# In Pursuit of Access with Equity in the Higher Education System of Namibia

## 2010

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# Abbreviations & Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| **ACTET** | Advisory Council on Teachers' Education and Training |
| **AIDS** | Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome |
| **CBS** | Central Bureau of Statistics |
| **CCE** | Caprivi College of Education |
| **CES** | Centre for External Studies |
| **COEs** | Colleges of Education |
| **COLL** | Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning |
| **ETSIP** | Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme |
| **GRN** | Government of the Republic of Namibia |
| **HEIs** | Higher Education Institutions |
| **HES** | Higher Education System |
| **HIV** | Human Immunodeficiency Virus |
| **ICTs** | Information and Communication Technologies |
| **IT** | Information Technology |
| **IUM** | International University of Management |
| **LCD** | Liquid Crystal Display |
| **MEC** | Ministry of Education and Culture |
| **MGECW** | Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare |
| **MoE** | Ministry of Education |
| **MoF** | Ministry of Finance |
| **NAMCOL** | Namibia College of Open Learning |
| **NCHE** | National Council for Higher Education |
| **NDP3** | Third National Development Plan |
| **NIED** | National Institute for Educational Development |

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|---|---|
| **NPC** | National Planning Commission |
| **NQA** | Namibia Qualifications Authority |
| **NSFAF** | Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund |
| **NSSC** | Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate |
| **OCE** | Ongwediva College of Education |
| **OHPs** | Overhead Projectors |
| **OPM** | Office of the Prime Minister |
| **PCs** | Personal Computers |
| **PhD** | Doctor of Philosophy |
| **PoN** | Polytechnic of Namibia |
| **PSBS** | Public Service Bursary Scheme |
| **R&D** | Research and Development |
| **RCE** | Rundu College of Education |
| **TOR** | Terms of Reference |
| **TV** | Television |
| **UNAM** | University of Namibia |
| **VTCs** | Vocational Training Centres |
| **WCE** | Windhoek College of Education |

# Preface

This report is written for policy makers, particularly those with an interest in higher education and has as its primary objective the stimulation of further research in higher education. Higher education, specifically access thereto, has a fundamental bearing on the extent to which Namibia as a nation can realise its objectives as set out in Vision 2030. Moreover, access to higher education is the conduit through which many Namibians currently excluded from the mainstream economy, can be included.

**Findings emerging from this report are aimed at:**

a)  Addressing factors identified which impede access to higher education – for it is the constrained access to higher education which continue to suppress the nation's ability to produce the requisite human capital needed to improve the country's competitiveness;

b)  Stimulating further research in the critical area of higher education provision in Namibia; and

c)  Completing ongoing efforts by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) in mustering public support on critical issues that hinder equitable provision of higher education.

It should be acknowledged that this report benefited immensely from valuable inputs provided by a range of stakeholders, notably higher education institutions in Namibia.  Council is thus deeply indebted to the team under the able leadership of Dr. Kenneth Matengu, from the University of Namibia's Multi Disciplinary Research Centre that carried out the study.

Resources invested in undertaking this study will come to nought if findings contained in this report will not be pursued to their logical conclusion by those entrusted with the responsibility to do so. Key actors are therefore encouraged to ensure that recommendations endorsed by the NCHE contained in this report, are implemented. Through higher education, Namibia as a nation stands a better chance to give meaning to its desire to transform into a knowledge-based economy.

**Stanley M. Simataa**
***EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION***

# Executive Summary

Why does social justice matter on issues pertaining to access with equity in the education system? Effort should be made to strengthen actions that lead to social justice, because it provides the foundation for a "healthy" community – healthy in the sense that no one should be overburdened or under burdened by what individuals and households require to sustain themselves. When HEIs embrace social justice, they build the mechanisms that help to fight the reproduction of social stratification. Over time, social stratification constitutes an obstacle to equality of opportunity, which can lead to social strife and civil injustice. UNAM was commissioned by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) to conduct this study, in order to investigate the question of access with equity in the Higher Education System (HES) in Namibia. The data was collected from the four Colleges of Education, IUM, PoN, NQA, NIED, MoE, NCHE and UNAM.

The data was collected using a mixed methods approach, namely qualitative and quantitative. The research team reviewed literature relevant to the study. These included national policy documents and other publications. On the basis of the review, research instruments (questionnaires and key interview questions) were constructed. The actual fieldwork was carried out over a period of three months, from May to July 2008.

## Findings:

1. The Staff Development policies at both UNAM and PoN continue to have positive impacts on the number of women in HEIs. The percentage of Namibians in academic posts compared to expatriates has increased to more than 65% at UNAM although it appears to be around 50% at the PoN. Generally, the percentage of women in the colleges of education is low. Marginalised groups and people with disabilities were poorly represented in the institutions' staff complements and student enrolments.

2. All HEIs experience problems of rapid staff turnover. Many reasons contribute to this, but the most serious relates to perceived poor conditions of service.

3. The number of ICTs at all institutions has increased; more computer laboratories have been constructed, and access to modern technologies has thus improved. However, there are a number of staff members without computers or without adequate connection to Internet, especially in the colleges.

4. With regard to accessibility of infrastructure to people with disabilities, the results show that while provision is made in new buildings, much still needs to be done. Many of the buildings at the colleges can still be said to be inaccessible to people with disabilities.

5. The results show that access to higher education in regions where the HEIs do not exist is low. The results demonstrate that access to higher education is still very unequal geographically, especially at the Colleges of Education. However, the PoN, IUM and UNAM appear to have students from almost all regions accessing their institutions, although, as can be expected, not in equal numbers.

6. The HEIs' interpretations of the quota system appear to be different, this study reveals. Some thought the quota system referred to the total number of students as directed by the MoE, while others thought it meant the number of students to be admitted from the different regions in the country.

7. Factors such as lack of commitment and motivation to their studies, anti-social behaviours such as excessive alcohol use (especially among the San students) and denial of hostel accommodation for pregnant female students appear to limit access to higher education for the marginalized and disadvantaged groups investigated in this study.

8. As far as participation in research is concerned, both the UNAM and the PoN Acts of Parliament and institutional policy documents provide for research activities. It was found that the areas of focus varied from institution to institution as per the institutions' own mandates. UNAM focuses on hardcore sciences, while the PoN places emphasis on IT, Engineering and Agriculture, among other areas.

9. The study found that there were very few women (disadvantaged groups) and individuals from marginalised groups in Research and Development (R&D) per se. Nonetheless, the female academic staff members, especially at UNAM, IUM and PoN were expected to conduct research that informed their teaching by virtue of being employed by the HEIs.

10. It appeared from this study's investigations that the HEIs in the country are not informed by hard evidence regarding the level and type of graduates they need to produce, and the candidates they need to enroll, in order to meet demands in the areas of the skilled workforce where the country experiences serious shortages. This is largely due to the lack of up-to-date, evidence-based, human resource plans, related to the supply and demand situation in the country.

11. The study also found that there was no joint research being carried out by the HEIs in the country. It appears there is a lack of communication between the institutions in regard to research activities.

12. A number of institutional stakeholders, including MoE, NIED, and others, were identified. However, those dealing with people with disabilities and the OPM were not among the stakeholders identified.

13. Although the relationship between poverty and lack of access to higher education is not that straightforward, the study found that in general, poorer regions have far less access to higher education.

14. The study also found that the NSFAF is playing a critical role in ensuring access to higher education for Namibia's young generation although there are questions regarding equity.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

1. MoE should better equip students from marginalised and disadvantaged groups to function well in the institutional environment from the early years of schooling. It is therefore recommended that a study be carried out to assess suitable institutional support environments for marginalised groups.

2. It is also recommended that HEIs adapt the schooling environment to better accommodate the needs and interests of students from minority groups. It is recommended that a detailed needs assessment be carried out of both HEIs and of the students in those institutions.

3. The quality of primary education should be improved since it is the foundation on which higher education relies. More support should be given to marginalised and disadvantaged students at this level, so that

they do not become "invisible" in the progressive ladder of education. Currently, the higher the level of education, the less the marginalised and disadvantaged groups are present at the HEIs.

4. Lowered entry requirements for marginalised groups should not be encouraged since these effectively remove students from later participating in the competitive professions, and they cannot progress to the levels of their choice. It is recommended that more effort be placed on changing attitudes in the communities from where they originate. Changed attitudes do make differences in people's lives.

5. Staff development should be targeted to promising members of marginalised and disadvantaged groups. It is recommended that a special staff development and retention strategy be put in place at HEIs, and this should be fully supported in both monetary and material terms by the government.

6. Debate should be encouraged to discuss the issues related to the inherent tension between access and quality. It is recommended that a consultative workshop be called to debate the issue of access through lowered entry points vs. quality.

7. Professional development skills blended with adequate financing should be made available to academic staff and HEIs to enable them to retain promising students from the marginalised groups. It is recommended that HEIs identify such individuals in their institutions and identify appropriate mentors for them.

8. The fact that the foundation programmes at UNAM and Polytechnic are meant to improve opportunities for students from marginalised and disadvantaged groups to enter HEIs is encouraging. However, a regular review of the current student recruitment procedures is strongly recommended. This would enable both the HEIs themselves, and the NCHE, to be able to track progress of social justice.

9. Since access to HEI relies on effective and efficient primary and secondary education, a sound cooperation between HEIs and the regional education offices is recommended.

10. The study also found that the basis upon which awards are granted by the NSFAF to beneficiaries have negative social impacts in the long term. Therefore, it is recommended that further discussions and analysis be conducted with the aim of finding a just formula.

# Introduction

*"...true opportunity requires a commitment to a core set of values. These values are integrally related to the principle of human rights: equal treatment, voice in societal decisions, a chance to start over, and the tools to meet our own basic needs are not just good policy ideas. They are the right of every human being simply by virtue of his or her humanity."*

**- The Opportunity Agenda**

One of the major challenges facing the higher education system in Namibia is to develop an equitable system where access to higher education goes alongside equity. It is not an achievement. It is a process of adapting procedures that resemble rules of a game, a quest for fairness of receiving burdens and benefits. Several sources show that this challenge is not typical to Namibia alone. Although strides have been made in terms of opening up the higher education sector to marginalised communities and to previously disadvantaged people, the higher education system of Namibia is not yet accessible to all. The Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) (1993, 37) noted that "… in the near future we shall measure our success in achieving both equality and equity by looking at who goes to school". In other words, what will demonstrate that our higher education system is successful is not the number of people who pass through our HEIs. Instead, it will be the degree to which people from the smallest minority group in our society are faring in the higher education system – the degree to which Namibians experience social justice. What then is social justice, and why is it relevant in the debate about access with equity?

## Social Justice and Access with Equity

The concept of "social justice" has a variety of meanings, all of them debatable and dependent on a standpoint. For instance, "social justice" is a concept often deployed by the political left to describe a society which they intend to build, a society with a greater degree of economic egalitarianism which may be achieved through progressive taxation, income redistribution, or policies aimed toward achieving that which developmental economists refer to as "equality of opportunity and equality of outcome"[1]. In its origins, social justice appears to be embedded in the doctrines of religious faith, philosophy as well as law and politics. According to information found through Wikipedia, the web-based encyclopaedia, social justice refers to conceptions of a "society in

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[1]	Equality of outcome of development initiative is a form of egalitarianism used to describe efforts aimed at reducing differences in material conditions of individuals or households in society.

which justice is achieved in every aspect of society, rather than merely the administration of law. It is generally thought of as a world which affords individuals and groups fair treatment and an impartial share of the benefits of society[2]". Although different proponents of social justice, particularly of social movements, have developed different interpretations of what constitutes fair treatment and an impartial share, it is generally accepted that the term refers to the reasonable distribution of advantages and disadvantages within a society. Since what is reasonable, just and fair is culture-defined through institutions of socialisation such as schools, churches and the family, social justice also derives its authority from the tacit and codified forms of morality existing in the culture.

Why does social justice matter? Effort should be made to strengthen actions that lead to social justice, because its employment provides the foundation for a "healthy" community – healthy in the sense that no one should be overburdened or under burdened by what individuals and households require to sustain themselves. When HEIs embrace social justice, they build the mechanisms that help to fight the reproduction of social stratification, which over time constitute an obstacle to equality of opportunity which can lead to social strife and civil injustice. Be that as it may, social justice as a concept has also been criticised. On the one hand, moral relativists deny that there is any kind of objective standard for social justice. On the other hand, many others dismiss the idea of social justice, saying that social justice is not feasible, and that it is an attempt to deny individuals' liberty. The presentation of these divergent views was only meant to inform the reader but not to set an argument for or against social justice. Instead, HEIs and their stakeholders should be aware that while indeed it may be impossible to fully achieve social justice, there ought to be a voice for the voiceless and ethics of responsibility. Preferential options for the poor and the vulnerable will go a long way in improving equity with access to the higher education system of Namibia.

Indeed, the question may be asked of the HEIs, *"Who goes to HEIs and do they graduate from these institutions?" Thomas, Cooper and Quinn (2003, 33-51) noted that "… stringent admission standards and competitive academic programs…militate against broad student access…" to higher education and against "access and retention of students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds".* One of the questions to which this study will attempt to provide an answer is whether HEIs in the country are offering disadvantaged and marginalised students equal access. According to the ETSIP document (2005, 38) currently the programmes on graduate and diploma level do not achieve the aimed results: programmes are characterised by low and biased admissions, high failure rates and an output with competencies not well-matched to needs. The ETSIP document also indicates that there is gender bias, as well as low admission from the least advantaged groups[3]. For this reason, this research was needed to investigate some of the barriers higher education institutions (HEIs) are experiencing in their endeavour to achieve access with equity, and to seek input on the kind of support services they need to promote higher intake and retention.

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[2]    Social Justice: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Justice. Accessed 29/04/09.
[3]    ETSIP document does not provide more information on what is meant by least advantaged groups.

The purpose of this study was to look at the issue of access with equity in the higher education system in Namibia. The overall aim of the study is indicated in the ETSIP document (2005, 38): Strategic Objective C, which is to improve the quality of tertiary education and training systems. Particular focus will be on three aspects of equity: equity in current pre-entry programmes, foundation programmes and student support programmes in higher education.

## Definitions of Concepts

### Access

By access we mean availability of something to an individual or community of individuals. Depending on the context and perspective from which availability can be viewed, access may be looked at from the way an individual is situated, the distance and time involved in the effort of accessing, and the resources required for the individual to access what she or he needs to achieve a desired goal. In this study we look at access from the perspective of availability, entry and exit to and from higher education, and what constraints individuals face to accessibility.

### Equity

Equity refers to the quality of being fair and reasonable in a way that gives equal treatment to everyone. Equity, in this study, common standards that are set for all potential candidates of the higher education sector. It is understood in this study, however, that the setting of the same standards for everybody does not always mean equity. Depending on the constraints individuals might have in terms of access to higher education, we can only talk about equity when the starting point of individuals is recognised. In the educational institution we can therefore look at equity from the way an HEI is able to adapt its system to the needs of different individuals through, for example, putting in place support systems, without losing its standards in terms of quality. To clarify, equity is not the same thing as equality, because equality refers to equal status, roles and responsibilities for all members of a society. Equity is also about fairness and fairness results in social justice.

### Quality

The concept of quality refers to how good or bad something is compared to the set standards. It also varies depending on who defines the quality. It refers to standards and measures that are both means from and means to an end. In order to know and determine quality, one must not only be able to measure it according to a set of acceptable standards, but also control and monitor those standards. Since the characteristics of things labelled as 'of quality' change, quality is also time bound. As such, educational outputs that were considered of quality a decade ago may be perceived as unfashionable today. Thus, in this study, quality refers to the meaningfulness of standards, and particular characteristics compared to set goals and national priorities within a defined period of time.

**Access with Equity**

The phrase access with equity denotes availability of HEIs to everyone on the basis of fair and reasonable entry requirements that do not discriminate. It also refers, in this study, to the extent to which people and geographical locations are harmonised to achieve a state of common competence of individuals and locations.

**Marginalised Groups**

In this study, marginalised groups refer to groups of people in minority ethnic groups. Women and people with disabilities are regarded as disadvantaged groups and not necessarily marginalised. Accordingly, in presenting this data, this division will be maintained.

## Background of the Study

Worldwide, it has been shown that quality higher education contributes significantly to the development of societies in multiple ways. On the one hand, informally, it sets quality standards for the public sector and industry. Higher education produces trained personnel, which is required for the economic growth and competitiveness of the nation. As Varghese (2007, 1) states, HEIs are generators of knowledge needed for development. Through their research and teaching they help to produce expertise, manage development, engineer social transformation, and preserve social values and cultural ethos. Namibia is aiming towards transformation into a knowledge-based economy. Accordingly, knowledge creation becomes a driving force towards economic growth and development. However, knowledge created and disseminated only to certain sections of communities, can serve as a laboratory for manufacturing inequities, social injustice, and civil strife, hindering the achievement of access with equity.

Therefore, in a country such as Namibia, where the GINI coefficient[4] (0.64) reveals it to be one of the most unequal societies in the world, access with equity in the higher education system plays a very crucial role in the development of the human capacity. It is obvious that highly educated individuals tend to have better employment, higher salaries and greater ability to consume and save. However, while knowledge is a source of economic growth, disparities in its distribution create inequality among the citizens and may lead to social conflict, such as happened in Kenya, Sudan and elsewhere in the world.

*Higher education emerges as an important variable contributing towards improving individual earnings. As studies from elsewhere show, when higher education is equally accessed, it is not only the individual earnings that become higher; educating the poor in fact helps to reduce inequalities and poverty (Varghese 2007, 3; Tilak 2007, 5).*

According to a World Bank Report (2000, 27), *the enrolment rate in developed countries is roughly five to six times that of developing countries. Factors creating an imbalance in achieving equity in higher education include proximity to*

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[4]     GINI coefficient is a measure of statistical dispersion developed and published by Gini Carrado in 1912. It is commonly used as a measure of inequality of income or wealth in a specific geographical area. It can range from 0 – 1. A low (0) Gini coefficient reflects a more equal society and higher (1) indicates a perfect inequality of wealth.

*HEIs, rural and urban differences, household wealth, gender, and variations in cultural practices and traditions among ethnic groups. The report indicates that there is no country where high-income groups are not heavily over-represented in tertiary enrolments (World Bank 2000, 27-28).* Furthermore, the report emphasises that disadvantaged groups – whether they are racial, linguistic, or religious – in specific societies, and women almost anywhere, find it difficult to compete for places in the higher education system in general and in HEIs in particular. Therefore, higher education systems need to find ways of reconciling the dual values of excellence and access with equity. As the report concludes, when contemplating access with equity, it is worth remembering that *"excellence is best promoted by policies that select society's most creative and motivated members for advantaged education". But selection based on prior achievement will only reinforce a history of discrimination and underachievement" (World Bank 2000, 41).* In the same way, it should be kept in mind that programmes that undermine standards of excellence have proven not to be sustainable in addressing the needs of a country.

### Rationale of the Study

According to the ETSIP document (2005, 38), the first step in improving quality in higher education is to raise the quality of the intake and accessibility to higher education by all. The courses that prepare students for post secondary education should include specific targeting of disadvantaged groups. To break the cycle of underachievement, there is a need to improve the exit skills at secondary level, the required skills at the tertiary level through pre-entry (before entry) and foundation (after entry) programmes.

In Namibia, the public Higher Education System, though fragmented, includes the University of Namibia (UNAM), the Polytechnic of Namibia (PoN) which are autonomous institutions, governed by Councils, with entrenched academic freedom, as well as the four Colleges of Education. These are Caprivi, Rundu, Ongwediva and Windhoek Colleges of Education.

Access to these institutions appears to be limited for people categorised as marginalised. Nonetheless, the trend appears to have improved for the better for the females who are referred to as disadvantaged in this study. The number of women enrolled in HEIs appears to have increased over the years and in some cases has surpassed that of male students. Their numbers may nonetheless be smaller in certain fields.

According to the same ETSIP report (2005, 37), both UNAM and PoN have structures in place to ensure that their output matches demand in both quality and quantity. While such a statement may be true, in practice there are critical, national, human capital shortages, particularly in fields such as science, engineering, medicine and agriculture, and these fields are characterised by relatively low enrolment and high dropout rates (ETSIP 2005, 37). Moreover, in these fields some reports (e.g. Marope 2005) show that intake in these fields is very low.

# Research Approach and Methodology

## Approach

The research team for this study spent several weeks reviewing relevant Namibian documents and consulting with relevant stakeholders (See Appendix B) in order to design an appropriate research framework. The research design that was implemented was based on two important decisions that also influenced the data collection approach. First, it was decided that for the study to be substantive, it needed to focus on enrolment figures and on the representation of marginalised communities in academic structures and in R&D work at HEIs. At this level, the study looked at the context of education in Namibia and its policy articulations in terms of national objectives, such as those articulated in NDP3 and Vision 2030. Second, even though the study was intended to be evaluative from a national perspective, the study focused mostly on the dilemma of equity and quality.

**As such, the study investigated the following:**

1. What factors hinder the identified groups' access to higher education?

2. What role can the community as a whole play in ensuring equal access to higher education for all identified?

3. What actions should be implemented by the higher education institutions to ensure the identified groups' equal access to higher education?

4. What plans and actions should be put in place to ensure the marginalised groups have equitable access to higher education?

## Methods

The study used applied research employing a mixed-methods approach in that it utilised qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. The reason for this was because we view research as *"a collaborative human activity in which social reality is studied objectively with the aim of gaining a valid understanding of it"* (Mouton 1996, 7). Questions in the research instrument (Appendix A) were used to collect data from the respondents. On the basis of the responses from the interviewees the researchers further probed issues that needed clarification.

## Qualitative Data Collection

### In-depth Open-ended Interviews

a) In-depth, open-ended interviews (also known as key informant interviews) were conducted with:

1. College management and Heads of Departments at Caprivi College of Education
2. College management and Heads of Departments at Rundu College of Education
3. College management and Heads of Departments at Ongwediva College of Education
4. College management and Heads of Departments at Windhoek College of Education

5.   Members of the University of Namibia senior management

6.   Research and Publications Committee Secretariat at the University of Namibia

7.   Senior management member at the Polytechnic of Namibia

8.   Two senior management members at the International University of Management

9.   Director - Namibia Qualifications Authority

10.  Director, Ministry of Education, Directorate of Quality Programs Assurance

11.  Director, Ministry of Education, Directorate of Higher Education

12.  Director, Ministry of Education, Directorate: National Institute for Educational Development

13.  Director and Deputy Director, Ministry of Education, Directorate of Science and Technology

**b)**   **Direct field observation of:**

1.   ICT infrastructure at all institutions

2.   Building infrastructure layout – relevant to people with disabilities

3.   Libraries – resources availability and usage

Unfortunately, due to time constraints and trimester holidays of some institutions, the research team was unable to meet all stakeholders of the higher education system.

## Quantitative Data Collection

**Short survey questionnaires – closed-ended**

a)   Short, closed-ended questionnaires were administered at all institutions of higher education. These requested information on:

1.   Total number of pieces of ICT equipment

2.   Number of certificate courses and areas of specialization offered

3.   Number of diploma courses and areas of specialization offered

4.   Number of bachelor's degree courses and areas of specialization offered

5.   Number of honours degree courses and areas of specialisation offered

6.   Number of master's degree courses and areas of specialization offered

7.   Number of PhD courses and areas of specialization offered

8.   NQA levels for existing qualifications/specializations

9.   Areas of self-perceived competence

10.  Data on enrolment and graduation

11.  Staff turnover

The use of these two methods was important because the qualitative method complemented the disadvantages of the quantitative method by providing an in-depth understanding about the issue of access with equity, which might otherwise not have been picked up by a single method.

### Data Analysis

First, qualitative data was analysed using a thematic approach. A thematic approach identifies recurring themes from accumulated data and groups them into categories. Then, quantitative information was entered into a suitable statistical office programme. From the analysis of this data, figures and graphs were produced to illustrate the results.

# Results

### Poverty and Higher Education

Theoretically, there are varying definitions of poverty. The word poverty is commonly used to mean *"lack of", but it means many dissimilar things to different people.* According to Spiker (2007) upon whose views this discussion is based, there are eleven clusters of meaning of poverty, which we summarise here in three groups.

To begin with, poverty refers to **material need**. When people lack certain things they need, which are essential to them, they are said to be deprived. If in a geographical area a general condition where people are in need in various ways over a long period of time exists, it can be said that a pattern of poverty of deprivation exists. In other words, people are not poor by virtue of not accessing higher education or accessing poor education; they are poor if they have been in that condition for some time and they cannot get out of it. In terms of material need, people who have low income, or whose low income results in low standards of living, can also be described as living in poverty.

Secondly, poverty is a description of people's **economic circumstances**. A community or a geographical area can be described as lacking resources if people cannot get the resources they need. If some people have fewer resources than others and cannot afford, as a result of their economic situation, things that other people can afford, they are in poverty as a result of economic distance. Economic distance means that people cannot afford to live where they are even if their income is comparatively higher than elsewhere. Additionally, poverty can also mean an economic class, which can be determined by people's relationship to the system of economic production – the weaker the relationship, the poorer the people.

Lastly, **social relationships** are also important elements in the conceptualisation of poverty. Usually, the position of people who lack status, power and opportunities available to others is indicative of their social class (people's social position in reference to their economic position, educational attainment and social status). Furthermore, poverty in some countries is defined in terms of people's dependency on state welfare grants. To others, poverty indicators encompass the degree to which people (like asylum seekers and people with disabilities) are excluded from society as a result of their circumstances.

Namibia's own characterisation of poverty until recently was defined using the relative share of food expenditure to total expenditure of households. In these terms, a household whose food expenditure exceeded 60% of the total expenditure was classified as poor, and severely poor if the food expenditure made up 80% or more of the total expenditure. This method was replaced in 2008 with the Cost of Basic Needs Approach. Under this approach, households with consumption expenditure in excess of N$262.45 per month are considered non-

poor, and those households with less than N$262.45 are considered poor. In other words, poor households are considered to be those that have a monthly expenditure of less than N$262.45 per adult equivalent, and severely poor households are those whose expenditure is less than N$184.56. The calculation is made on the basis of the cost of a food basket to enable them to meet the minimum nutritional requirements, in addition to some allowance for non-food items.

Overall, some (e.g. Sen, 1981 cited in Spiker, 2007) have long argued that poverty is really not about lack of goods and resources; rather it is about lack of entitlement. This argument implies that poverty should not be treated as a single, isolated issue. Instead, it should be understood as a complex set of many issues primarily determined by existing legal rights, social and political arrangements. Moreover, there is a moral side to it; describing people as lacking entitlement also means the problem is serious and something must be done to address such problem, and that those problems should not continue to be prevalent. The United Nations Human Development Index, upon which it annually places countries and regions on its development ladder, is informed by this standpoint. Having given this background, the question to be asked is: What role does poverty play in limiting access to higher education? And, can we say on the basis of regional poverty profiles that certain communities in Namibia are deprived of higher education?

On the basis of the available information, it is difficult to answer the two questions with certainty. The first step is to look at the economic position of people according to some measure. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics data, the incidence of poverty by region shows that poverty is highest in Kavango in terms of the percentage of poor (56.5%) and severely poor households (36.7%). The data also show that the incidence of poverty in Ohangwena is the second highest in the country as a percentage of the poor and severely poor, 44.7% and 19.3% respectively. These two regions not only have the highest incidence of poverty, but they also have the largest share of poor households in the country.

Interestingly, Kavango has the highest number of schools in the country (313) and the highest rate of teenage pregnancy (34%). Regions such as Khomas and Erongo have the lowest incidence of poverty in the country (6.3% and 10.3%) respectively. In other words, of all the poor people found in Namibia, 6.8% can be found in Khomas and Erongo Regions compared to 34.3% who live in the Kavango and Ohangwena Regions. Poverty-stricken households will not be able to access HE given the high tuition fees associated with HEIs if the Government of Namibia does not give financial assistance to all who qualify and are admitted to HEIs. It should be noted, however, that tuition fees are not obstacles at the COE, because all costs there are paid by the MoE.

In terms of language groups, the incidence of poverty is highest (poor 59.7% and severely poor 39%) among the households whose main language is Khoisan. A CBS report also shows that high levels of poor and severely poor households are found among speakers of Rukavango. Households with Damara/Nama as the home language also have incidences and depth of poverty values that are considerably above the national average. The reader will note in the section on the allocations of Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund that the regions which are the poorest are not the main beneficiaries of this assistance.

Since the measure of poverty in Namibia is primarily economic, it can be argued that the above language groups and regions lack sufficient income and as such are deprived through economic distance. "Deprived by whom?" one might ask. Well, the economic position of poor people is very difficult to deal with directly. The 'points' of redressing lack of entitlement and inequities in the system of production economy are the basis on which deprivation can be studied, but it is difficult, in terms of cause and effect, to link institutionalised set ups in the regions and the perceived limited access to higher education.

In essence, the economic and/or area deprivation that these language groups and regions experience is not poverty in itself; rather it is a result of the under-development of the economy in their regions. Development in terms of the provision of infrastructure and services is necessary, but it is not sufficient to deal with poverty. Making development possible requires removing barriers – for example, school and tuition fees, and reviewing the rules that potentially prevent poorer communities from participating in the system of economic production and providing social protection for the weak in society. The challenge here is not about a measurement of who does qualify for state support; rather it is about who doesn't. Also, the link between poverty and access to higher education is not that straightforward; access to higher education can only be determined on the basis of academic performance in Grade 12, on the basis of applications received by HEIs and on the basis of financial support provided by government.

Similarly, when applicants apply to HEIs, data on their socio-economic status (to determine whether one is poor) is not required from them. Moreover, it should be remembered that the Namibian definition of poverty excludes material resources such as cattle, goats and so on, which are also a source of income and social power. Whichever perspective one might take, it is clear that in time, we will have to look for ways of collecting data that will pinpoint any relationships between poverty and access to higher education. For now, we can say that the problems brought about by poverty in Namibia are massive, but we cannot say that low levels of access to higher education are a consequence of poverty.

In other words, although poverty has an effect, it is not the single cause of access problems. For instance, access to hostel accommodation is a crucial consideration when considering access to higher education; those without access to some basic housing experience difficulties in accessing HEIs. Nationally, it is a well known fact that lack of housing is a serious barrier, and many of the PoN and UNAM students walk very long distances to and from their institutions every day. Bearing in mind the crime situation in the country, the consequences of walking home late at night are obvious. Other formidable obstacles include unaffordable tuition fees, no access to electricity, fresh water, transport, sanitation and so on.

### The Function of Access with Equity in the Higher Education System

It should be recognised that for Namibia to transform into a knowledge-based economy, emphasis should not be placed on the traditional functions of HEIs only. Instead, since higher education depends heavily on the outputs of basic education, it will become increasingly important to promote excellence in an inclusive way,

taking into account all the social capital of the country at the level of basic education. For example, currently a shift in public and institutional priorities appears to be underway, away from access toward quality. But, the findings in this study show that increasingly, weak academic performance at high school level constitutes the most important remaining barrier to expanding access to HEIs. What this suggests is that access will be difficult to increase without improving quality in elementary, primary and secondary schools.

The ultimate aim of access with equity should be to add to the transformation of Namibia into a knowledge-based economy, with high quality of life at all levels of society equal to that in developed countries as envisaged in Vision 2030. When we consider the revelations from the poverty and inequality review by the National Planning Commission, it is evident that the problems around access with equity are serious, and solutions need to be found. The provision of equitable higher education through foundation programmes, distance education (such as that provided through NAMCOL, UNAM and PoN, in addition to private establishments) and lifelong learning are important conduits for a just social transformation of a country.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that serious strides are being made, and more and more people are accessing HEIs through the distance education learning mode. The unpalatable side, however, is that those who are pursuing HE through distance learning are often those who have some level of higher education already, and they are simply upgrading to a certain higher level degree. These people can afford it (what they need most is support services). There are some who cannot afford even a first degree and those who can't even qualify in the first instance. Thus, while the distance mode and the foundation programmes are fit for their purposes in the short term, the long term impact is that we are unlikely to see greater involvement of those from the sections of society with serious poverty, without the elimination of tuition fees and the provision of specialised social support systems.

## Access with Equity in the Transformation of Namibia into a Knowledge-based Economy

In a knowledge-based economy, higher learning and research act as essential components of cultural, socio-economic and environmentally sustainable development of individuals, communities and nations, as well as agents of transformation. However, the Namibian higher education system itself is confronted with formidable challenges and must proceed to the most radical change and renewal that it has ever been required to undertake before. In this way, the Namibian society may transcend mere economic considerations and incorporate deeper dimensions of capacity to self critique and self review on issues regarding morality and spirituality and to leverage social capital and technology. This also requires developing a set of core values about social justice for the country's socialisation institutions to educate the population.

One major question, when access with equity is considered in the context of transforming Namibia into a knowledge-based economy, is how to overcome the barriers to access by the major marginalised groups (ethnic minorities) and disadvantaged groups such as women and people with disabilities. The practice so far has been to lower entry points for the individuals considered as marginalised. This practice however, is highly

suspect and questionable. One can argue that it is not only entry standards that are kept low in the interest of accessibility, but also exit standards. Access to HE must be access coupled with quality rather than access for its own sake. Lowering entry points for one section of the population is just a new form of discrimination in higher education.

In addition to lowering points, foundation programmes have been established at UNAM and PoN to prepare students who want to do science. The only question one can ask here is whether access with equity is addressed in the foundation programmes, if, for example, the UNAM Foundation Program in Oshakati is predominantly accessed by students from the north central regions, particularly from Oshakati, due to lack of accommodation for students from other regions, inadequate publicity of the programme and other logistical problems.

Research results support this observation. In fact, respondents at the Colleges of Education, (we are citing colleges as examples because they have an obligation to enrol 5% of their students from marginalised groups, i.e. approximately 7 students out of the 130 enrolled per year) reported that nearly all students who enrol on the basis of lowered entry points are at the level of Grade 10, and they graduate at the level of Grade 12. In other words, low entry often means low exit requirements. The question then is: *"How can these graduates be expected to meaningfully contribute to the transformation, let alone upliftment of their own communities?"* The answer is simple: they cannot, not because they are incapable, but because the system does not prepare them for higher education. It appears, therefore, that there is a tension between access with equity and quality. Here a general statement can be made, namely that poor communities tend to score poorly on educational attainment and performance. Evidence from this study indicates that there were no academic staff members from the marginalised communities in HEIs.

# Higher Education and the Role of Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF)

The importance of higher education can be recognised in three main goals, namely a) to contribute to the economic development of the nation, b) to enable people to develop their capabilities and fulfil their potential both personally and at work, and c) to advance knowledge and understanding through exemplary scholarship and research. Higher Education Institutions create a pool of qualified people with the knowledge and skills to contribute significantly to economic development, to be entrepreneurial, to develop science and technology, deliver services, and to be enlightened leaders. The provision of higher education enables the country to compete in this era of globalisation and knowledge economy. None of these goals can be achieved satisfactorily without the provision of higher education.

For the individual, higher education is a necessary prerequisite for a good job, development of character, and social improvements. A higher education qualification increasingly becomes a necessary condition for entering, not only a profession, but also the rapidly expanding service and technology-orientated jobs. This is accompanied by the need for lifelong education in order to keep abreast of rapidly changing job requirements. Thus, higher education has come to be regarded as a key distributor of opportunities in the job market. In this way higher education is an equaliser between individuals from varied backgrounds. Indeed, higher education can be regarded as affording those who make it to the end a step of social mobility from humble beginnings to highly exalted offices in the country, since our society extols the virtues of excellence. On the basis of the data from the NSFAF and the poverty data, the problem emerges that it is highly unlikely that the number of NSFAF beneficiaries will increase in those regions where poverty is high, certainly not to the extent needed by the population there. In other words, the finding suggests that students from the poorer regions are not accessing the NSFAF.

Since higher education has become so important, many people are convinced that no qualified and motivated student should be denied an opportunity to go to an institution of higher learning merely because of the inability to pay tuition fees. The growing sense of the importance of higher education has been accompanied by an increased emphasis on the need to provide opportunities for higher education. Therefore, the government should be in a position to provide funding to enable students from poverty-stricken communities to access HE.

The Namibian government has in this regard set up a scheme for funding indigenous Namibian students. According to Marope (2005, 80), during the 2003/2004 financial year more than N$48 million was allocated to student support through the Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF). In addition, according to Marope, the move from a bursary to a loan scheme is appropriate, as graduates from higher education institutions

enjoy higher rates of private returns on their highly subsidized investment in education and training. A key concern is that only a few students benefit from the scheme. For instance, in 2002 only 40 percent (10% private sector bursaries and 30% government bursaries) of UNAM students received any kind of financial support. But the concern is not merely related to inability to fund one's own education due to poverty. It is primarily related to performance and educational excellence in the regions.

At independence, Namibia had a big demand for trained civil servants. As a result of this need, a Public Service Bursary Scheme (PSBS) was created with the main purpose being to train people to work solely in the civil service. However, when ethnic-based administrations were consolidated into one government, the demand for new recruits in the public service decreased significantly. This development rendered the PSBS irrelevant. Meanwhile the demand for financial assistance to students with no inclination to work in the public service increased dramatically. Different proposals, which could allow government to continue addressing the human resource needs of the country above and beyond the service requirements of the public service, were considered.

In 1996 Cabinet decided to do away with the PSBS and replaced it with the NSFAF. The latter became operational in January 1997. Act No. 26 of 2000, which governs the Fund, ultimately came into force and became effective in 2000. What was previously awarded as a bursary has now become a loan. The contract conditions between the beneficiaries of the loan and the Fund were deemed not to be effective in bringing about improvements in the administration of the loan, including recovery of the loan. To offset this shortcoming Cabinet reviewed, amended and approved changes to this Act through Cabinet decision No.16/18.09.07/002.

Typically, assistance is provided in the form of either a loan or grant to *needy*[5], full-time, first degree, undergraduate Namibian students who are enrolled at recognised HEIs in the country. The assistance is granted to cover tuition, textbooks, registration fees and related educational expenses as may be determined by the Board (MoE, 2005). Support to cover accommodation and meals may only be granted to those students enrolled in high priority fields of study as determined by the Board (MoE, 2005). In terms of parameters for awarding financial support, attention is paid to two considerations: namely regional quota (region where the candidate wrote the Grade 12 exams) and priority field of study. The regional quota is based on awarding financial assistance to a certain fraction of Grade 12 learners in a political region as a percentage of all Grade 12 enrolled students. The assumption is that this approach ensures equitable distribution of funds throughout the political regions and that access to the Fund is relatively greater than in the past. However, the reader will note in the following sections that access with equity remains a major concern.

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[5] In the context of the policy, needy students are those students whose combined parental/guardian annual earning/gross salary does not exceed N$150,000 per annum. This amount is calculated on the basis of an individual's basic salary plus allowances and other benefits minus income tax and pension fund contributions. Exceptions can be made if a parent or guardian proves that he/she is already paying for other children at any recognized HEI.

## Basic Criteria for Eligibility and Award

As far as eligibility is concerned, any Namibian citizen in good health, who has been admitted or registered for a course for which he/she has applied, is entitled to apply for financial assistance. Additionally, a sworn statement by parents depicting their income status and academic credentials, as well as proof of admission or registration, must be provided. Once applications have been received and acknowledged, a selection committee consisting of representatives from various government ministries/offices/agencies, including the delegates from HEIs, reviews applications and makes recommendations to the Permanent Secretary for approval. According to the Policy, the awards and allocation of funds are based on what is needed compared to what is available, measured against what HEIs can accommodate. Beneficiaries are expected to begin repayment of the loan after six months has lapsed since successful completion of their studies.

## The Role Played by National Student Financial Assistance Fund

Effort was made to access information regarding the human resources investment made during the PSBS period from 1991 to 1996. According to the Ministry of Higher Education Vocational Training, Science and Technology (1999, 21), PSBS enabled 1285 students in 1997 to access HEIs. This figure increased to 1650 in 1998. The Ministry of Education's publication "Investing in People, Developing a Country" also indicates that GRN considered it appropriate to expand access by revising the PSBS into "a new Government Students Financial Assistance Scheme, with emphasis on loans" (Ministry of Higher Education Vocational Training, Science and Technology 1999, 21). The rationale was that this would "broaden access and promote equity" in higher education. However, in terms of the implementation of the "Investing in People, Developing a Country" document, although the idea of converting the bursary scheme into a loan has been a success, it has still not led to the achievement of equity.

The available data for the period 1998 – 2008 show that there has been an exponential growth in loan allocation to students at tertiary institutions in some parts of Namibia's regions. As the data from the NSFAF in the sections that follow show, some regions are benefiting more than others and equity is not being achieved. According to the data provided by the NSFAF, more than 26,000 students have so far been supported since the inception of the Fund. This figure is very low when related to the fact that the combined number of students at the country's HEIs and Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) is approximately 25000 per year. Additionally, it should be remembered that not all these beneficiaries actually graduate within the prescribed period of study. This also means that dropouts and failures are not recorded even though it is the Ministry of Education's policy that once a student fails, he or she forfeits the financial assistance unless the student pays for the proceeding year and passes. In that case, the student may reclaim the loan.

In terms of institutional allocation, according to the data provided, the pattern shows that over the years most of the support has gone to UNAM and PoN students, although undergraduates enrolled at the IUM and at the VTCs have also been supported. This pattern does not suggest a certain type of favour towards certain institutions. Instead, as the policy states 'The award and allocation of funds is based on what is needed compared to what is available, measured against what the institution concerned can accommodate'. In terms of the amounts

spent so far, it is clear that the amount of funds allocated for financial assistance to students has been increasing, indicating the commitment of the government to invest in human resources (see figure 1).

**Figure 1: Actual N$ (mil) spent on student loans 2000 - 2006**

| Year | Amount |
|------|--------|
| 1998 | |
| 1999 | |
| 2000 | 845,786.5 |
| 2001 | 13,296,550 |
| 2002 | 15,232,560 |
| 2003 | 21,221,609 |
| 2004 | 24,607,276 |
| 2005 | 31,185,357 |
| 2006 | 27,523,250 |
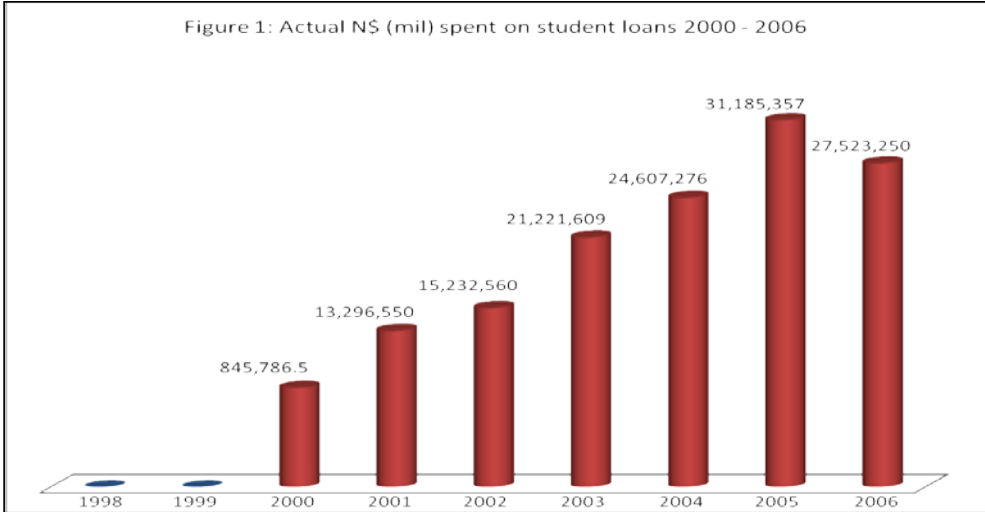
Source: MoE 2009, Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund.

## Allocation of Loans by Regions

As earlier indicated, the allocation of funds to the regions is based on a fixed quota system calculated on the number of Grade 12 learners in proportion to all Grade 12 learners. According to the findings, the biggest share of the funds goes to Khomas (23%), Oshana (17%), Omusati (13%) and Oshikoto (10%) Regions. The Caprivi Region occupies fifth position in terms of the greatest share of students' loan allocations and awards.

Geographically, this seemingly uneven allocation might be a result of several factors. First, it could be that these regions have the largest number of secondary schools. Second, the academic performance in these regions may be higher than in other regions, which enables more students to qualify for admission to HEIs.

**Figure 2: Loan allocation by regions 1998 -2006**

Legend: 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006

Caprivi 10.9, Hardap 4.1, Karas 3.0, Kavango 4.7, Khomas 22.4, Kunene 3.5, Ohangena 4.2, Omaheke 1.4, Omusati 9.7, Oshana 14.6, Oshikoto 14.6, Otjozondjupa 4.9, Foreign 1.7
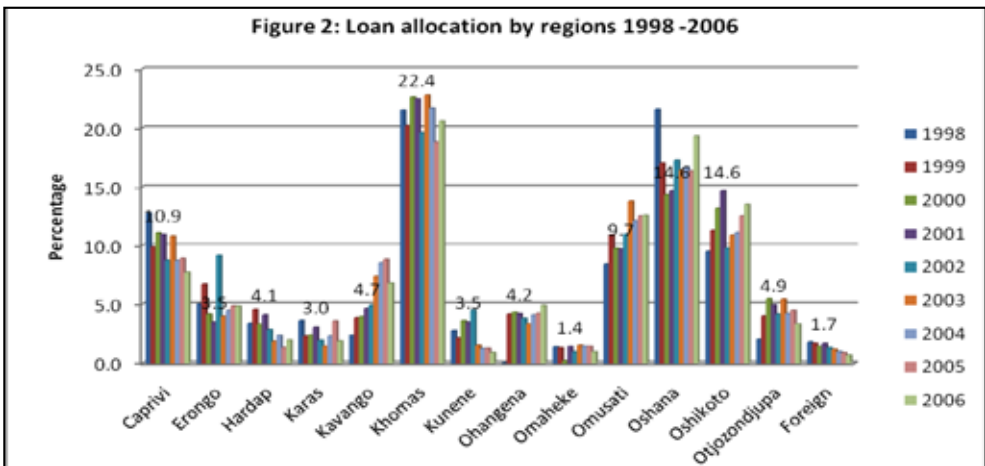
Source: MoE 2009, Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund.

In the event that the above reasons are true, a question of access with equity still remains, as most regions could still be described as deprived. Although population size should be considered in the allocation, its function should be well thought out, so that other regions are not unduly disadvantaged. For instance, the population size and number of schools in the Kavango Region are similar to those of the Khomas Region, and yet the share of funds allocated to Kavango is noticeably lower. According to a Review of Poverty and Inequality in Namibia by the National Planning Commission (GRN, 2008), among the regions, the highest incidence of poverty is in the Kavango Region, where 56.5% of the population are poor and 36.7% are severely poor.

Another pertinent issue arising from Figure 2 above is the low number of awards to students in regions where HEIs do not exist. Similarly, in Ohangwena, the incidence of poor and severely poor households is 44.7% and 19.3%. Generally, the levels of poverty in regions where HEIs exist are lower (Khomas 4%, Caprivi 5.2%, Oshana 6.1%). The only exception is Kavango where the level of poverty stands at 17.8%.

**Figure 3:** Allocation of Funds to the Regions and Support to Namibian students studying outside the SADC region in 2007
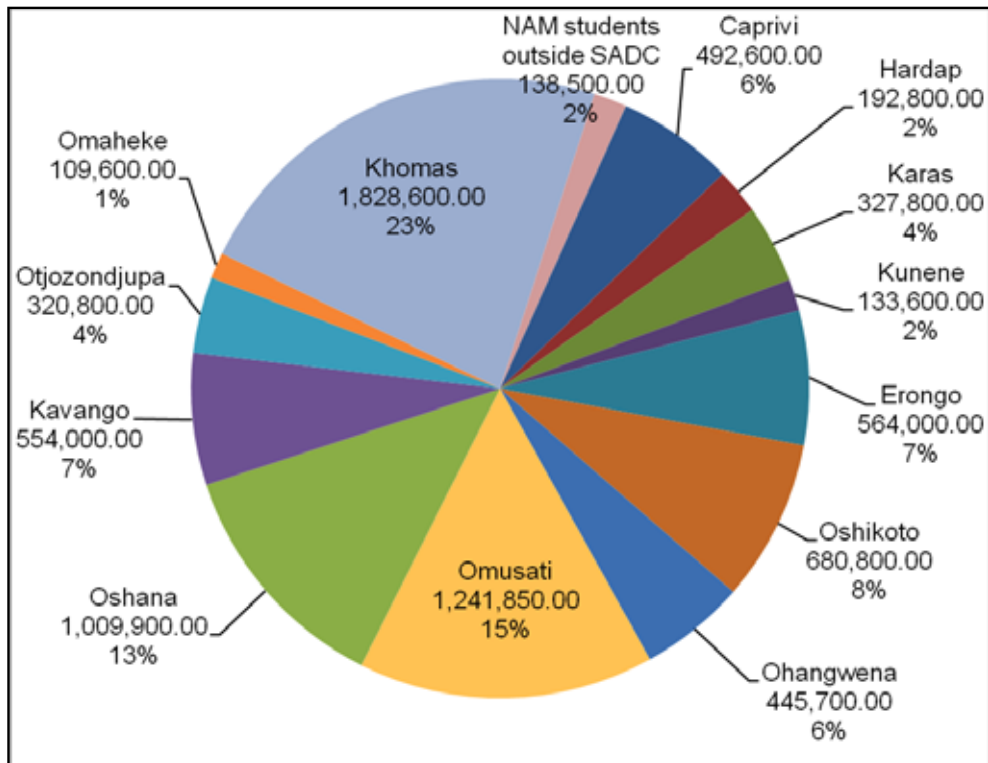


Source: MoE 2009, Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund.

The high allocation (23%) to the Khomas Region could be attributed to the fact that it is resource-endowed and that it has many secondary schools with a relatively high number of its learners qualifying to HEIs. In addition, the proximity of learners in Khomas to the NSFAF, mechanisms for information dissemination and general

access among others may contribute to the enablement of students to apply for the loans.. However, regions like Kavango and Ohangwena might have fewer secondary schools, but have many learners. In fact, according to SACMEQ (http://www.sacmeq.org/education-namibia.htm) , the Kavango Region has the highest number of schools (313 schools, with 62,441 learners) in the country. We are making this comparison to demonstrate that the population sizes in these regions (202,694 in Kavango and 228,384 in Ohangwena) are not much different from the population of Khomas (250,262).

However, if the low number of loan allocations to other regions is due to the fact that most of these regions are resource poor, then something needs to be done to balance the situation. If it is a question of academic performance, something should be done to ensure that the performance in the regions is not so different, since they take the same exams on the same content. The same applies to the problem of lack of qualified teachers, assuming that this is a related challenge. Incentives should be found to attract qualified teachers to the poverty-prone regions. Detractors are factors such as long distances from the urban centres, allowances, no provision of modern houses in the rural school areas, and lack of up-to-date ICT facilities in rural schools. The human resource component in terms of service provision should not be ignored, as it affects access with equity ultimately. Also, the provision of supporting educational facilities indirectly enhances effective performance of the teachers.

The community, of course, must also play its part. This aspect of access with equity requires deeper investigation as it relates to ethnic philosophies and values about teachers as educators and what education attainment really involves. In other words, the issue really is about what matters to them as individuals and as communities. In the northern and north-east regions, the numbers of livestock is approximately double or more than double that of the population. We know in part this has something to do with access to the production system of the economy. But are these people really poor? Unfortunately, this issue is outside the scope of this study.

Another aspect of access with equity to higher education which these data clearly depict is the fact that since most of the money goes to Khomas and the three north central regions; the question arises as to which ethnic groups are benefiting more than others. The four north central regions, except Ohangwena are mainly populated by the same ethnic group (Owambo). Therefore, the question of access with equity becomes a serious problem in this regard. Consequently, there is a need to change the basis upon which the current system/formula determines allocation. This is not an easy task – but difficult does not mean impossible. It is important not to misunderstand the argument here; this report does not argue that the existing system has been crafted to unfairly advantage certain ethnic groups at the expense of others. Instead, the standpoint is that there is a need to find a solution that promotes access with equity to everyone, wherever and whoever they are in terms of academic performance and access to funding. Doing so will help consolidate democracy and promote social stability.

## Allocation by Field of Study

Namibia has set herself a long term goal – Vision 2030. This plan envisages that through her own effort, by the said year, Namibia will be celebrating living standards similar to those of developed countries of the West. For a country to develop, it needs highly qualified and competent human resources in certain priority areas. However, in as much as all fields of study are essential for the development of a country, there are fields of study that are fundamental pillars of economic growth and development. Such disciplines are commonly referred to as the science and technology field. Figure 4 below shows that there has been an enormous cumulative investment in Education, Engineering, Architecture and ICT.



Figure 4: Number of Students Awarded Loans by Field of Study 1998 - 2006
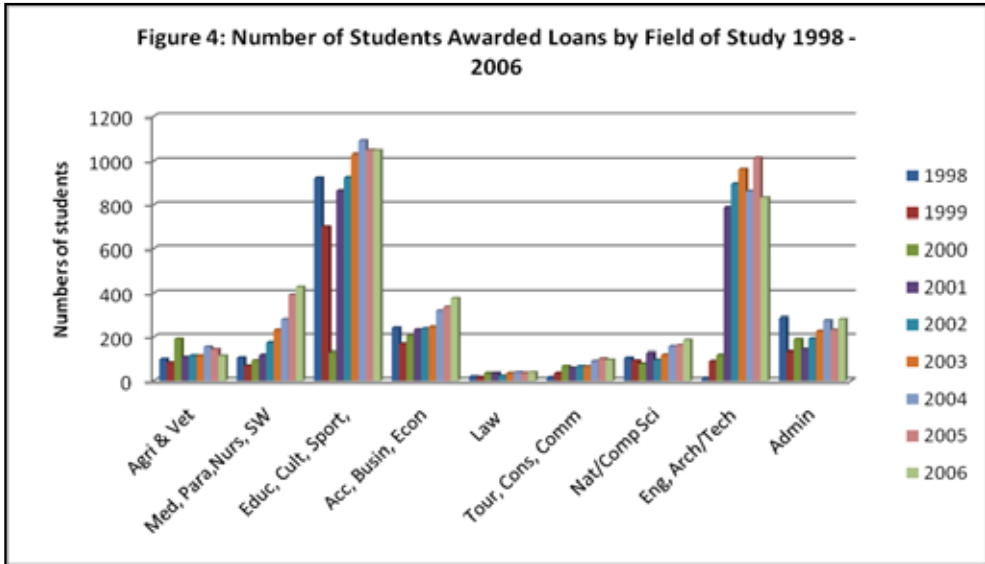
Source: MoE 2009, Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund.

On the face of it, this investment record is good news, because as a country we could argue that we are on the right track. However, closer examination reveals that the allocations in education are predominantly to students from educational colleges, while the engineering and architecture allocations are predominantly to students in the vocational training centres. The point here is not that resources are being misdirected. Rather, the conclusion drawn in this study is that Vision 2030 will not be achieved if investments in engineering and technology students are chiefly at the level of vocational education. Nevertheless, indications are that during NDP3, greater investments at the level of higher education will significantly contribute to growth in the number of medical doctors trained and to the achievement of the Vision.

Furthermore, agricultural (Vet Sciences) development is one of the pillars of developing economies, but additional data (see Figure 5 below) show that funding in this field has been modest. The same low funding in some other important areas such as Law (the backlog in court cases demonstrates this fact) and Conservation were also poorly funded.

Figure 5: Total awards by discipline in 2007
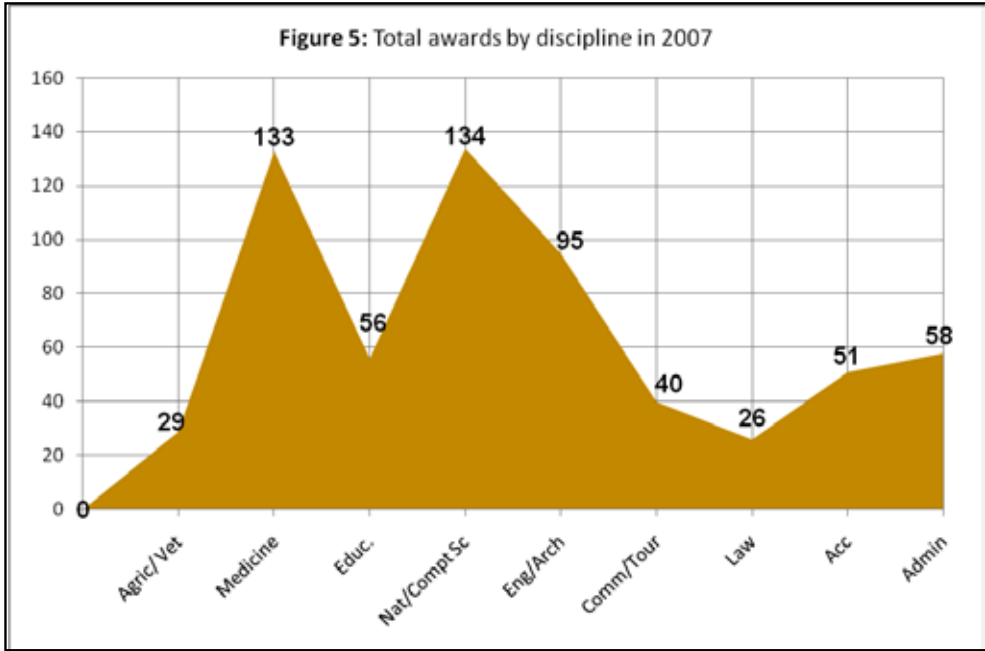
Source: MoE 2009, Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund.

### Does Geography matter in the Allocation of Funding to Regions by Disciplines?

According to the procedure laid out by the NSFAF, applicants are awarded funding for the field of study for which they apply. Accordingly, if potential students from Kunene for instance, do not apply to study medicine, they will not be awarded funding in that discipline even if they qualify to do so. Conceptually, it can be assumed that the information in Figure 6 below is indicative of regional academic strengths in various disciplines. We must remember that behind these disciplines are subjects taught by teachers using comparable or even the same syllabi. In this sense, Figure 6 is worthy of note and a source of questions at the same time.

Figure 6: Total Number of Awards across Disciplines by Region
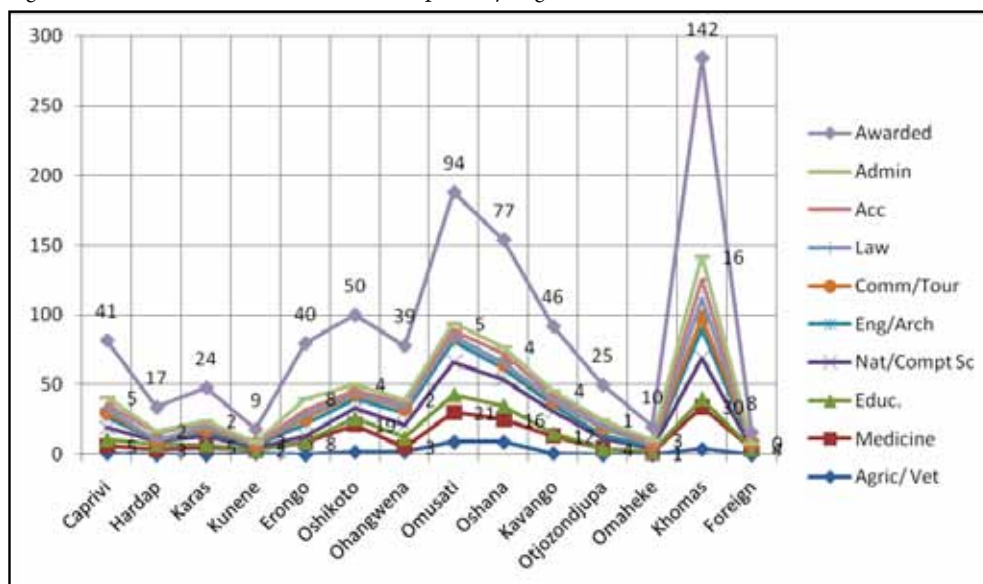


Source: MoE 2009, Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund.

However, to avoid further speculations, we can only ask questions such as the following: Why do some regions score lower than others in the same disciplines? Does this figure suggest that certain communities in Namibia are less interested in certain subjects? Can we safely assume that certain regions are more competitive in, for instance, science-based subjects, than in others? These are questions that require careful analysis of various variables.

What can be said with certainty is that in terms of total awards, Khomas, Omusati and Oshana Regions receive the highest number of awards across all disciplines. When considered over the period of 1998 – 2008, the pattern of allocations does not change, except that on average, Oshana is second to Khomas in terms of the share of financial resources awarded to individuals by region and discipline. The same is true for the regions of Karas, Kunene, Ohangwena, Kavango, Otjozondjupa and Omaheke, which receive the lowest number of awards and share of financial resources by discipline. Whatever the cause may be, the effect is not desirable. This is a matter of concern, and effort should be made to address this state of affairs.

### Do Tuition Fees Hinder Access to Higher Education?

Currently, there are no laws regulating tuition fees at HEIs. Generally, each year tuition fees increase by approximately 10% on average, taking inflation into consideration. In addition, tuition fees vary by the nature of the programs and the duration of the courses. Table 1 compares the fees for 2010 as announced by the HEIs concerned. These fees indicate an average amount a student pursuing HE in the country will be expected to pay in 2010. The amounts in the table are approximations based on basic degree courses at PoN and UNAM and diplomas at the Colleges and IUM.

In terms of the GRN loans administered through the NSFAF, the Ministry reported that it pays a minimum of N\$20712 and maximum of N\$33212 (Mr. Witbeen, pers. Com, 16.12.2009) for both UNAM and PoN. Thus, on average a student should expect to get approximately N\$26900, resulting in a deficit of N\$9418 for UNAM and N\$13610 for PoN. Accordingly, these amounts are the differences the students who are recipients of GRN loans are expected to pay. Thus, bearing in mind the poverty levels, these fees may be too high for the average Namibian family to afford. As such, current and future tuition fees might be a serious barrier to accessing higher education.

**Table 1: Comparative fees of HEIs (Amounts in N\$) per student per year**

| Institution | Registration | Accom | Meals | Tuition | Breakage | Total | GRN loans |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UNAM (4yr degree) | 500 | 11800 | 15600 | 7840 | 640 | 36380 | 26962 |
| PoN (B. Tech) | 595 | 10227 | 13480 | 15820 | 450 | 40572 | 26962 |
| CoE (BETD) | - | - | - | - | - | Fully paid by MoE | |
| IUM (Higher Diploma) | 450 | - | - | 11418 | - | 11868 | |

## Distance Education

The importance of distance education in enhancing access to HE cannot be underrated. It provides an alternative mode of access to higher education for individuals who might not be able to access higher education fulltime. In cognizance of the importance of distance education in eradicating poverty, ignorance and social inequality, in 1997 the Government of Namibia by an Act of Parliament established the Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) to provide education to out of school youth and adults, which would enable them to access HE. In 2007, a total of 27,805 Namibian students were enrolled at NAMCOL, of which 190 were enrolled in tertiary level programmes (Möwes, 2008).

For the past decades, some of the HEIs have been offering and continue to offer HE qualifications through distance education, which has made it possible for many Namibians to access education. For instance, according to Möwes (2008), in 2008 the Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning (COLL) at the PoN registered 1853 students in the 13 study programs available by distance education. At UNAM during the same period, the Centre for External Studies had 1535 students in the 12 programs available by distance education. It should be noted however that the existing funding scheme focuses more on students wishing to study fulltime (on campus). It is therefore important that the Government of the Republic of Namibia consider expanding the financial support for students wishing to study by distance.

## The Dilemma between Access with Equity and Quality

Even though this tension between equity and quality in some form is inherent in any institution of higher education, equity should not be confused with open or unlimited access. It is clearly not equitable to admit

students with no chance of success or students with inadequate backgrounds, and thus perpetuate what is commonly referred to as the 'revolving door' that propagates mediocrity in HE graduates. Spokespersons of the HEIs interviewed in this research project were concerned about this situation. The following instructive comment was from a respondent who noted that for students to be admitted to the college they needed to have *"... 21 points for the normal students and 19 points for marginalised..."* This informant observed that the *"admission policy accommodates students from all groups of the society... but then it lowers the standards, because you admit students with lower grades, while you are expected to produce high quality teachers".*

What constitutes equity in a particular institution relates to institutional mission, degree of selectivity, presence of remedial programmes, and availability of tutors. To some extent, the questions that respondents raised point to this: One of the functions of the NCHE is to help ensure an appropriate diversity of institutions and programmes to meet the educational needs of the state in a more harmonised manner.

To put this into context, what we mean is that the higher education system may provide access for all who believe they can benefit from post-secondary education, but it should do so through differentiated admissions to different types of institutions such as UNAM, PoN and Colleges of Education. Other institution types, with other objectives for skill development, e.g. Vocational Training Centres, should be seen and accorded appropriate status which does not devalue nor classify qualifications received as substandard or inferior. Their objectives are just different.  In this way, higher education can be diversified, and people can have a choice within higher education between academic and skills-based post-secondary education.

The dilemma however, is that widening access will not happen if the practice in the foundation levels (schools) restricts specialisation to a range of school-subjects in line with the teachers' expectations of the abilities of the students, when in fact the ambitions of the students may be influenced by the expectations prevalent in the cultures of their communities. Current attitudes within communities, and to some extent GRN, devalue the importance of training at VTCs.

On the one hand, at a policy level, the crucial role of both assuring equity internally and sustaining and enhancing quality, rests with coordinating bodies or some other legal agencies mandated with the promotion of access to higher education. On the other hand, higher education's biggest problem in Namibia remains the character and quality of the education students receive *prior* to enrolment at HEIs. HEIs themselves have very little direct influence on what takes place at the primary and secondary levels. Foundation programmes, bridging courses and mature age entry schemes have been instituted, and they appear to address access issues quantitatively, rather than qualitatively.

# Profiles of the HEIs in Namibia

## Human Resources

Human resources play an important role in the provision of quality education at the HEIs. The current staff profiles at UNAM and PoN, which include a relatively significant number of professors and PhDs, are highly uneven. In terms of gender, while the number of women professors at UNAM is low, at the PoN there are no women at full professorship level. At both institutions, the number of PhDs has increased. Although men still dominate the staff profiles, the number of women with PhDs is nonetheless higher than ever. The policy of staff development at both UNAM and PoN appears to continue to have a positive impact on Namibianisation of the academic staff. The percentage of Namibians in academic posts compared to expatriates has increased to more than 65% at UNAM although it appears to hover around 50% at the PoN. At colleges of education, the ratio of women to men is also low. In addition, the number of PhDs at colleges is virtually non-existent. Overall, as can be seen in Table 2 below, all HEIs experience serious problems in staff turnover. Many reasons contribute to this, but the most common relates to lack of retention initiatives.

**Table 2: Staff turnover at HEIs over five years 2003 – 2007**

| Institution | Ill-Health | Resignation | Death | Retirement | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UNAM | 2 | 99 | 7 | 13 | 121 |
| IUM | 1 | 28 | 1 | 0 | 30 |
| OCE | 2 | 16 | 1 | 4 | 23 |
| WCE | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 9 |
| RCE | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| CCE | 2 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 13 |
| PoN | 1 | 157 | 5 | 0 | 163 |

Source: Office of the Registrar at UNAM, PoN, COE, and IUM.

## Infrastructure and ICT Integration

Accessible infrastructure and the integration of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in HEIs is a key issue facing Namibia. Also, worldwide, the use of ICTs is the focus of widespread interest. The assumption is that ICTs really make students learn better, that they improve the management of education and that the quality of education improves. And, indeed, studies do exist that show that technologies, computers in particular, lead to better performance. In fact, the importance of ICTs is recognised in both NDP3 and the Vision 2030 document. The subsection on ICT in Vision 2030 identifies the following as ICT goals (GRN 2004, 80):

1.  Develop and implement a comprehensive ICT policy

2.  Integrate ICT education and training in school curricula

3.  Invest in research for development to promote local ICT industries

4.  Improve access to ICT facilities for all members of the Namibian society, and

5.  Enhance bandwidth both internally and externally to at least 1GB

The first-two tasks in the above list have been completed, with the first resulting in the *Information and Communication Technology Policy for the Republic of Namibia*. This policy document, launched in 2003, is ambitious and broad, covering issues such as global context, Southern African regional political initiatives, regulatory regime, as well as human resource development and how to deal with donated computers (GRN 2003). The *ICT Policy for Education* was first drafted in 1996. After several years of delays and consultations, in 2005 Cabinet approved the document, and the Ministries of Basic and Higher Education launched the ICT Policy for Education. The policy has several levels at which institutions need to function, indicating that HEIs should operate at Level 4[6] of the policy. At this level, HEIs are required to *integrate* ICTs in their research, teaching and management. It is not exactly clear to HEIs what is meant by integration.

**Table 3: ICT infrastructure at HEIs**

| HEI | Total PCs at the HEI | Functional PCs without internet | PCs with internet | LCD projectors | # of OHPs | Video conference facilities | # functional TVs | Nonworking PCs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CCE | 120 | 77 | 23 | 4 | 4 | - | 1 | 12 |
| OCE | 120 | 57 | 55 | 4 | 12 | - | 6 | 8 |
| RCE | 97 | 6 | 91 | 7 | 6 | - | 8 | - |
| WCE | 115 | 19 | 96 | 7 | 12 | - | 2 | - |
| IUM | 206 | 190 | 104 | - | - | - | - | 16 |
| UNAM | 868 | 0 | 868 | +50 | +50 | 7 | - | - |
| PoN | 1935 | 0 | 1935 | 41 | 7 | 2 | 6 | - |

Source: Office of the Registrar at UNAM, PoN, COE, and IUM.

As can be seen in Table 3 above, data on ICT infrastructure at HEIs somewhat favour Windhoek-based institutions. Although ICT availability is mostly a matter of strategy by the leadership of an institution, this situation affects how the institution approaches integration. Many understand integration to mean presence of computers at institutions, establishing labs for students to use and overall, achieving some level of computer literacy and e-mailing.

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[6]  Level 4 is a development level where HEIs are required to have many rooms with ICT which have Internet connection, and at least 50% of staff should possess an advanced level ICT certificate. or higher. Students should have access to ICT at least one class per day, and over 50% of the communication with the parent should be via ICT.

The researchers asked teacher educators to explain how they integrate ICTs in their teaching. Nearly all said that they use LCD projectors (which are grossly inadequate at the colleges) to teach and that they give assignments that require their students to browse and search Internet sites. At UNAM and PON, the same practice is followed, the difference being that of degrees not kind.

According to the findings of this research, consignments of computers have been deployed at colleges of education, while PoN and UNAM have increased their ICT infrastructure. More computer laboratories have been constructed, and student access enabled. When it comes to provisions or means to ensure that people with disabilities, the blind and deaf, access ICT, things are not as desired. Firstly, regarding the physical infrastructure at all colleges, UNAM and PoN can be described as inaccessible for people with disabilities. On-site observations indicated that it was only the Main Halls and toilets that were accessible for people with disabilities at RCE. Moreover, according to the management at Rundu and Caprivi Colleges, they in fact do not admit the blind and deaf, because they are unable to educate such individuals. UNAM has a Disability Unit, which is responsible for making learning possible for people with different disabilities including hearing and visual impairment. At the colleges, it is only the Ongwediva College of Education that admits the blind and the deaf, because it has some facilities and an enabling environment in place, such as '...tutors and Braille printing machines...'. However, even at this institution, the main building is constructed with stairs, without any provision for wheelchair-bound students or staff.

With respect to ICT, PoN reported that all its courses are technology-embedded. However, in practice, it is not clear to what extent the needs of the blind and deaf are taken into account. Recently, UNAM deployed ICT-teaching aid equipment in most of its lecture halls. To ensure that the users effectively integrate ICTs, the Learning, Teaching and Improvement Unit organised innovative teaching seminars to familiarise the teaching staff with the use of these aids. The research team does expect that the integration approach, if it can be called that, will depend on the individual lecturer's perceptions of the attributes of ICT. The perception is usually the predictor of the rate of adoption. Although the *ICT Policy for Education* does talk of training, management and funding, there are clearly other conceptual sources of difficulty in the preparation of teachers to integrate ICT in the teaching process. Such difficulties include taking into account factors such as strategy, clarity, complexity and need. In this case, it is doubtful that the interests of people with disabilities have been taken seriously.

Most importantly, even though all these HEIs have access to Internet, they are not linked to one another in such a way that they could harmonise and take advantage of modern technology to share expertise and facilities – a coordination challenge. One can say that HEIs have made significant decisions in their quest to integrate ICTs. Whether this infusing does indeed have an impact on the quality of education being offered at these institutions is a different question. It would nevertheless, be important to do an evaluative study to assess precisely what impact, if any, ICTs are having on quality education. Overall, it should be remembered that ICTs are only tools, and there are many of them. They depend on the capacity of the institutions to be useful. In many of the institutions, particularly colleges, there are not adequate and appropriate numbers of highly skilled technical

support staff. In a way, this is paradoxical; you need capacity to create capacity. To some extent, sharing of expertise and skills could solve this problem.

It is important to be appraised of the status of the ICT infrastructure in the HEIs for a variety of reasons. First the impact of technology on our lives and indeed on education cannot be overestimated. It impacts all our lives, it is helpful for bringing information to the finger tips of the students, and the students can carry out information searches that will enrich their education. Selwood, Fung and O' Mahony (2003, 16) indicate that ICT can add value to education and that ICT "… can offer advantages such as time saving" and "the ability to handle large quantities of data …" Accordingly both staff and students at the HEIs need adequate ICT to ensure effective and meaningful instruction takes place. What seems to come through in this research, however, is that in most of the HEIs, the staff members seem to have access to ICT, in the form of computers, especially at UNAM. Nonetheless for all institutions, the situation is far from adequate for the number of students they have.

### Student Intake and Regional Representation

One of the issues that this research study investigated was the regional representation of student intakes at HEIs. This information was requested to determine to what extent regional equity is considered within the higher education system of Namibia. According to the results, it appears that those regions with higher education institutions are advantaged and those without are experiencing what in development studies is referred to as area deprivation[7]. Information provided by the UNAM, PoN and IUM show that at both UNAM and PoN 38% of their students are from the Khomas Region (See figure 7). The Khomas Region is followed by Omusati (17%) and Oshana (22%) in terms of highest representation at UNAM and PoN. The rest of the regions are represented in the remaining enrolment figures. Even though Khomas can be described as having representation from all ethnic groups, it should be remembered that we are talking about area deprivation, and not ethnic considerations.

The situation at IUM is different, as they group their students according to towns. However, still people from Windhoek, which is in Khomas Region, make up the largest group of enrolled students. Interestingly, students from Angola are the second largest group at this institution. Again, the figures here mimic those reported by the NSFAF and those of poverty described by the National Planning Commission Study of 2008.

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[6]  Area deprivation is defined as the state of being infrastructurally and institutionally under-resourced, even if many of the people living in the area are not economically deprived. Area deprivation describes a situation where a locality has adequate development opportunities, but by virtue of the fact that the right institutions are not in place, the potential cannot be realised because success is dependent on the availability of infrastructure and institutions.

**Figure 7:** Regional distribution of students at UNAM, PoN and IUM
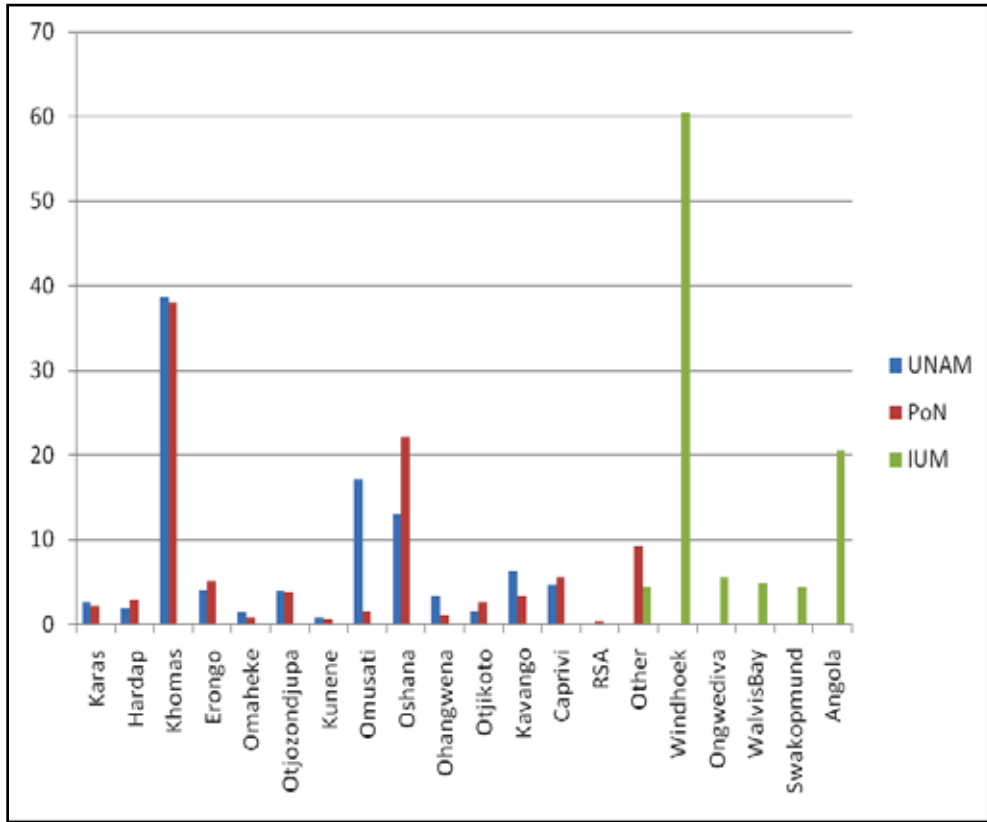


Source: Office of the Registrar at UNAM, PoN, and IUM .

Moreover, all colleges reported that the regions where they are based are their biggest catchment areas (see Figure 8). They reported that they reserve some 5% of their intake, and that they make accommodation provision for those enrolled from other regions. This is a very important access with equity matter. To clarify, the reference to the PoN, UNAM and colleges above should not be understood to mean that PoN and the colleges do not enrol students from other regions in an equal manner.

**Figure 8:** Regional distribution of students at the four Colleges of Education
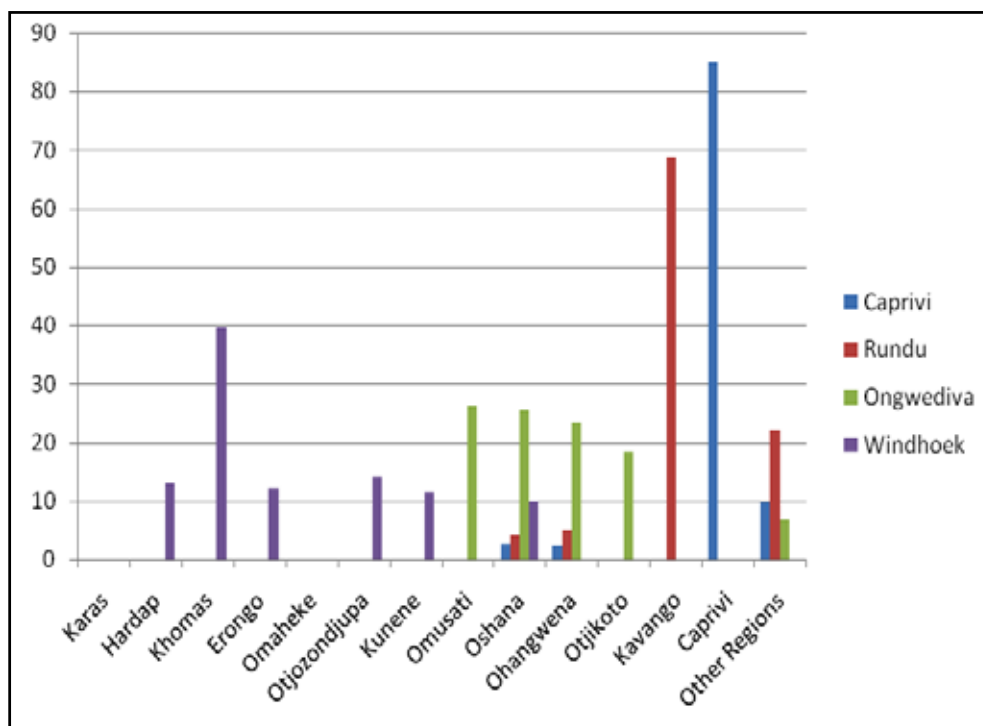


Source: Colleges of Education, Office of the Rector.

Area deprivation is used as a pointer to a system problem; higher education is a very powerful inducer of immigration and plays a central role in human capital depletion in peripheral areas. As one respondent put it: *"… all colleges we have are in the northern part of the country and only Windhoek College is in the central part. Is that not inequitable distribution of higher education? … of the students we have the majority are from the northern part …"* As earlier discussed, this issue must be addressed as it creates high immigration to centres where HEIs are situated and contributes to underdevelopment in those regions without HEIs. The figures above only point to unequal geographical distribution of HEIs in the country.

## Representation of Marginalised and Disadvantaged Groups in Staff Positions at HEIs

In this study, women and people with disabilities were regarded as disadvantaged groups, while people from the minority ethnic groups such as the San and Ovahimba were viewed as marginalized. With respect to the presence of people from marginalised and disadvantaged groups, the data from the field show that in all HEIs, both in administrative and academic sections, their number is low, which seems to suggest that nothing is being done to increase their numbers in HEIs. This state of affairs could be attributed to the primary thrust of HEIs which is not access. The thrust of HEIs in all cases is to pursue excellence and the maintenance of high quality standards. Head-hunting for the most talented personnel, and most importantly, their retention, is a

priority for HEIs. HEIs do, and will most likely for a long time to come, despise the practice of lowering entry standards. Nonetheless, head-hunting does not yield results in this case because entry standards that are kept low to increase accessibility also lower exit standards.

**Table 4 (a): Staff members from the disadvantaged groups at HEIs**

| Institution | Women at the institution | Women in Academic position | People with disabilities | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UNAM | 356 | 162 | 2 | 358 |
| IUM | 37 | 13 | 0 | 37 |
| OCE | 49 | 37 | 0 | 92 |
| WCE | 67 | 30 | 1 | 68 |
| RCE | 25 | 17 | 0 | 25 |
| CCE | 34 | 7 | 1 | 35 |
| PoN | 285 | 122 | 1 | 286 |

Source: Office of the Registrar at UNAM, PoN, COE, and IUM.

**Table 4 (b): Staff members from the marginalised groups at HEIs, 2008**

| Institution | San | Ovahimba | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| UNAM | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| IUM | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| OCE | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| WCE | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| RCE | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| CCE | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| PoN | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Office of the Registrar at UNAM, PoN, COE, and IUM.

According to the data from this research, what emerges is that there are larger numbers of female staff at all HEIs compared to numbers of staff from the marginalised communities and people with disabilities (See Table 4 (a). Nonetheless, none from the marginalised groups were involved in R&D work, and none were involved as academic staff members. The importance of R&D involvement cannot be overemphasised, since this area presents the cutting edge of knowledge. Involvement in R&D requires further study for one to be a fully participating member in this field. Accordingly, zero participation implies limited accessibility to certain staff positions in HEIs for a certain section of the community. Thus, the question of access with equity cannot be solved in higher education without first solving the problem of quality in the foundation level at the primary and secondary schools. There is a lot more work to be done in this area, because, if one takes the Caprivi Region for example, where there are several crèches and schools for children living with disabilities, one finds that these students don't often make it to secondary schools and tertiary education institutions.

## Marginalised Students' Access to Higher Education

As earlier defined in this study the term "marginalised students" refers to those students from the Ovahimba and the San communities. Table 5 shows the picture of marginalised groups' access to HE at IUM in the last five years.

**Table 5: IUM enrolments of students from different sections of the society over the past five years**

| Year | Enrolled | San | Ovahimba | Women | People with disabilities |
|------|----------|-----|----------|-------|--------------------------|
| 2007 | 917 | - | - | 516 | 2 |
| 2006 | 810 | - | - | 443 | - |
| 2005 | 622 | - | - | 357 | - |
| 2004 | 710 | - | - | 394 | - |
| 2003 | 753 | - | - | 467 | - |

Source: Office of the Registrar.

One can see that IUM had only two students living with disabilities during the five year period under consideration. From the above information, it is clear that currently individuals from the identified marginalised groups do not have access to programmes at IUM. It was indicated by the respondents that the main problem was the fact that, "…the majority of the marginalised groups do not meet the minimum entry requirements to gain access to higher education". Therefore for HEIs to maintain quality and excellence which is their primary consideration for student admission, applicants have to meet these stringent entry requirements.

**Table 6: WCE enrolments of students from different sections of the society over the past five years**

| Year | Enrolled | San | Ovahimba | Women | People with disabilities | Graduated |
|------|----------|-----|----------|-------|--------------------------|-----------|
| 2007 | 656 | 8 (4)* | 5 (3)* | 390 | 6 (3)* | 202 (112)** |
| 2006 | 613 | 8 (3) | 8 (3) | 363 | - | 210 (119)** |
| 2005 | 616 | 9 (4)* | 11 (7)* | 365 | - | 200 (121)** |
| 2004 | 209 | 5 (3)* | 12 (7)* | 120 | - | 166 (89)** |
| 2003 | 199 | 7 (4)* | 8 (7)* | 117 | - | 137 (84)** |

*Indicates number of female students

**Indicates number of female students graduating

Source: Office of the Rector.

Table 6 indicates that WCE has over the five years been able to enrol students from the marginalised groups each year. Even though the numbers are low, it seems that an attempt has been made to facilitate access to HE for these groups. Probably the observed numbers at WCE are a result of the ministerial directive requiring Colleges of Education to enrol students from the marginalised groups with reduced admission points, which one respondent called "Affirmative Action" (see next section). As indicated by Moxley et al. (2001) such a practice enables institutions of higher education to admit students from marginalised groups who might not be able to enter higher education if stringent admission requirements were applied. It is hoped that the few graduate teachers from the WCE would be catalysts for others from these communities to seek further and higher education.

The lack of accessibility to college lecture rooms and/or libraries, especially for wheel-chair-bound students, was identified as an obstacle to admitting more students with disabilities. Even though WCE has six students

living with disabilities, it was felt ramps would be helpful for the mobility of students in wheel chairs. It was also pointed out that the college is only able to admit student teachers living with various disabilities if a support system for such students is put in place. The lack of lecturers with specialised training in "… *sign language (for deaf students) and Braille and relevant equipment…*" hampers the admission of students living with disabilities at the colleges.

**Table 7: RCE enrolments of students from different sections of the society over the past five years**

| Year | Enrolled | San | Ovahimba | Women | People with disabilities | Graduated |
|------|----------|-----|----------|-------|--------------------------|-----------|
| 2007 | 380 | 1 | 2 | 191 | | 125 (62)** |
| 2006 | 372 | 2 | 2 | 181 | 2 (1)* | 109 (59)** |
| 2005 | 357 | - | - | - | - | 115 (65)** |
| 2004 | 347 | 2 (2)* | - | - | - | 111 (60)** |
| 2003 | 337 | 4 (3) | - | - | - | 118 (63)** |

*Indicates number of female students

**Indicates number of female students graduating

Source: Office of the Rector.

Table 7 shows that a total of 15 students from the two marginalised groups were admitted to the College during the five year period. The small number of students indicates low accessibility to higher education by members of the San, Ovahimba and people with disabilities to RCE. One of the reasons provided by the respondents from the colleges was that students from these communities often did not apply for admission.

**Table 8: OCE enrolments of students from different sections of the society over the past five years**

| Year | Enrolled | San | Ovahimba | Women | People with disabilities |
|------|----------|-----|----------|-------|--------------------------|
| 2007 | 315 | - | 2 (2)* | 170 | 2 |
| 2006 | 288 | - | - | 151 | 2 (2)* |
| 2005 | 321 | 1 (1)* | 5 (3) | 170 | 3 (2)* |
| 2004 | 288 | - | 2 | 158 | 4 |
| 2003 | 286 | 1 (1)* | 4 (3)* | 150 | 2 (1)* |

*Indicates the number of female students

Source: Office of the Rector.

Table 8 shows that a good number of students from marginalised communities were admitted to OCE. This is probably due to the existence of the Eluwa Special School in the region close to the college, which has been in existence for a long time. It should be mentioned here that it was reported to researchers that the claims of some of the people who were admitted on the basis of belonging to a marginalised group were suspect. Table 8, indicates the overall number of students at CCE, and the proportion of students from marginalised communities. It is evident that marginalised students have only been accessing the College since 2006.

**Table 9: CCE enrolments of students from different sections of the society over the past five years**

| Year | Enrolled | San | Ovahimba | People with disabilities | Graduated |
|------|----------|-----|----------|--------------------------|-----------|
| 2007 | 386 | 9 | 2 | 2 | 122 |
| 2006 | 390 | 3 | - | 2 | 127 |
| 2005 | 389 | - | - | 1 | 110 |
| 2004 | 376 | - | - | 1- | 106 |
| 2003 | 331 | - | - | - | 87 |

Source: Office of the Rector.

According to spokespersons of the colleges, particularly at OCE, the practice of pre-selecting potential student teachers by regional offices, and sending such lists to the Directorate of Higher Education which then instructs colleges to register students, is highly flawed, as it means that not all enrolled in the scheme are marginalised. This of course, also points to lack of clear criteria and definition of who does and who does not qualify as marginalised. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the female students in all HEIs outnumber the males, except at RCE, where the numbers appear to be equal. Given the above observation, it is the view of the researchers that female students should not be regarded as a marginalised group as far as access to Higher Education is concerned.

## Access with Equity to the Higher Education System

Accessing higher education in Namibia is most often through meeting set criteria on the basis of a school leaving certificate or prior higher education elsewhere. There is a wide range of entry requirements to certificate, diploma, undergraduate degree and graduate academic programmes. The basic admissions requirement at colleges, UNAM, and PoN is 25 points, which is equal to five 'C' symbols. These requirements are subject to special mechanisms with regard to admitting people from marginalised groups. Points can be relaxed to as low as 19 points specifically for marginalised students. It appears that there are some discrepancies in the assignment of points for admission. In RCE and CCE they interpret a 'C' symbol at the NSSC level as equal to 5 points, while in OCE they rate the 'C' as 6 points.

As a matter of procedure all potential students must apply. However, colleges reported that a sizable number of potential student teachers from marginalised groups is annually considered for admission on instructions from the Directorate of Higher Education. All applicants are examined. Only those who perform successfully in the test and interviews are admitted. Depending on the interests of students, each college allocates students to areas of specialisation namely lower primary, upper primary and junior secondary.

To increase access to higher education, UNAM, IUM and PoN have provisions for non-traditional entrants through a mature age entry scheme, which recognises prior learning and considers three years of work experience as one major requirement. UNAM also has the foundation programme to help school leavers to upgrade their points, especially those intending to enrol for the Natural Sciences. While acknowledging the importance of English as a medium of instruction, some respondents in this study strongly argued that institutions of higher

education were unrealistic to expect learners to have obtained a C in English as one of the requirements. "The C in English is a thorn in the flesh", said one of the directors. However, one must remember that again, HEIs rely on the outputs of basic education.

In the same way, one can ask, "Why can't the HEIs do something about the foundation problems in basic education?" Foundational problems currently experienced by basic education are a result of multiple complex factors such as lack of readiness to enter primary school, insufficient teaching and learning and poor language proficiency by both teachers and learners at the primary school level. However, appropriate coordination and better working relationships amongst HEIs might help alleviate some of the above indicated challenges. Overall, English proficiency is a major concern for HEIs, because students need to communicate. Without that one can be written off in academic circles.

## Implementation of Quota Practice

Unlike the colleges of education, UNAM, IUM and PoN do not have a quota directive(s) on admission of students. According to the enrolment statistics of the four colleges, the majority of students registered in each college are from the region where the college is situated. According to the respondents, every academic year the Ministry of Education decides on the admission number of students each college of education can enrol. This is usually 130 per intake for smaller colleges such as Caprivi and Rundu, and approximately 300 for Windhoek and Ongwediva.

The criteria used to determine the quota for each college is not stipulated anywhere. Moreover, there is no policy guiding the practice of the quota system. It is also difficult to measure the extent to which the colleges adhere to the quota system, because it depends heavily on interpretation, i.e. whether quota refers to enrolment by region or only to marginalised groups. One of the respondents indicated that if the Ministry of Education finds the quota system working well at colleges, then it should be applied to UNAM and PoN as well. At HEIs themselves, opinion is divided. There are those who support low entry points to increase access to HE, but others say anyone who cannot meet the set minimum requirements is unfit to become part of HE.

## Challenges faced by Marginalised Groups in HEIs

As a reminder, while considerable effort has been made to promote access, this issue has primarily been a preoccupation for basic education. Mechanisms such as school feeding schemes have been established and have encouraged learners from marginalised communities to remain in school. But basic education has not really produced the desired results – results that ensure marginalised people compete in the same way as their counterparts when they apply to HEIs. The policies in Namibia have promoted equality in education consistently, particularly with regard to disabilities and special needs education, but no such policies apply to HEIs. Access is not a primary preoccupation of HEIs. Their primary concern as competitive organisations is to focus on excellence and attempt to recruit the best students, who are often not from marginalised groups.

Therefore, on the one hand, the challenge of achieving access with equity in the higher education system is considerable. On the other hand, an approach focusing on promoting access with equity at HEIs would seem under-informed, because as we have said earlier, these institutions depend on how good primary and senior secondary education outputs are.

Nevertheless, what are the challenges to HEIs as far as students from marginalised groups are concerned? According to the results of this study, HEIs *'... struggle to motivate marginalised students'.* These students are apparently not well motivated to study. They also expect to be considered special, special in the sense that they cannot be expected to stick to deadlines, be examined like their peers or be consistent in their school attendance. This was reported with specific reference to the San students. Furthermore, it was reported that the interventions from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister appear to have been understood by some of the marginalised groups, particularly the San, to mean that they can get away with anything. Some respondents indicated that they have been threatened by these students, in the sense that if a lecturer failed or reprimanded them, they would report the lecturer in question to the OPM.

Furthermore, it was reported that students from marginalised groups tend to abuse alcohol and have very high rates of absenteeism. College staff reported that they feel pressured by the system to 'pass' students from marginalised groups. Some claimed that the assumption that these graduates will uplift their communities is misleading, because since their exit standards are so low, they will only perpetuate the poor entry marks of the learners in the schools. Moreover, lecturers at Caprivi and Rundu Colleges reported that some of their graduates from these marginalised groups have already been dismissed from employment due to absenteeism and alcohol abuse.

With respect to women students, all colleges reported that they dismiss female student-teachers from hostels as soon as the management is made aware of pregnancy. Apparently, they do this because they fear that abrupt deliveries or miscarriages can happen in the hostels, which in their view would be unhealthy for the institutions as they do not have facilities to enable safe delivery of babies. They cite the case at Ongwediva, where a female student "attempted abortion" in the last trimester of pregnancy. While the dismissal of students due to pregnancy is somewhat understandable the welfare of pregnant students should also be looked at. First, all colleges are located in relative proximity to hospitals. Secondly, modern medical advances have developed to the extent that reasonable predictions can be made concerning possible delivery dates. Moreover, student-teachers are adults, some of whom are married. Therefore female married students may have no control over when to become pregnant.

Another interesting dimension of the access issue, respondents argued, relates to poverty. Many respondents ascribed educational marginalisation to poverty. They argued that people from poor family backgrounds attend schools that offer poor education, while children from well-to-do families attend schools that offer the best education in the country. According to one respondent, *"Access [to school education] is not based on equity but on affordability".* This assertion can be interpreted as meaning that if financing was available, access with

equity would not be a problem. However, this cannot be completely true, because first, not everyone wants to go on to higher education, and second, entry to higher education is also a question of individual academic performance.

Nevertheless, the study revealed that the fact that GRN does not offer free higher education tempts some to compare the current practices to past injustices. One put it this way, *"In the past it was a question of favouring Whites and discriminating against Blacks. Now it is a question of the children of the "haves" getting access, and the children of the "have-nots" do not have access to HE. It is the poor versus the rich. The poor children from rural areas are the ones who suffer the most. It is these children who struggle to get access to higher education even when they have good points."*

It was also indicated that culture and traditions play an important role as far as access with equity to higher education is concerned, because in some cultures education is not highly valued in their way of life. Another respondent shared the same sentiments but in a slightly different way: *"Their [students'] background determines what type of education they should get. People with money send their children to institutions of higher learning of their choice".* These sentiments should be taken seriously, as they point to frustration and a sense of injustice and social exclusion.

Respondents also expressed dissatisfaction with the current student financing scheme. Respondents complained that this practice was getting young people indebted even before they start working. One respondent argued that *"We need to use money to train our human capital if we are to achieve Vision 2030 … It is not that we cannot provide bursaries , it is just a problem of how we allocate our money. We need to identify the needy children and give them bursaries … We are not a poor nation … We should stop spending money on wrong things. We need to set priorities".* Obviously, the issue is debatable, and debate should be encouraged. As one interviewee remarked, *"Yes, students are indebted, but so far no student has been taken to court for being unable to pay. Where do you get money to give bursaries to all needy students?"*

Besides these "student problems", access with equity with respect to staffing is also a challenge. Taking the system as a whole, the total number of staff members living with disabilities working in academic positions at all the HEIs is only five. Several informants reported that the current basic education system does not cater for the needs of the students, and hence staff, living with disabilities. From this point of view, education for all, when defined as increasing access and equity based on the rights of individuals to a decent life and equal opportunities for social promotion, is not being achieved, and this factor may hinder Namibia from transforming into an egalitarian, knowledge-based society. As Kim (2004, 224) suggests, a more appropriate way would be to *"find the right place for every applicant, and open up internal mobility in the higher education system rather than striving for justice in the selection procedure."*

To affirm the standpoint above, while it is true that the issue of access with equity is a complex one, it is important to consider that lowering selection procedures at HEIs will not in the long run solve the problem of marginalised communities. Rather, quality and inclusive basic education will have a greater chance of addressing the problems of marginalised communities. This is where the focus should be.

Furthermore, according to the respondents, one of the challenges is lack of a clear definition of "marginalised group". According to interviewees there were cases where anybody who came from Kunene Region was considered a marginalised person simply because he or she was of the Ovahimba group. It was reported that because of a lack of a clear definition, "... *the Directorate of Higher Education just instructs colleges that here is the list of names of people from marginalised groups. Admit them"*. The situation is tantamount to a gross violation of opportunities for needy people. It was further reported that "... *some governors did the same, and it was difficult for the colleges to resist the political instructions"*.

Another reported challenge was due to the uncoordinated and unplanned admission of students from marginalised groups. The study revealed that in some colleges students end up living in common rooms as they cannot be provided with adequate accommodation due to late enrolments, which colleges blamed on the Ministry.

## Factors Affecting Student Progress

There were a number of factors reported by respondents to affect throughput. One major factor was the lack of funds. Many students did not have financial support other than from family. The PoN, for example, estimated that more than 69% of its student population did not have any financial support. All institutions indicated that they were being under-funded and could not provide basic services such as accommodation.

The lack of student accommodation facilities was also reported to be a barrier to academic progress. In all HEIs investigated, many students commute to and from the campuses every day. This state of affairs leads to irregular attendance in classes due to lack of transport money. Some respondents reported that a sizeable number of students come to HEIs unprepared. The lack of preparedness for higher education, once again, is something that HEIs cannot handle alone because it is a vicious cycle. HEIs enrol secondary schools graduates into teacher education programs who are not competent enough for the profession. As a result, it is the mediocre type of teachers who enter the system to perpetuate the cycle of poor secondary school graduates and poor results both at HEIs and in secondary schools. The first year students who come directly from senior secondary schools lack essential basic skills and lack proficiency in English Communication, Science and Mathematics to enable them to cope with higher education. The UNAM Foundation Programme, and similar programmes envisaged by the MoE, constitutes a step in the direction of addressing this problem.

Lack of academic support and student support systems was also reported to negatively affect student progress. Due to lack of funds, HEIs are unable to mount adequate academic and student support services, such as tutorial services and student counselling, in an effective manner. An important question to ask them is: "Are there

stakeholders who can be engaged to assist in the management of these challenges? And if so, what support are the stakeholders providing?" Nearly all HEIs have stakeholders, but the degree of their engagement with these institutions influences the outcomes. While some institutions reported to engage their stakeholders effectively, others reported that they wrote letters, but no results were achieved. The conclusion is that acquiring support from stakeholders is very much a question of leadership.

# Research and Development

*"Today, the most searching question facing us is: how best may we integrate science and technology into our education and work systems, and more interestingly, how to make those interventions relevant to the needs of industry, commerce, public service and the public at large. For Namibia's economy to grow and flourish in this competitive environment, science and technology must be the key change agents. This is our only hope and chance to build an internationally relevant and stable economy. This requires us to make a paradigm shift [regarding] how we do business, how we teach and how we learn"*

**- Nahas Angula, 1999.**

From the above quotation it becomes apparent that for any country to achieve its developmental goals, it must put R&D high on the national agenda and embed it deeply into the society's culture and into everyday life for meaningful and sustained benefits. R&D creates benefits for society by bringing commercially viable products for improving the living standards of the nation. Science and technology are vehicles for the preparation of individuals for R&D work. Namibian leadership made this point through the National Policy on Research, Science and Technology of 1999, and the Research, Science and Technology Act No. 23 of 2004. The Research, Science and Technology Act states the following objectives:

1.  To ensure the co-ordination, monitoring and supervision of research, science and technology in Namibia;
2.  To promote and develop research, science and technology in Namibia;
3.  To promote common ground in research, scientific and technological thinking across all disciplines, including the Physical, Mathematical and Life Sciences as well as Human, Social and Economic Sciences;
4.  To encourage and promote innovative and independent thinking and the optimum development of intellectual capacity of people in research, science and technology;
5.  To ensure dedicated, prioritized and systematic funding for research, science and technology application and development in Namibia; and
6.  To promote linkages between Namibia and international institutions and bodies on the development of research, science and technology.

The same Act envisages the establishment of a Commission on Research, Science and Technology, and outlines the functions and powers of the Commission as follows:

1.  To monitor and supervise the promotion, co-ordination, development and continuation of research, science and technology in all sectors in Namibia, and to minimize overlapping in the fields of research, science and technology;

2.  To prepare and review a national programme;

3.  To co-ordinate and facilitate the development of research, science and technology on national, regional and local level, and to provide direction and policy guidance to the research, science and technology innovation systems in Namibia;

4.  To promote broader participation in research, science and technology activities with due regard to the promotion of designated groups or persons belonging to designated groups;

5.  To promote awareness and national appreciation of the value of research, science and technology to social, cultural and economic development;

6.  To promote, facilitate and organize seminars, conferences, lectures, workshops and similar events relating to research, science and technology;

7.  To promote the application of research, science and technology to the development and improvement of industrial and commercial output, designs and productivity; and

8.  To provide research grants, loans, bursaries and similar financial aid in research, science and technology.

While these initiatives are indeed laudable, they have not been implemented. And, what is of primary concern to this research study is whether these aspirations trickle down to the HEIs in the country.

## Institutional Missions and Objectives on Research and Development

Clarity and specificity of institutional mission and objectives on research are of paramount importance to national development, because these determine not only the degree to which HEIs respond to national challenges but also their approach. Therefore, with the provision of research in the above mentioned national policies and Acts, it is ideal that each higher education institution have an institutional mission and objectives on R&D. According to the data provided to the research team, it is evident in this study that all colleges do not have a mission and objectives on R&D.

According to the college management members, colleges do not have research agendas because of the following factors:

1.  The nature of the colleges themselves – Colleges operate like high schools in the sense that teacher educators are overcrowded with teaching.

2.  The majority of teacher educators do not have the required educational capacity to conduct research.

3.  Research is not considered as a core function of the colleges.

The situation is different at UNAM and Polytechnic of Namibia. With regard to both UNAM and Polytechnic, research is one of their core functions after teaching. The Polytechnic of Namibia Act 1994 (Act No. 33 of 1994), provides for the conduct of applied research so as to both realise the essence of the institution's motto and pursue the nature of the central research activity characteristic of a technological, career-oriented, higher education institution. Thus, the stated mission of the Polytechnic is to *"contribute to sustainable national*

*development through excellence in technologically-oriented career education and training, applied research and service".* Its objectives include *"conducting research which will contribute to the quality of sustainable social and economic development and which strives to serve humanity and the Namibian society as a whole".* Applied research at all levels, but especially at the undergraduate and postgraduate degree levels, should lead to technological innovation, invention and creation of new industrial and commercial products. Each academic unit/department is expected to be the base of research at the Polytechnic. A productive research culture should generate equity and distinct scholarships.

The University of Namibia Act 1992 (Act No. 18 of 1992), provides for undertaking of research to encourage the growth and nurturing of cultural expression within the context of Namibian society and to contribute to the social and economic development of Namibia. The Mission of the University of Namibia includes engaging in socially and nationally relevant, academic and technical training, research and educational programmes with the involvement of all stakeholders in a conducive environment for learning, innovation, knowledge creation, professional development, functional skills development and development of related competencies, within the cultural context of the Namibian people.

**The Objectives are as follows:**

1.  To continue to develop the University as a leading national institution and a major contributor to nation building;
2.  To give high priority to applied research across a broad spectrum of relevant fields;
3.  To encourage inter-disciplinary approaches to the resolution of real-world problems;
4.  To undertake basic and applied research, with a view to contributing to the social, economic, cultural and political development of Namibia; and
5.  To encourage endogenous development and application of science and technology.

## Research in National Priority Areas

For the purpose of speedy development, it is essential for higher education institutions to prioritise research areas. Vision 2030, as well as NDP3, outlines national research priorities. Since Colleges of Education and IUM reported that they do not do research, it is only the PoN and UNAM that will be considered here for analysis. According to the respondents at the PoN, this institution's areas of specialised research are: IT, Engineering, Natural Resources Management (including Land Management), Allied Health Sciences, Accounting and Finance, and Journalism and Media Technology. At UNAM, respondents reported that UNAM's priority focus is on hardcore sciences, such as Physics, Engineering and Chemistry, and aggressive funding is channelled toward these. In addition, one of the informants reported that *"…in recent months, our university has verbally acknowledged the need for multidisciplinary, holistic research activities. However, nothing much has been done to promote this genre of research…we continue to channel massive financial resources towards the hardcore sciences".* For purposes of this research study, the research team investigated to what extent people from marginalised and disadvantaged groups are involved in R&D work. The next section reports on this issue.

### Marginalised Groups and R&D

The results of this study indicate that currently there are a number of women (approximately 25) involved in R&D at UNAM and PoN. However, there appear to be no people from the marginalised groups or people with disabilities at UNAM or PoN. At IUM and at the Colleges of Education it was reported that none from the marginalised and disadvantaged groups was involved in R&D work. Although the reason for this is straightforward, in the sense that as earlier indicated, HEIs are focused on competence, excellence, and quality; these virtues are what basic education does not give to members of marginalised communities. The question then arises, "From those who have accessed higher education so far, could it be that they are un-attracted to R&D, or are they considered incompetent, or could it be that none has actually graduated in the areas of specialised R&D as stated in the section above? It is difficult to say what determines the answer. However, clearly, once again, the issue of equitable basic foundations at primary and secondary school levels is of major concern.

### Institutional Knowledge on Market Demand and Supply Situation

For every business to excel it needs to know its market demand and supply in order not to under or over supply its produce. The same is expected from higher education institutions in the country because of the nature of their mandates, which can be equated to that of a business. Institutional knowledge about the market situation is important, because through its produce, the institution affects development. The study shows that colleges have been operating in a vacuum until recently when a forum between the regional offices and the colleges to determine the needs of teachers was established. Currently, some HEIs think that the market needs are dealt with by ETSIP. While ETSIP may indeed give some indication of what kinds of skills are needed and in what fields, human capital production cannot be based on that kind of general information–too general to base academic human capital production planning on it

Both UNAM and the PoN reported that they take into account market demand and supply issues through the curricula that are developed in connection with the advisory boards, which consist of experts from the industry and public sector. However, this practice does not give HEIs precise numbers of the type and levels of graduates needed in the market. UNAM and PoN also reported that whenever new programmes are introduced, a valid needs assessment is conducted. At IUM, among others, its market demand and supply indicator is the 95% deficit of HIV/AIDS management and professionals. How they established this figure it is unclear. It is therefore important to carry out an independent study, which will ascertain not only the mechanism of demand and supply information attainment, but also the alleged over and under supply of human capital in specific professions.

### Joint Research and Development Activities

According to the information gathered during this research study, there is no recognisable joint R&D work ongoing between the HEIs in the country. Besides the Colleges of Education, which work closely with the Faculty of Education at UNAM on their Insert Programme, PoN, UNAM and IUM did not report any collaboration. The impact of the higher education system would be greater if collaboration between HEIs existed.

## Institutional Stakeholders

Stakeholders are important players in propelling innovations and broadening access to education. In summary, all HEIs listed the following as stakeholders:

1. National Planning Commission
2. Ministry of Education
3. International Donors
4. Ministry of Trade and Industry
5. National Researchers
6. Schools
7. Community
8. Regional Education Offices
9. Principals
10. NIED
11. UNAM
12. ACTET
13. NCHE

Notice that no institution reported the OPM or the National Federation for People with disabilities as an important stakeholder. The OPM, especially the Deputy Prime Minister, has taken a keen interest in bringing the marginalised communities into the mainstream in Namibia. On the other hand, the National Federation for People with Disabilities deals with issues of accessibility and marginalisation for the disadvantaged persons.

## Institutional Performance Ranking

This research project asked HEIs to rank subjectively, on a scale of 0 – 100%, their performance in the areas below. The objective was to determine the level of confidence of academic staff members in institutional performance. PoN and UNAM declined to answer the questions. However, IUM and all four colleges ranked their institutions. Each interviewee was asked to rank the performance of the institution as categorised in Table 9. The researchers calculated the average score to indicate the confidence the respondents have in the provision of quality higher education by their respective institutions. Table 10 below shows the rankings.

Some aspects of the table are difficult to verify, but others such as the quality of research output can easily be verified. According to some sources, Namibia publishes approximately 60 scientific articles in refereed journals per year (Thomson website 2007). Unfortunately, it requires stringent measures and time to ascertain where the authors are based, and most importantly, the ranking of the articles. In terms of Web Popularity Ranking, PoN and UNAM ranked numbers 78 and 21, respectively, amongst the top 100 top African universities in 2009 (http://www.4icu.org/topAfrica/).

**Table 10: Subjective self-ranking of institutional performances on various aspects**

| Aspect | UNAM % | PoN % | IUM % | WCE % | OCE % | RCE % | CCE % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Provision of quality higher education | * | * | 85 | 70 | 50 | 55 | 68 |
| Output of academic research | * | * | 70 | 20 | 0 | 20 | 23 |
| Provision of extension services | * | * | 75 | 0 | 60 | 30 | 3 |
| Provision of continuing education | * | * | 85 | 60 | 0 | 5 | 16 |
| Production of HRs relevant to national economy needs | * | * | 85 | 80 | 65 | 60 | 91 |
| Collaboration with local and international institutions | * | * | 75 | 70 | 40 | 15 | 23 |

(*UNAM and PoN declined to rank these aspects of their activities)

Source: Office of the Registrar at UNAM, PoN, COE, and IUM.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the results contained in this report, some conclusions can be drawn. Taking into account the complexity of factors influencing the achievement or hindering the achievement of access with equity in higher education in Namibia, a broader view of quality may be considered. If Namibia, using only limited resources, is to achieve a healthy social diversity and viability in international markets, there will be many smaller decisions at the 'juncture' where quality and access trade-off consequences should be examined together.

As far as the issue of dismissing pregnant students from the hostels is concerned, the research team is not convinced that pregnancy is a sufficient reason for students to be denied hostel accommodation in the first two trimesters of pregnancy, because this limits their access to higher education. To deal with the social problems faced by marginalised groups and students in general, it is important for the Ministry of Education to ensure that all colleges of education have qualified, on-site professionals to deal with these challenges, for example, social workers and clinical psychologists who are used to dealing with the multitude of problems faced by students at HEIs.

**Based on the needs identified in this research, the following actionable recommendations are made:**

1.  MoE should better equip minority students to function well in the institutional environment from early levels of schooling. It was found in the research that many of the students from minority groups either repeat or drop out of the system. It was not clear exactly why, but there are pointers to factors such as struggles with social problems, among others absenteeism, alcohol abuse, and lack of motivation.  Furthermore, HEIs do not have adequate professional services that can assist students as soon as indications of such problems appear. It is therefore recommended that a study be carried out   to assess and recommend suitable institutional support environments for marginalised groups. (**Action: NCHE**)

2.  The institutional environment must be adapted to better accommodate the needs and interests of minority students. This can be done by conducting a detailed needs assessment of both HEIs and the students in those institutions in order to identify the obstacles being faced by HEIs related to the admission of students from the marginalised groups and people with disabilities.  The study should also determine how HEIs can adequately address these obstacles so as to retain students from the marginalised communities and people with disabilities, especially once they have been admitted to these HEIs. (**Action: HEIs, NCHE and MoE**)

3.  The current access procedures to foundation programmes at UNAM and PoN should be revised to cater for students from marginalised and disadvantaged groups. (**NCHE**)

4. There should be sustained cooperation and collaboration between the HEIs and schools to ensure that students in the secondary and primary schools are trained in a way that they meet the HEIs entry requirements. **(Action MoE and HEIs)**

5. Primary education, as the foundation on which higher education relies, must be improved qualitatively. If marginalised and disadvantaged groups are not well trained at this level, they will not matriculate to HEIs or succeed in HE. It is necessary to provide support to the marginalised and students with disabilities at this level to ensure they proceed further in education. The continuation of the feeding programme in schools, though expensive, is one way to ensure individuals from the marginalised and indeed the disadvantaged groups continue with education and hence reach HEIs. In addition, mobile schools should be encouraged if this is the only way to ensure access to basic education and hence tertiary education for students from the marginalised communities. There are also recommendations that teachers from these communities be encouraged to return and serve in their own communities, serving as role models for the young people there. **(Action: NCHE and MoE)**

6. Lowered entry points for marginalised students should not be encouraged since this disadvantages them later when they enter a competitive job market. In addition, it is being suggested that preferential treatment of learners from the marginalised communities should not be perpetuated by the HEIs. This creates dependence, and as a result, such students do not apply themselves and become self-reliant. As a result, upon completion of HE, they fail to make it in the work place, because throughout their school days they were treated with kid gloves. A better scheme should be used, such as mentorship for such students and tutorship during their school days, to ensure they become self-reliant upon completion of school, rather than reduced entry points. **(Action: NCHE and HEIs)**

7. Bearing in mind that HEIs rely on the outputs of primary and secondary education, the Ministries of Education and Gender Equality and Child Welfare should play a leading role in ensuring that all stakeholders in Early Childhood Development are actively promoting access with equity. This can be done by sensitising parents, particularly those with children with disabilities, and other stakeholders. In other words, these Ministries should sensitise and encourage parents and others to ensure that all children including disabled children go to school. **(Action: MGECW and MoE)**

8. In recognition of the strong indications that poverty is a serious barrier to accessing higher education, it is recommended that everyone who qualifies and is admitted to HEIs should be awarded a loan through the NSFAF. In this way, issues of lack of access and inequality in accessing HE will be addressed, by ensuring that everyone, irrespective of their socio-economic background, is given the financial assistance they need. **(Action: MoE, MoF and NSFAF)**

9. Since the increase of tuition fees are due to inflation, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education should increase its subsidies to higher education institution. In addition, the loans awarded per student

should be proportionate and adequate to cover all the expenses of the course. Moreover, there is also a greater need for the private sector to be involved in funding potential students. It should be borne in mind also that students from marginalised or disadvantage backgrounds that are unable to access the NSFAF loans or any other, will not be able to access education. Therefore, it is recommended that everyone who qualifies for admission at HEIs should be given a loan. **(Action: MoE, MoF, HEIs, Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry)**

10. The importance of distance education as a vehicle for expanding access with equity to HE should be recognised by apportioning to it more funding for training and support to material developers at HEIs. **(Action: HEIs, NCHE and the MoE)**

11. Targeted staff development for promising individuals from marginalised groups and people with disabilities should be encouraged in HEIs. Bearing in mind that even though quite a number of people from marginalised and disadvantaged groups have already passed through HEIs, it is important to create a special staff development and retention strategy to ensure they remain in HE to act as models for others from their communities. **(Action: NCHE & OPM)**

12. Noting the problems encountered by the CoEs in counselling the San students, it is recommended that an appropriate counselling approach, which takes into consideration the socio-economic and cultural background of the San, be investigated and put in place. **(Action: HEIs & NCHE)**

13. Since there is a real dilemma between access and quality, it is important to promote debate about this issue. As a start, a consultative workshop can be called to debate the issue of access through lowered entry points against quality. The debate being suggested here should address both the advantages and disadvantages of lowering entry points and whether this contributes to the quality of the graduating products that are to be entrusted with the education and economic development of the country. **(Action: MoE, NCHE & HEIs)**

14. Professional development blended with adequate financing should be made available to academic staff at HEIs to enable them to retain promising individuals from the marginalised and disadvantaged groups. **(Action: OPM, NCHE and MoE)**

**Note that for these recommendations to be effected by the NCHE, its legal authority should change from advisory to executive. The executive legal authority should be enshrined in the HE Act and not inferred from its functions as indicated in the said Act.**

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# Appendix A: Access with Equity within the Higher Education System in Namibia

**Research instrument**

Designation of Respondent --------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Region ------------------------------------------------- Institution----------------------------------------------------

Date Interview Administered-------------------------------- Name of Interviewer-------------------------------------

## Section A: Institutional Profile

1. Year of establishment [                    ]

2. Number of academic positions in the structure

3. Number of administrative/support positions in the structure

4. Number of staff positions currently filled

        Academic (total)

            Male

            Female

        Administrative/support (total)

            Male

            Female

5. How many of your staff members are from marginalised groups?

| San | Women | Himba | People Living with disabilities |
|-----|-------|-------|--------------------------------|
|     |       |       |                                |

6. Staff turnover in the last five years (causes or as a result of:)

            Ill-health

            Resignations

            Death

            Other (specify)

7. Total number of students currently registered

            Male

            Female

8. How many of the current student enrolment are from marginalised groups?

        Women group (specify)

            Male

            Female

        People living with disability

            Male

            Female

        San people

            Male

            Female

        Himba people

            Male

            Female

9. Number of student intakes for the last five years

| Year | Enrolled | | San | | Himba | | People living with disabilities | | Dropped out | | Repeating | | Graduated | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2006 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2005 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2004 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2003 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

**10**. Fields of study of marginalised graduates by gender

| Year | Field of study | San | | Himba | | People living with disabilities | | Women | | Graduated | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2006 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2005 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2004 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2003 | | | | | | | | | | | |

11. ICT infrastructure

| | Number | Location |
|---|---|---|
| Total  PCs at your institution | | |
| Functional PCs at your Institution without Internet | | |
| Number of PCs with Internet Connection | | |
| LCD projectors | | |
| Total number of Overhead projectors | | |
| Video conferencing facilities | | |
| Number of functional TVs | | |

12. What provisions or means are there to ensure that people living with disabilities, the blind and deaf have access to this infrastructure?

**Section B: Access with Equity in Enrolment and Throughput**

13. Where do most of your students come from? List by region.
14. Is there any policy on the quotas for each area?
15. Is this a national policy or institutional policy on quotas?
16. If institutional, on what is it based?
17. Do you adhere to your quota policy?
18. If yes, how do you implement it?
19. If you deviate from this policy, what circumstances dictate that?
20. If admitted, do these students successfully complete the programme as expected? If no, explain the reason?
21. What factors adversely affect your students' progress in their studies?
22. What do the following stakeholders do to ensure students complete their studies?
    a) The College
    b) The lecturers
    c) The community
    d) The Ministry of Education
    e) 0ther stakeholders
23. What are the requirements for a student to be admitted to the college?
24. Is this policy flexible on marginalised groups such as people living with disabilities?
25. If so, how is it used to make higher education more equally accessible to all?
26. What other groups of the society do you consider marginalised?
27. Are the students from the groups above accommodated in the hostels?
28. If no, why?
29. What role are your stakeholders playing in the provision of accommodation to the above identified groups of students?
30. Is your institution's infrastructure accessible to people living with disabilities?
31. If not, what are you doing to ensure that they have equitable access?

**Section C: Institutional System Needs Analysis on Access with Equity**

32. What are your institution's most pressing needs currently? List at least five in order of priority.
33. From your institution's perspective, how might these needs be met?
34. Are there policy matters that should be addressed through a coordinated approach to the higher education system as far as access with equity is concerned? List those issues/matters.
35. What policy measures should be taken to deal with this problem?

36. Being the type of institution that you are, what type of support and coordination system do you require in order to effectively and efficiently fulfil your mandate in as far as access with equity is concerned?

37. Has any attempt (formal or ad hoc) been made to create this support system?

38. If so, which office/institution tried this and how did it work?

39. And in your view, why did it not function as expected?

40. Do you have any views about access with equity of the HEIs in Namibia?

41. Are there current arrangements within the higher education system that are of concern to you as far as access with equity is concerned?

42. What exactly concerns you about access with equity in higher education?


**Section D: Stakeholders**

43. What role can the community as a whole play in ensuring equal access to higher education for all identified?

44. Who do you consider as important stakeholders for your institution? List all local and national or international stakeholders (may be individuals, institutions or organisations) that might make access with equity within the higher education system (sector) effective and efficient to lead Namibia into a knowledge-based economy.

- Decision-makers: people/institutions who make the final choices among alternatives usually political or administrative levels

- Gate-keepers: people/institutions with the authority to permit something to happen or to disallow it

- Influential/opinion leaders: people/institutions who can influence the behaviour or opinion of large numbers of people

- Policy-makers: people/institutions in charge of making official policy


**We thank you sincerely for your valuable input into this important study!**

# Appendix B List of Respondents

List of people, in alphabetical order, consulted and those who kindly provided the Research Team with the information needed to compile this report.

Amakali, A

Auala, R

Chata, B

Claassen, P

Corneels, J

Fledersbacher, A

Gertze, F.E

Gunawardana, M

Haikali, S

Hailombe, O

Hausiku, D

Hidengwa, M

Iipinge, S

Izaks, R

Kabajani, C

Kamati, D

Kamwi, J

Kangumu, B

Katewa, E

Kirchner, E

Masule, B

Mbondo, L

Mbuye, E

Muituti, F

Musambani, E

Musialike, H

Mwandemele, O

Nicol-Wilson, E

Nzwala, K

Pomuti, H

Rheis, E

Shihako, M

Shipena, A

Sibuku, C

Sichombe, G

Sifani, J

Sikabongo, R

Stanley, S

Uahengo, F.B

Van Kent, A