

# **Council Retreat Report**



15-16 May 2014 Windhoek, NAMIBIA

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# Introduction

The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) Secretariat organised and hosted a Retreat under the theme: "Striving for Quality and Equitable Higher Education" to share information related to its mandate with its Council Members. The Retreat took place over one and half days from 15-16 May 2014 at Midgard Country Estate (Okahandja). The NCHE has 35 Substantive/Alternate Members drawn from various sectors of the society. Of these 24 Council Members and Eight Secretariat staff Members attended the Retreat, which was mainly an information sharing session. This report summarises the proceedings of the Retreat. Additionally, it captures comments and recommendations from the participants.

## 1. DAY ONE

## **1.1 Official Opening and Welcome**

Dr Kalumbi Shangula, the Chairperson of the NCHE, officially opened the Retreat. In tone-setting remarks, Dr Shangula commended the NCHE Secretariat for organising the Retreat, which he said provided a platform for Council Members to better appreciate the NCHE and their roles and obligations in providing stewardship to the Secretariat in keeping with the Higher Education Act (Act No.26 of 2003). He exhorted the Secretariat to organise more similar engagements, saying they enabled Council Members to execute their mandate from a point of knowledge. He called for the speedy resolution of the debate around the NCHE becoming a "juristic person." To achieve this, the Chairperson said there was a need to build a strong case based on the advantages of the NCHE assuming this status.



Dr Kalumbi Shangula NCHE Chairperson

### **1.2 Overview of the NCHE**

The Executive Director (ED) of the NCHE Secretariat, Mr Mocks Shivute reminded the Council Members that the NCHE was established by the Higher Education Act No. 26 of 2003 to serve as an advisory body to the Minister of Education on matters related to the higher education sector. The ED explained that the NCHE was mandated to promote the establishment of a coordinated HE system; facilitate access of students to higher education institutions (HEIs); ensure quality in HE; and advise on the allocation of funds to public HEIs.

Stressing that the Retreat was meant to re-orient Council Members and to remind them about their mandates and responsibilities, the ED explained the specific functions of the NCHE. Council Members were also reminded of the advisory functions of the NCHE; its composition; term of office; the frequency of its meetings; the structure of its committees; issues related to allowances and other expenses, as well as its organogram. With respect to the organogram of the Interim Secretariat (so-called because it resorts under the Directorate of Higher Education), the ED explained that there were some positions which were yet to be filled for a variety of reasons including challenges related to identifying suitably qualified and experienced human resources. The vacant positions included those of the Director of Funding Framework (FF) & Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS); the Secretary to the Director of FF & HEMIS; Deputy Director of HEMIS; and two Senior Higher Education Officers.

The ED took the opportunity also to brief Council Members on programmes that the NCHE had implemented and those that had been drafted pending finalisation. He informed them that with funding from the Millennium Challenge Account - Namibia, a Funding Framework for public HEIs had been developed and approved by Cabinet.

Other milestones include the successful development of a Quality Assurance System for HE in Namibia; development of procedures for the registration of private HEIs; the development of the NCHE Secretariat's Five-year Strategic Plan and Annual Plans; and the finalisation of a "Comprehensive and Holistic Review of the entire Higher education System in Namibia in Relation to its Contribution to the Achievement of Vision 2030". The latter study recommended that the Polytechnic of Namibia be transformed into a University of Science & Technology.



From left to right: Mr Sylvester Mbangu, Mr Paul Nanyeni, Ms Pamela Hoebes and Ms Josephine Lazarus pay attention while NCHE Chairperson Dr Kalumbi Shangula speaks at the retreat.

On work in progress, the ED informed the Council Members that the Secretariat was in the process of finalising the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS); a Public Higher Education Institutions Tuition Fees Adjustment Policy; a National Policy on Higher Education; Amendments to the H.E. Act and others.

## **1.2 Challenges**

The ED informed Council Members that although the Secretariat had achieved a lot and had its work cut out going forward, there were challenges. These included inadequate human resources; lack of expertise; work-loads; shortcomings in the existing Act; and lack of a comprehensive data base on the H.E. sector. Another challenge was that the Secretariat was operating from rented premises with limited space, which was very costly. However, on an optimistic note, construction of the NCHE's head office had begun.

# 1.3 Comments & Recommendations

While congratulating the ED for his comprehensive overview, Council Members expressed concern over the Secretariat's approved structure and expressed the view that it appeared insufficient in the light of the work that the Secretariat planned to accomplish. They emphasized the point that the structure appeared skewed and "non-responsive." The Council also wanted clarity on the major issues in the Amended Act.

"If you look at the structure, to me it's more of administrative – particularly the finance aspect – and your main mandate; accreditation of the HE's and programmes, does not appear on the structures," said one Member. The Secretariat was further advised that the Council's Strategic plan be used to ensure accountability with respect to the Secretariat's annual plan's implementation.

# 2. The Higher Education Amendment Bill (2010)

### 2.1 Overview

In her presentation, Ms Vejanda Kauaria, Chief Higher Education Officer, touched on the background to the Bill, studies that had been commissioned, areas that were assessed, the major recommendations from the commissioned studies, as well as the suggested amendments. She explained that efforts to review the Higher Education Act of 2003 (Act no. 26 of 2003) began in 2007 with discussions revolving around whether the NCHE should become a "juristic body" or remain a "non-juristic body". The then Legal Matters Committee of the Council studied the Act, identified its weaknesses and suggested possible amendments which the Council later approved. Council Members were informed that in 2008 the Council commissioned a study to determine if the current HE Act was at par with similar legislations in other parts of the African Continent. Another study on *"The Quest for Coordination of the Higher Education System in Namibia"* was commissioned in 2009. The study looked at *inter-alia* the registration of HEIs, accreditation of their programmes, institutional audits, funding mechanisms and governance or regulatory mechanisms. The study concluded that Namibia's HE Act was not at par with other similar legislations on the continent. It was recommended that it be reviewed and amended. It was also recommended that the definition of HE institutions be amended to include programmes offered by the Namibia College of Open learning (NAMCOL); that the NCHE becomes a juristic body; that the NCHE be vested with executive powers; that NCHE be

allowed to appoint the head of the Secretariat and staff to the Secretariat; that NCHE has permanent committees; that accreditation of HE programmes be the responsibility of the NCHE; and that HEIs provide annual reports to the NCHE.

Council Members were informed of detailed and specific suggested amendments related to arrangements of sections, finances, definitions and other items. The Higher Education Amendment Bill was tabled before the Cabinet Committee on Legislations on 21 August 2012 but was referred back for further internal consultations on the issue of the NCHE becoming a "juristic person" and other matters.

## 2.2 Comments & Recommendations

The Council observed that the NCHE was listed as a State Owned Enterprise (SOE), while it only has an advisory role which can be construed as a contradiction. The Members also expressed concern over the seemingly overlapping functions of institutions in which some HEIs appeared to be offering programmes beyond or outside their mandates. At the same time, the Council Members called for speedy resolution of the overlapping functions between NCHE, Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) and Namibia Training Authority (NTA). They recommended that the proposed Higher Education Amendment Bill which has been under consideration for many years be revisited and looked at with "2014 eyes" to ensure its relevance. They finally urged that the debate of the NCHE becoming a "juristic person" be speedily resolved.

## **3. BUDGET PRESENTATION**

**3.1** The ED presented a detailed budget for the NCHE for the period 2014/15. In summary, the ED informed the Council Members that the total operational and capital budget for 2014/15 was N\$ 27 million. This is a significant increase from the previous financial year in which the NCHE got N\$ 17 million. The ED told the Council Members about the various activities and programmes planned for implementation and how much they were projected to cost. The ED's presentation focused mainly on the NCHE's operational budget. The 2014/15 budget was submitted to the Audit and Finance Committee which included its input and recommended it to the Executive Committee and then to the Council. The ED stressed that the budget was still open for suggestions. To put the current budget into context, the ED showed the Council Members the budget for the previous financial year and explained the basis on which the current financial year had



Mr Mocks Shivute NCHE Executive Director

been costed. The NCHE has budgeted for various positions including that of a Quality Assurance Expert. Since the NCHE did not have its own premises and was operating from rented offices, rentals constituted a significant portion of its operational budget. Expectations were that expenses related to rentals would go down significantly once the Secretariat constructed its own premises. The ED said it was possible that the Secretariat may have over budgeted in certain aspects, but said this was better than under budgeting, which would negatively impact on the operations of the Secretariat. Nevertheless, Council Members were informed that many of the increases in the current budget allocations were due to two major factors: additional positions that were approved on the staff -establishment and which are set to be filled within the current financial year, and secondly, ongoing construction of the Secretariat's head office and its related fittings and installations.

## 1.2 Comments & Recommendations

Council Members thanked the ED for his comprehensive presentation of the operational budget and noted it. However, it was felt that Council should focus on strategic issues and not spend time deliberating on the Secretariat's budget. Nevertheless, in light of the above recommendation, Council Members were informed that the Secretariat had taken a decision to share the budget with them to give everyone a clearer picture of the operations and resources of the Secretariat. Accordingly, the budget was regarded as additional information especially for new Council Members.

### 4. Presentation Discussion of the NCHE annual plan for 2014/15

**4.1** Ms Anneley Willemse, Senior Higher Education Officer told Council Members that the Secretariat developed the first strategic plan in 2012. This was a five year plan. Additionally, an annual plan for 2012/13 was developed with guidance from the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). In 2013 when National Development Plan (NDP) 4 was

launched, the OPM issued an instruction to the NCHE to align its strategic plan with NDP 4. The result was a 4 year strategic plan from 2013 to 2017. At the same time, a second annual plan was developed for 2013/14. In February 2014, again under the guidance of the OPM, the Secretariat had a retreat for a week, during which it developed the Secretariat's current plan for 2014/15.

Ms Willemse's presentation focused on the Higher Education Unit. Council Members were informed that the first strategic objective of the NCHE is to ensure a well-coordinated higher education system. To achieve this, the NCHE resolved to gather in-depth knowledge of the higher education sector.



Ms Anneley Willemse Snr Higher Education Officer

Council Members were also informed that the NCHE had been organising public lectures

on issues related to higher education in the country. After every public lecture, a report is produced and distributed to various stakeholders. One public lecture was held in September 2013. Plans to host another public lecture, possibly in September 2014, were at an advanced stage.

The report for last years' public lecture had been produced and posted on the NCHE website. Hard copies were also available. Normally, the Secretariat solicits ideas from Council Members on possible topics for discussion during the public lectures before suggestions are sought from other stakeholders. Normally, the Council provides guidance with respect to the selection of a suitable speaker, a facilitator or moderator and the panellists for the public lecture.

While presenting the annual plan, Ms Willemse paid particular attention to actions that were planned, as well as baselines set. Council Members were informed that the Secretariat could commission research on critical areas in higher education. Among the areas looked at by the research, were post-graduate programmes offered by higher education institutions.

Another activity that was planned was the development of the National Higher Education Policy. A draft had already been developed. Council Members were informed that the second objective of the NCHE was to improve the quality of higher education in the country, which forms the core of its mandate. This involves quality assurance and accreditation of programmes, as well as registration of private HEIs.



*Mr* Mocks Shivute (left), the Executive Director of the National Council for Higher Education makes a presentation at the retreat.

The NCHE planned to register four private higher education institutions during the current plan. It had received application forms from five private higher education institutions: Triumphant College; International University of Management (IUM); Institute of Open Learning (IOL); Institute of Bankers (IOB); and Headstart Mercy Montessori. Council Members were also briefed that during the current plan, the NCHE would also monitor and evaluate HEIs in the country and conduct tracer studies. Efforts to enable higher education institutions conduct tracer studies had been initiated. The institutions involved in this were the University of Namibia, the Polytechnic of Namibia and the International University of Management. Under the current plan, the NCHE intended to develop human resources at public higher education institutions by targeting academic staff. Working with consultants, the Secretariat had developed staff development guidelines. Plans to print and implement the policy were in place. Money had been set aside to help academics at public higher education institutions to upgrade their knowledge and skills. The project started in 2007 and approximately 40 staff members had benefitted from it.

Yet another strategic objective was to ensure affordable and equitable access to public higher education institutions. Under this, a Public Higher Education Institution Tuition Fees Adjustment Policy was being developed to prevent a situation in which HEIs would increase fees arbitrarily. Council Members were informed that consultants had been engaged to develop this policy. Efforts were also underway to develop a HEMIS. Consultants had already been engaged.

Meanwhile, Ms Abia Mbulu, Deputy Director of Finance & Administration told Council Members about several projects that had been planned. They included the Public Service Reforms Initiative which seeks to ensure that a public management information system is implemented; setting up of an Employee Wellness Programme which seeks to ensure that staff members are sensitised on the Secretariat's employee wellness programme and a Human Resource Management System, which seeks to ensure that all budgeted posts are filled. A Human Resource Development initiative, which seeks to increase the capacity of staff members and to develop a staff development policy was underway. A Financial Management prgramme seeks to ensure that audited financial reports are received and that accountability reports are submitted to the Ministry of Finance in time through the Ministry of Education. A Ministry of Information Communication Technology project seeks to ensure that sufficient ICT equipment is procured and Auxiliary Services are supported.



**Ms Abia Mbulu** Deputy Director of Finance & Administration

### 4.2 Comments & Recommendations

While congratulating and thanking the presenters for a detailed presentation, Council Members made the following comments and recommendations:

- The Secretariat has drawn up an elaborate annual plan. There is need to ensure that there is a person appointed to drive implementation although the ED would be overall in charge.
- ✓ There was need to ensure that the annual plan was clearly linked to the operational budget of the Secretariat.
- Staff development initiatives should benefit only Namibians. There was need for clarity on the rationale for conducting tracer studies and on who should be responsible for conducting them.
- It was recommended that the responsibility for conducting tracer studies be given to the higher education institutions themselves who should then share information from such studies with the NCHE.
- There was need to clarify the accreditation done by Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) and NCHE to avoid duplication of functions.
- Everything must be done to ensure that the Higher Education Amendment Bill goes through.
- Staff members at the NCHE Secretariat appeared to be overburdened because there were several posts that had not been filled. However, the Secretariat was commended for being patient until it found suitable people to fill those positions.

# 5. Presentation and Discussion on "Good Corporate Governance Principles as Applicable to the Higher Education Landscape."

5.1 Mr Gerrit Jordaan, from the Forensic Department at Price WaterHouse&Cooper (PWC) and the facilitator for

King III described his presentation as an "awareness session." He explained that normally, such presentations are made over a day and a half because there is a lot of information related to good governance which people like Council Members need to know. Nevertheless, he said he would do his best to focus attention on parts of the report that were applicable to the NCHE.

He began his presentation with a definition of governance, which he said implied "risk, return and reputation underlined by common sense." He presented the main principles of King III and explained how they were applicable to the NCHE. Focusing on specific sections of the Higher Education Act, he advised Council Members to reflect on whether the NCHE had a code of conduct, and whether it was relevant and applicable. He explained that there were nine chapters in King III and many principles, some of which were applicable to the NCHE.



Mr Gerit Jordaan from PWC

He said it was important that Council Members educated themselves on their responsibilities and the level of accountability that is expected of them. He said this was particularly important given that, unlike boards of companies in the private sector, the NCHE had 35 members from diverse backgrounds. He informed the Council Members that Professor Mervin King, a retired judge, was the brain behind King I, II and III. He is credited with developing the first good corporate governance guidelines, initially for listed entities, like the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. King III was released in September 2009 and became effective in March 2010. Mr Jordaan explained that a good understanding of obligations and responsibilities on the part of Council Members would ensure compliance in corporate governance-related issues to avoid consequences that emerge from non-compliance. He stressed that the principles of King III were applicable to all entities; private or public. It was important therefore, for Council Members and those working at the NCHE Secretariat to understand the principles and use them to support their work. Elaborating on the three principles of King III, Mr Jordaan expressed the view that the principle of return was not really applicable to the NCHE because it was not a profit-making organisation. However, reputation was very important. He said the Higher Education Act had sections which Council Members needed to pay particular attention to. One of the sections relates to compliance. Section 6 of the Act looks at the functions of the NCHE, section 7 at its composition. Section 2 is on its meetings and decisions, Section 13 is on disclosure of interest by members of the Council. Section 14 is on the committees of the Council. Section 16 deals with the establishment of the Secretariat. Section 18 is on functions of the Secretariat, while Section 21 is on the assignment of functions by the NCHE.

With respect to ethical leadership and corporate citizenship, Mr Jordaan said there was need to ensure that all parties indicate in writing that they had read and understood the NCHE code of conduct. It was also important to develop a specific charter for the Council. Equally important, was the need for Council Members and other members of the Secretariat to disclose conflict of interest, ideally on an annual basis. He said it would even be better if disclosure of interests were to be done at the start of every meeting to allow members who may be caught in conflict of interest issues to recuse themselves. Mr Jordaan strongly recommended that the NCHE developed a conflict of interest policy and sets up a Performance Management System if it was not available. As a rule of thumb, Mr Jordaan advised that it was important to always consult when in doubt. Stressing that education and training of new directors was important, he advocated for continuous training. He advised that it would be beneficial for the NCHE to appoint a secretary to support its Council. In keeping with good practices related to good corporate governance, there was need to evaluate the board and its committees, not to fire them, but as a positive development meant to empower them and increase their capacity.

Noting that the Council (35 members) was probably inflated, Mr Jordaan said its possible strength was that it allowed for greater representation of stakeholders. He explained the role of audit committees in an organisation and said the role of internal auditors needed to be clearly understood as a support function. The audit committee's roles included keeping costs in realistic parameters. This was particularly important in information communication technology (ICT) matters. Investments in ICT needed to be monitored and evaluated while rules, codes and standards in ICT needed to be adhered to, to avoid repercussions. Following a debate over the advantages and disadvantages of an executive and a non-executive board, Mr Jordaan reiterated that it was important to

comply with rules and regulations governing institutions. Nevertheless, he explained that according to King III, a board could not only have advisory powers because typically, boards are set up to give strategic direction, approve certain decisions, and execute agreements that are in place, which implies that they also have advisory powers.

He stressed that yet another key role of the board was to manage risk so that the objectives of the Council would be achieved. The management of risk is an on-going process because risks change. The importance of ensuring the presence of an effective and independent audit committee was stressed. In line with good governance principles, the audit committee should ideally be allowed to meet with internal or external auditors at least once a year in the absence of management. The terms of the committee should be developed while an audit committee should always ensure that the finance function in the organisation is effective, trained and experienced. Mr Jordaan stressed the need for continuous training and monitoring, as well as for control mechanisms. He said there were rules and regulations governing issues of confidentiality. He encouraged both Council members and Secretariat staff to familiarise themselves with them. Commenting on the proliferation of social media networks and the blurring line between freedom of expression and the need for board members to act in the best interest of their organisation, Mr Jordaan said it was important that there was a clear code of conduct by which all stakeholders abide by.

## 5.2 Comments & Recommendations

The Council Members thanked Mr Jordaan for his presentation. They agreed that many aspects of King III were applicable to the NCHE.

 It was recommended that as Council Members and Secretariat staff execute their mandates, should they ever find themselves in doubt, they should consult.

#### 6. Day Two

### 6.1 Public Higher Education Institutions Funding Framework

Professor Hedi Zaiem, a consultant with Canadian-based Cide, made the presentation. He began by providing the background to the Tertiary Education Funding Reform Implementation project which began in October 2011 when Cide was awarded a contract by the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA-Namibia) and the Ministry of Education to undertake a study on reform. The objective was to review, redesign and implement a sustainable Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund. Another objective was to develop a tertiary education financial policy and build a comprehensive oversight capacity at the NCHE in order to implement the funding policy. Professor Zaiem informed Council Members that work was on-going to determine the optimum funding policy for public HEIs in Namibia regarding the adjustment of tuition fees at public HEIs given that funding is at the core of higher education. Special focus was being given to achieve predictability and



**Prof. Hedi Zaiem** Cide Consultant

affordability to prevent public HEIs from inflating the allocations they expected from the Ministry of Education.

Professor Zaiem explained three major pillars: the public higher education funding framework, the fees policy, and the students' financial assistance scheme. He explained what the new proposed funding framework aims to achieve, which is essentially predictability, efficiency and equity. As things stand, there is no rigorous method or formulae to guide the manner in which public HEIs are funded. The tendency has hitherto been that when institutions they develop and submit their proposals to the Ministry of Education, they inflate their projections so that should the Ministry cut down on those proposals, they will still remain with an acceptable compromise. The aim now is to develop a clear method of determining funds that will go to each public HEI. Predictability will ensure that institutions are aware of the factors influencing allocation of funds and can anticipate how much will be allocated to them in a given year.

In terms of equity, every institution will be able to understand why there are maybe differences in allocations to them on the basis of need. This will also enable the Ministry to determine whether there is need to treat a particular institution differently or in a special manner on the basis of identified unique needs. Efficiency will ensure that HEIs achieve national goals. Professor Zaiem explained the four types of funds channelled to public Higher Edu-

cation Institutions: Operational Funds; Capital Funds or Investments; as well as two optional funds: Performance Funds; and Competitive Funds. He explained that there was no formula for Capital Funds because Capital Funds are not linked to the teaching burden of an institution. An Investment Budget is influenced by an institutions' development plan. The two optional funds are additional funds which can constitute around 10 percent of the global fund which are linked to performance. Competitive Funds normally come as a lump sum provided by government, distributed to institutions on the basis of competition based on projects. This is a new funding mechanism which encourages innovation in Higher Education.

He explained the importance of developing strategic plans by institutions in securing funding because a development plan ultimately forms a contractual relationship between the government and an institution. It will determine what is to be funded and what cannot be funded. Under such an arrangement, the government would typically fund only projects upon which it would have agreed with institutions. In other words, if an institution decided to implement a particular project without consulting and agreeing with government, the government would not be obliged to fund such a project. The institution would be responsible for funding such a project. Professor Zaiem gave an overview of the contents of an annual plan. The role of the Secretariat and the Council in developing this plan was explained. The funding framework, according to Professor Zaiem, was a restrictive way of calculating funding.

Typically, the bulk of an institution's funds goes to its operational budget. Each funding formula is based on what are known as drivers which take into consideration the number of students. Calculations are based on the effective burden which is the number of subjects, the number of Namibia Qualifications Framework (NQF) credits units attached in which each student is registered. Council Members were informed that in Higher Education, the cost of a student is linked to various issues, depending on what the students are studying. Some students take language courses, while others take ICT-related courses. Council Members were also informed about how the subsidy that comes from government towards institutions is arrived at. Professor Zaiem explained how equity funds are determined. For example, a government may decide to improve enrolment of students in a disadvantaged part of the country or section of the population such as women and girls. It will make additional allocations if a HEI increases the percentage of students enrolled from the affected areas. Therefore, an equity fund can be linked to the enrolment of a specific section of the population. Council Members learned how adequacy needs influence allocation of funds to public Higher Education Institutions. For example, if government wants to increase the enrolment of students in critical fields, it can encourage institutions by providing additional funds linked to the training of such cadres. This enables universities to have the capacity to train critical human resources for development. Internal efficiency which shows an institution's pass rates and drop-outs, can also influence funding that goes to that particular institution. Professor Zaiem stressed that improving internal efficiency should not be done at the expense of quality delivered by a HEI.

External efficiency funds are influenced by steps that are given higher education institutions take to ensure the employability of their graduates on the job market. These funds enable institutions to put in place mechanisms to understand what industry needs so that they provide relevant graduates who do not struggle to get employed. The nature of research undertaken by an institution also can influence funding that is channelled toward it. Typically, the number of articles from an institution that are published in peer reviewed or refereed journals, the number of its PhD Graduates, as well as patents that come out of the research undertaken by its academics can provide an indication of the nature and extent of research being undertaken by the institution. According to Professor Zaiem, a Competitive Fund is optional. Each department of an institution can write proposals and submit them to the NCHE for funding. For example, an institution can write a proposal to improve the link between its institution and industry, or the economic environment. A committee will then evaluate the project and those that are selected will be funded over a given period. The process of obtaining funds is highly competitive. Elsewhere, such funding follow under the category of Quality Improvement Grants and can be used to improve the quality of teaching, research and community service, as well as to improve or strengthen university linkages with regional and international development efforts. They have the potential to improve management capacity, stimulate research, and encourage cross-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary collaboration or to force institutions to focus on new or emerging issues. To access this fund, private HEIs can compete with public HEIs.

# 6.2 Comments & Recommendations

Council Members congratulated Professor Zaiem for making an otherwise complicated and mind-boggling presentation comprehensible. They welcomed the fact that in the pursuit of equity, educational and economic poverty would be taken into consideration and that plans were in place to alleviate the plight of citizens in regions that had been identified as economically or educationally poor. The government can now reward institutions that enrol students from those disadvantaged communities.

- Institutions need to creatively consider how they can enrol students from economically or educationally poor regions.
- Institutions that have campuses deliberately set up to take education to formerly disadvantaged parts of the country should be supported.
- Internal efficiency should ideally be looked at from a management and governance point of view in HEIs to ensure that funds are managed and deployed efficiently.
- In the pursuit of equity, there is need to bear in mind the fact that there are some disciplines which are more "resource-intensive" than others.
- A funding formula is only a small part of the financing of Higher Education. A funding framework is a more comprehensive approach and should be supported.
- A reward system which is factored into the Funding Framework is laudable and should be supported because it encourages innovation and research within institutions. Institutions such as the University of Namibia, which recently registered seven patents in malaria research, can be rewarded and supported under the reward system.
- Initiatives to improve the employability of HEIs graduates should be sufficiently funded and supported so that institutions of higher education produce fit-for-purpose graduates.
- Everything should be done to ensure the speedy implementation of the funding framework.
- Failure to plan is planning to fail. Accordingly, efforts to enable stakeholders within the Higher Education Sector to plan, should be welcomed and supported.
- ✓ The Higher Education Sector in Namibia is data-deficient. In other words, there is a lot of information that is missing within the sector. Efforts must be made to fill knowledge gaps. For example, it is unclear how many Higher Education students are in Namibia. It is easier to estimate the number of students in public higher education institutions, but nobody knows for sure how many other students are in private institutions in the country.
- ✓ As things stand, each HEI plans in its own way. There is need to coordinate planning in HEIs.



From left to right: Prof Agnes Van Dyk, Ms Mary Nyandoro and Mr Timotheus Angala attend the NCHE retreat.



Ms Nangula lipumbu (left) and Mr Melki- Zedek Uupindi exchange views during the NCHE retreat.

- NCHE needs to set up a planning process in HEIs, as well as a steering mechanism to inform what to develop, how to develop and when to develop it.
- The challenge of ensuring equity is not confined to Higher Education Institutions because sometimes Higher Education Institutions might desire to enrol students from formerly disadvantaged communities, but fail to attract suitable students. Accordingly, there is need to improve quality of education at primary and secondary school levels so that those schools can then feed into the HEIs.
- Lack of equity in Higher Education and even beyond the system, is a ticking time bomb. There is need to
  ensure that there is good financial assistance for the students and that there are employment opportunities that exist in the job market.

## 7. Public Higher Education Institutions Tuition Fees Adjustment Policy

## 7.1 Overview

In this session, Professor Zaiem explained that in most countries, the tuition fees for public HEIs are controlled by the government in collaboration with the Council for Higher Education. He explained what was meant by "tuition fees," and said that a tuition fee policy regulates the manner in which institutions determine the level of fees, as well as how often fees are adjusted. Generally, the government's subsidy is designed to complement financial resources for HEIs. For that reason, HEIs are not encouraged to increase or lower their fees willy-nilly. Professor Zaiem told the Council Members that a study had been conducted to address the principal issues surrounding tuition fees. He said there was an on-going debate as to whether tuition fees should exist at all in Higher Education Institutions, or whether all institutional costs should be shouldered by the government. There are a lot of people who hold the view that education at all levels should be free. There is also debate around the appropriate share of costs that should be borne by the students if the understanding is that people should also help with tuition fees, in other words, what determines the tuition fees under such a scenario.

It is also unclear what form of support parents need to enable those of their children who are willing and able to benefit from higher education to access the sector. He said access to higher education was a very important issue in Namibia. There was also a debate, according to Professor Zaiem, around the degree to which tuition fees should reflect underlying programme costs and study levels especially as they relate to Namibians and non-Namibians. There was also need to determine an appropriate way of increasing tuition fees in tandem with increasing associated costs of Higher Education. He said the level of spending by the government on higher education in Namibia was 1.2% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This makes it higher than is the case in South Africa

where it is only 0.7% of the GDP, and more than what obtains in some developed countries which have efficient Higher Education Institutions, such as Japan or Australia. He said the sad reality was that in many countries, the wealthiest members of the community appeared to be benefitting more than the poorest from public spending of higher education funding.

Professor Zaiem said there were two underlying reasons why people should pay in Higher Education Institutions. The first is that there is inherent inequity and so the fear is that if Higher Education is made free, then even the rich would benefit from money that is meant to support their less fortunate counterparts. The other reason is that there are high returns in education, demonstrated by the fact that a person with a higher degree is more likely to earn more money than one who does not have such a degree. With respect to enrolment in higher education, data from the Namibia Statistics Agency indicates that the first 20% of the population in Namibia is made up of very poor people. While on the extreme side, another 20% of the population are extremely rich. In primary education the enrolment was very high among poor people. However, beginning from upper secondary school, the numbers of poor people tends to diminish with enrolment of poor learners at approximately 14% while that of children of wealthy families is above 80%. Consequently, children of rich parents or families tend to have more access to HEIs than those from poor families.

This shows that there is a lot of inequity in terms of access to HEIs on the basis of income. However, this situation is not unique to Namibia. People who have a high level of higher education have less risk of being unemployed. People who have no education have a very low average level of income per annum. Zimbabwe has the lowest tuition fees in SADC. However, the public tuition fees in Namibia are 70% lower than those in Botswana and 31% lower than those in the Republic of South Africa. When tuition fees are low, it is very difficult to raise them for political considerations, but if they are high, they can be maintained at that level. Professor Zaiem explained that there were four models in HEI funding all over the world. The first model is Low-tuition fees and low financial assistance to students. Many African countries use this model. The second model is no tuition fees and good assistance to students. This is more common in Scandinavian countries that include Sweden, Finland and Denmark to name a few. The third model is high tuition fees and low financial assistance which is found in Japan, South Korea and some countries. It is not sustainable according to Professor Zaiem. The fourth model is high tuition fees and good financial assistance to students, which seems to be the case in Namibia, the USA and the United Kingdom.

This is considered to be the best model with regard to equity and access. The principle is that to have access a country needs resources for higher education, and so people must contribute. Most public HEIs do not have clear and rigorous methods for determining and adjusting tuition fees. In Namibia, information gleaned from various institutions seems to suggest that the criteria for increasing tuition fees have been a desire for 20% cost-recovery per department and as an institution. Fees are also set in tandem with what is happening regionally. Inflation is also a consideration and the level of fees seems to be determined to cater for the deficiencies of the government's subsidy to HEIs, regardless of the relevance of the fee increases. Whereas there is a general belief in many countries that investments in higher education are private, the truth is that such investments end up benefitting entire countries in that they produce competent human resources for development. This therefore, justifies governments' intervention on funding. It is desirable all over the world, that every young person who can benefit meaningfully from higher education be given an opportunity to access higher education regardless of their background or means. Prof Zaiem said for Namibia it was important to determine the correct level of tuition fees in keeping with international best practices.

In Namibia, there appears to be a general consensus over the need for students to pay for higher education. However, there is need to ensure affordability and differentiation on the basis of various factors that include citizenship. Information which has been gathered so far, according to Professor Zaiem, seems to suggest that there is a belief that the government should determine the maximum fee for each academic programme in HEI, although institutions are free to charge less than what government would have set, taking into account their own situations such as the size of their institution. However, there is general dissatisfaction over the level of assistance given to students under the NSFAF, hence vociferous calls for reform.



Left to right: Mr Robert Muganda, Mr Raymond Simanga, Rev Simon Gillharm and Mr Moses Magadza follow proceedings during the NCHE retreat.

## 7.2 Comments & Recommendations

Again, while thanking Professor Zaiem for his presentation, Council Members asked a few questions and made recommendations.

- Ideally, tuition fees should be related to the specific or unique circumstances of Higher Education Institutions.
- The role of the Council in managing the regulation of tuition fees should be clearly spelled out.
- Tuition fees must be managed by a specific committee within the NCHE based on studies and based on the proposed model.
- ✓ Adjustment of tuition fees should be done in relation to cost-drivers.
- $\checkmark$  Whatever index is used should be specific to Higher Education.
- ✓ There is need to conduct research to determine if free Higher Education in Namibia can ensure equity in Higher Education.
- ✓ Public HEIs are by nature not profit-making institutions. Accordingly, when fees are adjusted, the idea must be to ensure that they meet operational costs, not to make a profit.
- With respect to ensuring equity, institutions must be flexible when they set their entry requirements because, strictly on the basis of background, some students may not possess minimum entry requirements. For example, a D symbol in mathematics and above may be hard to satisfy the students from disadvantaged communities.
- Ideally, higher education must be free while a student is studying. Students should be given loans and asked to pay back once they are working.
- A representative of people with disabilities cautioned that making higher education free to everyone would not ensure equity because people living with disabilities have peculiar needs. Rather than introducing a one-size-fits-all with respect to tuition fees, policy planners must carefully look into the unique circumstances and needs of specific members of the population. *"If, for example, you say that everybody must pay N\$2500, even me who is visually impaired will be able to pay N\$2500. But we will not be using the same equipment to study, even though we are in the same institution. When tertiary fees are set, attention should be put on differentiation to determine the needs of people living with disabilities and how much they should pay," she said, adding that policy planners should bear in mind that disability comes in different forms so that they can meet the needs of the different types of disabled people. <i>"Although we are all disabled, we don't have the same needs*," she concluded.

Tuition fees should never be a barrier to social categories in education. However, that does not mean it should be free.

The issue of equity should be addressed from kindergarten all the way up to HEIs. It is not something that comes about as a result of one becoming a tertiary institution student. For example, issues of ac-

cess to education for disabled people should be ensured through installing necessary infrastructure in lower stages of education.

- The term "profit" should not be one of the terms associated with the management at HEIs.
- If there is a requirement that people must pay for Higher Education, ways and means must be found to enable them to pay taking into account their social condition.

#### 8. Higher Education Management Information Systems (HEMIS)

Professor Zaiem told Council Members that the HEMIS was in his view the most important part of the reform of the Higher Education Sector. He said the NCHE had an obligation to build a planning and good steering model for higher education in Namibia. He said Namibia did not have a statistical book on Higher Education and said this was not advisable as it made it difficult for anyone to evaluate the Higher Education system. He said a HEMIS had since been developed for Namibia. Plans were in place to train the personnel from public and private Higher Education Institutions on the system. He explained the four components of the HEMIS which are: Data Management Model in which the Council will be the core of a network of HEIs. The Council will have all the databases of all Higher Education systems at its disposal. Ideally, this should be updated yearly by the HEIs themselves. This can include data related to the number of students registered for particular courses, the number of credits and specific fees they have to pay. The second is the Funding Model which will be used to calculate all the funds, as well as to estimate the budget of each institution. It can also be used to prepare the budget of each HEI. The third is the Investment Model which will be used to estimate the needed investment for each institution and to assess if existing infrastructure is adequate or not. It can also be used for evaluation purposes by the Council to determine whether facilities at a given institution are adequate to execute its mandate.

The fourth and final is the Statistics Model.

Professor Zaiem explained that HEMIS had the distinct advantage of being able to provide disaggregated data related to the Higher Education Sector. For example, information can be provided on the basis of region, age, sex and so on. It can be used to produce all higher education indicators which are useful when conducting evaluation, as well as assessing policy decisions. Plans were in place, according to Professor Zaiem, to produce the first ever Higher Education year book for Namibia in line with international norms and standards.

# 7.3 Comments & Recommendations

- There is need to evaluate Namibia's technical and human resources capacity to implement a HEMIS.
- Institutions should play a key role in generating information that will be put on to the HEMIS.
- The role of the Council in implementing the HEMIS would be that of coordination, while maintaining the autonomy of HEIs.

# 9. Quality Assurance System for Higher Education in Namibia

#### 9.1 Programme Accreditation

Ms Nangula lipumbu, Quality assurance Officer, in her presentation focused on programme accreditation. She first explained NCHE's quality assurance mandate as contained in the Higher Education Act that established it. She said the NCHE's quality assurance's mandate was to: promote quality assurance in HEIs and to accredit programmes of HEIs in concurrence with the NQA: Monitor quality assurance mechanisms of institutions of higher education; advise the minister on quality promotion and quality assurance in higher education. She explained that quality assurance mechanisms enable the government to hold institutions accountable with respect to the quality of programmes that they are offering. Ultimately, the objective is to improve on quality. Quality assurance also allows cross-border mobility by ensuring that the education offered by institutions is comparable to that offered by similar institutions internationally.



**Ms Nangula lipumbu** Quality Assurance Officer

She told Council Members that in situations in which quality is not assured, students who graduate from such a system risk being second-guessed when they go abroad. In extreme cases, some students are asked to study

longer to be able to reach the standard they find in the institutions of the countries that they would have moved to. This wastes the students' time and resources. Quality assurance is not only meant to help and protect students. It also benefits lecturers in that if their institution is quality assured, they can be trusted to serve at other HEIs as moderators, for instance. Quality assurance spans over all academic programmes from undergraduate to post-graduate. One of the key objectives of quality assurance is to consider best practices internationally with a view to ensuring consistency and uniformity in quality. Although efforts are made to adapt standards to the Namibian situation, quality assurance is done on private and public HEIs. This ensures that the programmes that are offered in these institutions are credible and quality assured. Programme accreditation ensures employability of students who graduate from academic programmes and academic institutions and helps institutions market their academic programmes. According to Ms lipumbu, quality assurance ensures that programmes that are offered by HEIs are not questionable, particularly in private higher HEIs. This enables the transferability and articulation of credits across institutions whether they are private or public.

With some HEIs in Namibia taking their services to different parts of the country as they strive to take education closer to the people, quality assurance would ensure that those institutions do not compromise quality in their satellite campuses. Quality assurance also protects the credibility of the country's programmes, especially when some institutions offer them outside the country. She explained that the quality assurance of short courses was delegated to HEIs themselves. She also presented the procedure that is followed when accrediting programmes at HEIs. Accreditation of programmes is compulsory. As part of its quality assurance function, the NCHE conducts site visits to HEIs that indicate readiness to offer particular programmes. This is done to ensure that the infrastructure, equipment and other facilities are in place for efficient implementation of those programmes. The NCHE accredits academic programmes in concurrence with the NQA. HEIs have to ensure that their programmes are accredited after every six years or when something substantial changes within the concerned programme. This is done to ensure that the programme is operating on the basis on which it was accredited initially.

#### 9.2 Institutional Audit

Ms Anneley Willemse, Senior Education Officer informed Council Members that an Institutional Audit focuses on institutional policies, sub-systems, strategies and resources on quality assurance of its academic activities. The idea is to ensure that sufficient and appropriate infrastructural resources are in place to support the offering of academic programmes. Just like quality assurance, institutions audits aim to bring about improvement and accountability. After every Institutional Audit a report containing recommendations is produced. The process is evidence-based and supported by documentary proof of the systems and policies that are being used by the institution. The audit is tailor-made for Namibian institutions and is applicable to both private and public HEIs. The audit is also meant to boost the confidence of students in the country's HEIs and focus on teaching and learning, research and community engagement, governance management support systems and finances.

Participation in this audit is compulsory and is done after every six years. The procedures for the Institutional Audit are similar to the ones with the programme accreditation in Quality Assurance. Initially, institutions undertake a self-evaluation process and produce an Institutional Portfolio. Sites visits are also conducted during Institutional Audits to verify that what has been said in the Institutional Portfolio is true. In summary, an Institutional Audit seeks to determine what is in place at a HEI to support the offering of its academic programmes.

## 8.3 Comments & Recommendations

Council Members thanked the two presenters for their presentations and made some comments and raised some questions.

- Is an Institutional Audit a pre-requisite for accreditation of programmes? The response given to this was no.
- ✓ Given that programmes may not be offered unless they are accredited, are there plans to review that policy statement? The response was that programmes that are not accredited immediately stop being offered. Once this happens, the NCHE and the institution begin a process of phasing students out of that programme. Institutions should embrace a culture of quality assurance to avoid a situation in which their programmes can be stopped, which would inconvenience their students.
- Are there benchmarks used when conducting an institutional audit or is it up to those who conduct the

audit to decide that the institution is not up to standard? The response to this was that the panel of experts who conduct the audit are selected on the basis of their expertise. Accordingly, it is generally accepted that they are capable of deciding what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, by way of standards.

- ✓ What is the fate of institutions that do not register?
- The NCHE should familiarise itself with the letter and spirit of the SADC Protocol on Higher Education and Training so that whatever happens in Namibia is in line with regional best-practices.
- ✓ HEIs should structure their internal systems to feed into external systems to avoid multiple accreditations for the same programme.
- ✓ The apparent overlap between the functions of NCHE, NQA and NTA needs to be addressed. Ideally, there should be only one accreditation process.
- Plans to set up a common accreditation system for the SADC region should be supported to allow for cross-border mobility.

# **10 Registration of Private Higher Education Institutions**

### 10.1 Briefing

Ms Vejanda Kauaria, Chief Higher Education Officer, briefed Council Members on the NCHE's mandate to register HEIs, the aim for such registration, what NCHE considers when registering a private Higher Education Institution and the registration process in so far as it relates to approval or non-approval of registration. She also explained the process of de-registering a private Higher Education Institution. She explained that NCHE derives its mandate to register Higher Education Institutions from the Higher Education Act No. 26 of 2003 and the Regulations for the Registration of HEIs of 2009. The Registrar in this process is the Permanent Secretary of Education, although this function had been delegated to NCHE.Registration of education institutions is done to ensure quality.



Ms Vejanda Kauaria Chief Higher Education Officer

The idea is to ensure that students registered in private HEIs do not end up getting education that is inferior to that offered by public Higher Education Institutions. In this process, the NCHE plays the role of watchdog by ensuring that qualifications offered by private HEIs are aligned with the NQF, and that they are operating legally. The NCHE also looks at the financial capacity of private HEIs to offer programmes that they develop, as well as whether the safety of students at these institutions is guaranteed. She then explained the process of registering a private Higher Education Institution and what might lead to a situation in which an institution fails to register.

#### 9.2 Comments & Recommendations

- The NCHE must ensure that Namibia has a robust monitoring and evaluation system related to the accreditation and registration of private HEIs to avoid a situation in which some institutions operate without being registered.
- ✓ There is a need to clarify the basis on which fees that accompany applications for registration were arrived at.
- There is need to consider ways and means to make the process of registering of HEIs less cumbersome.
- There is need to ensure that requirements for registration are realistic. For example, a newly established institution cannot be expected to produce audited financial results.
- There is need for clarity on how to deal with registered institutions that are operating but are financially incapacitated.

# **10 Overlapping Functions of NCHE, NQA and NTA**

Ms Nangula lipumbu, Quality Assurance Officer, once more explained that there were overlapping functions of the NCHE, NQA and NTA in that the three institutions all appear to have the mandate to register service providers, accreditation of institutions, and accreditation of programmes, institutional audits, and certification and de-registration of institutions. The function of registering service providers overlaps between the NCHE and the NTA. There are two Acts of two bodies that confer the same mandate to the institutions. With respect to accreditation of institutions, the overlap is between NQA and the NTA. Another overlap is in the accreditation of programmes in which both NCHE and NTA are mandated to accredit. When the NQA accredits an institution it also accredits the programmes that the institution offers. With respect to monitoring related to institutional audits, the NCHE monitors the quality assurance mechanisms of HEIs. On the other hand, the NQA is mandated to check compliance with accreditation. The NTA also does the same thing. This means that the three bodies are doing institutional audits. There is, therefore, the need to streamline these functions. In terms of registration, NCHE issues a Registration Certificate that should be prominently displayed within the premises of the Higher Education Institution. The NTA Council also accredits and provides a Certificate of Registration. This becomes problematic should one of the institutions decide to de-register another institution which would have been duly registered with another organisation. The NTA can revoke an institution's registration just as NCHE can de-register an institution. Given that some of these mandates emanate from the gazetted acts of the three institutions, one of the ways in which the issue of overlapping mandates can be resolved is by amending the Acts responsible for setting up those institutions, or through memoranda of understanding.

## **10.1 Comments & Recommendations**

- Since in terms of the registration of institutions, the application forms are similar and the requirements similar, representatives of the three institutions should come up with one form.
- There is need to clarify whether vocational educational institutions fall under Higher Education Sector so that perhaps NCHE can focus on accrediting HEIs, while NTA will focus on accrediting vocational educational and training institutions.
- ✓ NQA must ideally deal NQF, while the rest should be dealt with by the NCHE.
- It may be advisable to separate the processes of registration, accreditation and auditing.
- There may be a need to identify a body or an authority that is outside the three affected institutions to consider how the functions in which overlaps that have been identified can be streamlined.

### **Closing Remarks**

In his closing remarks, Dr Kalumbi Shangula, Chairperson of the Council said the retreat had provided an opportunity for Council Members to better appreciate the NCHE, its roles and obligations in keeping with the Higher Education Act. He said the Council had noted the budget for 2014/2015, as well as the Secretariat's comprehensive annual plan and assured the Secretariat of the Council's support towards efforts to achieve its strategic objectives. He described the presentation on "Good Corporate Governance Principles as Applicable to Higher Education Landscape" as comprehensive and informative and expressed the hope that NCHE would make reference to the good practices and relevant aspects that were outlined in executing its mandate.



Dr Kalumbi Shangula Chairperson of NCHE

Dr Shangula further said the Council will undertake to speedily resolve the debate around the NCHE becoming a "juristic person" before the Amendment Bill could be final-

ised. The chairperson said the Retreat had enabled the Secretariat to brief the Council on programmes that had been successfully developed, as well as those that were still being developed. He commended the Secretariat for these achievements.

He said Council Members now had a better understanding of the Funding Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions and the Public Higher Education Tuition Fee Adjustment Policy, as well as the Higher Education Management Information System. On the issue of the overlapping of functions/ roles between NCHE, NQA and NTA, he expressed the hope that the mandates of these three sister institutions would be clarified and streamlined soon. He urged the Secretariat to organise more similar retreats because so much was happening at the Secretariat, and there was need to keep Council Members abreast with developments and to reflect on achievements and challenges.

Finally, he urged the Secretariat to revisit the Higher Education Amendment Bill which has been under consideration for many years to ensure its relevance.

# NCHE RETREAT PARTICIPANTS

# Chairperson

1. Dr Kalumbi Shangula

# **Vice Chair Person**

2. Dr Lischen Hoases-Gorases

# **Council Members**

- 3. Mrs Barbara van der Westhuizen
- 4. Mr Richwell Lukonga
- 5. Mr Basilius Kasera
- 6. Dr Helen Nkandi-Shiimi
- 7. Mr Raymond Simanga
- 8. Ms Mary Nyandoro
- 9. Dr Andreas Niikondo
- 10. Mr Timotheus Angala
- 11. Prof Agnes van Dyk
- 12. Mr Paul Nanyeni
- 13. Ms Esther Akwaake
- 14. Prof Rehabeam Auala

# **Alternate Members**

- 15. Rev Simon Gilham
- 16. Mr Silvester Mbangu
- 17. Mr Matchwell Lizazi
- 18. Mr Corneels Jafta
- 19. Mr Robert Munganda
- 20. Ms Pamela Hoebes
- 21. Ms Josephine Lazarus
- 22. Dr Hylton Villet
- 23. Ms Hilka Amadhila
- 24. Mr Melki-zedek Uupindi

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- 26. Ms Abia Mbulu
- 27. Ms Bertha Njembo
- 28. Ms Vejanda Kauaria
- 29. Ms Anneley Willemse
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