilities of our educational institutions, we unlock the full potential of our human capital, accelerate productivity gains; and foster inclusive development for the benefit of the whole nation

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At the tertiary education level, educational and career trajectories become more defined. Minimum Standards differentiate tertiary education institutions according to their categories; levels of qualification; and clear upward progression or articulation criteria. Minimum Standards are of paramount importance for they do not only distinguish institutions from each other in the tertiary education landscape, but primarily underlie the sequential cumulative learning expected to happen at the different categories of institutions.

Students at different categories of tertiary education institutions, (universities, TVET Colleges, other general Colleges), are equipped with varying levels of sophistication in academic, technical, digital, and all other competencies. The tertiary education stage serves as a crucial foundation for cultivating diverse knowledge, skills and competences that are crucial in meeting the evolving demands of the economy.

I am happy to report that last year, the Ministry of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation (MHETI) commissioned a study on the Minimum Standards for the Namibian higher education landscape. The report is ready for submission to Cabinet in April 2024.

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**Honourable Members,**

Special emphasis is required to address the requirements of emerging economic niche sectors by offering targeted academic, technical and digital programs. Namibia needs an adaptive and well-coordinated higher education and training system. A system that guarantees sustainable production of various high-quality graduates, who are versatile and well-suited for the demands of the present and future workforce.

At this juncture, let me assure you, Honourable Members and the Namibian public, that our nation's public universities, TVET Colleges and other colleges, are fast adapting to contemporary demands, and stand prepared to deliver education and training across various academic disciplines and technical fields required for the emerging sectors.

I am pleased to report that in the majority of the recipients of Youth 4Green Hydrogen (Y4GH) Scholarships, the 1st (2023) and 2nd (2024) cohorts, the majority of them are, and will pursue their studies at local universities and TVET Colleges. A sandwiched mode of delivery is adopted for studies under the Green Hydrogen Project.

Initial studies at Masters and at the Technical Levels will be done locally at Namibian universities and TVET Colleges, followed by studies at selected international universities and TVET Colleges abroad, the majority of these, are in Germany. The final leg leading to graduation will be undertaken locally, at home institutions. Namibian Universities and TVET Colleges are in partnerships and collaborations with globally reputable institutions in the field of Green Hydrogen. The purposeful mobility of our students between local and those institutions abroad, is to properly deepen their grounding in theoretical and practical knowledge, competencies, and skills, in the field of Green Hydrogen.

In the broad field of mining where oil and gas are part, deliberate efforts by our public universities are at an advance stage, these are visible with their efforts to strengthen relevant existing programs and develop new ones. Both universities are involved with the global Subsoil Project.

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**Honourable Members,**

Namibia boasts a youthful population dividend exceeding 70% of the nation's populace, presenting a remarkable opportunity to harness this demographic advantage for economic growth. By prioritizing the delivery of high-quality education and fostering digital skills, particularly, in AI technologies, we can unlock the potential for sustainable utilization of our natural resources; spur job creation;

innovation and inventions; and propel comprehensive development initiatives forward.

Equally important are concerted efforts by our Ministry and the broader Tertiary Education Fraternity to effectively adopt, harness and optimize the benefits of emerging digital technologies to widen the formal education reach, through Online and Distance modes, at our public higher and technical education institutions.

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**Honourable Members,**

The government of the Republic of Namibia is committed and will never relent on its commitment to the provision of tertiary education to eligible needy students. For four consecutive years, the Government through its human capital development arm, NSFAF, has funded all eligible needy and marginalized students to access tertiary education. In 2020/2021 Academic Year, 14,179 new students and 21,881 continuing students were funded; in 2021/2022 Academic Year 14,604 new students and 23,651 continuing students were awarded, and in 2022/2023 Academic Year 17,096 new students and 24,348 continuing students were catered for. In the current academic year, 20,122 new students and 27,047 continuing students were awarded to the tune of about **N\$2,057,300,000**.

It is common knowledge that the recent positive economic picture, followed on the heels of a protracted sluggish economic growth; a steady increase in students' enrolment numbers, with adverse effects not only on the higher education and training institutions, but also, on the quality of teaching and learning, as granted subversions have not been and still are, not commensurate to the needs of public higher and technical education institutions.

Notwithstanding the perverse past and present challenges and the multiple competing needs and demands, you crafted a national budget that gives prominence and due regard to the social services and programs of the Namibian nation, thank you Hon Ipumbu Shiimi and Hon Obeth Kandjoze, Minister of Finance and Public Enterprises and Director General, respectively. The slight increase in our Ministry's budget inspires hope, courage and determination.

The presented budget has a budgetary provision for the Higher Education, Technology, and Innovation sector, totalling **N\$4,750,022,000.00 (Four Billion Seven hundred and Fifty Million and Twenty Two Thousand Namibia Dollars)**. The seven Public Enterprises under the ministry, (UNAM, NUST, NSFAF, NCRST, NTA, NCHE, and NQA) together, they are allocated **N\$ 4.4 Billion**. Within this allocation, **N\$1,043,300,000 (One Billion Forty Three Million Three Hundred Namibia Dollars)** is designated for UNAM, while **N\$505,000,000 (Five Hundred and Five Million)** goes to NUST, and **N\$2,324,196,000 (Two Billion Three Hundred and Twenty Four Million One Hundred and Ninety Six Namibia Dollars)** is for NSFAF.

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The dual exit system at senior secondary school level is the cause of the unprecedented numbers in the tertiary space. These high student numbers compelled Government, early this year, to implore public universities and public TVET Colleges to explore and adopt new access expansion strategies. NUST with its entry level at level 3 of our National Qualification Framework (NQF), admits Grade 11 learners who meet NUST admission criteria directly into some of their programs. NUST also has been running a parallel Bridging Program for those deemed to be close enough to their admission requirements.

On the other hand, UNAM after having undergone a lengthy academic programs' audit some years back, which led to them offering consolidated/integrated degree programs - most if not all UNAM basic degrees are at Honors level - BSc Honors, B.A Honors, etc. Therefore, UNAM entry level is at NQF level 4. However, engagements at the beginning of the year between Government and UNAM leadership, led to the birth of a Bridging Program called UNAM Preparedness Program, which is accessible at several UNAM campuses.

Equally, the NTA was requested to look at modalities of expanding access at their level through the introduction of new relevant programs and initiatives leading to value chains and job creation. Important areas like Agriculture, transitioning carpentry into furniture production, fashion and leather design into production of quality products for the market, ICT and others are being explored. Consultations between our Ministry and the NTA are ongoing, the aim being to operationalize some of these envisioned initiatives at some selected new and old TVET Colleges across the country.

Moreover, I must emphatically stress that all these important new initiatives' sustainability and quality is dependent on adequate funding.

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

**Honourable Members,**

The commitment of the Government of the Republic of Namibia to ensuring equal access to quality education for all citizens is clearly unquestionable. The establishment of the NUST Eenhana Campus last year; the soon to be operationalized NUST campuses at Reitfontein, Otjozondjupa and Luderitz, //Karas Regions further demonstrates Government commitment to taking higher education to different corners of this country we all call home.

With the growing emphasis on green solutions and clean energy, our public higher education institutions have initiated projects focusing on utilizing technology to address fundamental needs at the local and global scales.

In line with this commitment, our institutions have pledged to:

- a) Enhance international cooperation in Food Security, Energy, and Water Security. Collaboration among Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Africa will broaden access to high - quality education, empowering African students to pursue postgraduate studies in the continent, focusing on Food, Energy, and Water Security.
- b) Additionally, the inauguration of a flagship program in Integrated Water Resources Management marks a significant milestone. The Southern African Science Services Centre for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management (SASSCAL) Graduate Studies Program in Integrated Water Resources Management, recently launched in the Southern African Region, is hosted by NUST, paving the way for advanced studies and research in this field. In the space of research and innovation, UNAM and NUST have ventured into the development of prototypes from indigenous plants and fruits, with a view to commercialize these products. Another exciting development is the development of new improved cultivars of maize, pearl millet (mahangu), wheat, potatoes and sesame.

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Despite some challenges in the sector, significant efforts have been made to uphold the quality of higher education through accreditation of programs and institutions' registration, among other initiatives. In terms of ongoing program development, for the year 2023/4, UNAM and NUST have submitted 17 and 12 new programs, respectively, to the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) for accreditation, with the intention of implementing these programmes in 2024.

The extensive accreditation processes at UNAM and NUST are linked to academic programs' audit aimed at aligning the institution's curriculum framework to the requirements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the demands of the labour market. Beyond producing competitive graduates, accreditation also fosters confidence among higher education institutions, faculty, sponsors, and industry stakeholders.

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The primary challenge confronting the two public universities, revolve around the dwindling subsidy, which fails to meet the ever-growing demand for access to equitable, quality higher education. The Funding Framework for Higher Education, which is a scientific instrument to ensure equitable financing for higher education, always points to much higher budgets for UNAM (about \$2.1Billion) and NUST (about \$1.1 Billion). Adequate funding of our public universities and TVET Colleges is essential to uphold the standards of higher education and training. The responsibility for delivering education and training is a collective endeavour, with private institutions also playing a key role in expanding student access to higher education.

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

**Honourable Members,**

The National Commission for Research, Science, and Technology (NCRST) is currently rolling out the second phase of the National Program on Research, Science, Technology, and Innovation. Concurrently, it is actively engaged in various science promotion initiatives on national, regional, and international platforms. These initiatives encompass a range of programs such as the National Innovation Survey, National Innovation Challenge for Women, and the National Mathematics Olympiad. Strategic policy initiatives, such as Research Outputs and Journal Accreditation Policy and the approval of the Namibia Bio-Economy Strategy, as well as its Implementation Strategy, are prioritized.

In the TVET sector, significant strides have been made, notably, the completion of the Khorixas TVET College, and Kai//ganaxab Skills Development Centre which was expanded to include a TVET College. These two are slated to commence operations mid this year. In addition, the capacity of some existing TVET Colleges were expanded, by constructing additional workshops, classrooms and hostels. Furthermore, the completion of the Keetmanshoop and Nkurenkuru, TVET Colleges is anticipated by July 2024. With these interventions and additional resource allocations, the TVET Sector will be able to accommodate significantly increased numbers of trainees.

I cannot end this statement without extending a word of gratitude to the Deputy Minister, Hon Natalia Goagoses, our dedicated staff, including those within our public enterprises, under the leadership of our Executive Director Dr Alfred Van Kent. They persistently seek innovative solutions to address the multifaceted issues facing the sector to the best of their abilities.

**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 **Four Billion Seven Hundred and Fifty Million and Twenty-Two Thousand**



**Namibian Dollars (N\$4,750,022,000)** for the Ministry of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation for the 2024/25 financial year. I so submit.