



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY

BY

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**MINISTER OF EDUCATION, INNOVATION, YOUTH, SPORT, ARTS AND
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Protea Hotel Windhoek Fürstenhof

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**Keynote address: Launch of the 2024 National Graduate Survey
Report**

Chairperson of the National Council for Higher Education Dr Isak Neema,

Council Members of NCHE

Deputy Executive Director of the NCHE, Dr Sylvia Demas and Secretariat Staff

Vice Chancellors and Leaders of the Five Participating Higher Education Institutions,

Other Higher Education Institutions representatives

Representatives of Government Ministries, Agencies and Development Partners,

Members of the Academic Community,

Graduates, Students

Members of the Media,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is an honour to join you for the launch of the 2024 National Graduate Survey Report.

I wish to commend the National Council for Higher Education, together with the participating higher education institutions, for undertaking this important work. I also thank the graduates who responded to the survey and shared their experiences. Their responses allow us to look beyond enrolment and graduation and ask a more fundamental question: What happens to our graduates after they leave our institutions?

That is the question that gives this report its importance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

A higher education qualification represents much more than the completion of a programme of study. It reflects the knowledge, skills and capabilities that graduates have developed, as well as the contribution that higher education institutions and the broader education system have made to Namibia's human-capital development. We therefore have a responsibility to ask whether that investment is translating into opportunity. The purpose of a graduate survey is precisely to help us answer that question with evidence.

The findings before us provide encouragement, but they also require honest reflection. The survey indicates that a significant proportion of graduates have entered employment, contributing in the public and private sectors, civil society and through entrepreneurial activities. This is encouraging. At the same time, the findings also show that a substantial proportion of graduates remain without employment or experience difficulty making the transition from graduation into work. We should therefore resist the temptation either to celebrate the positive findings without reflection or to focus only on the challenges.

The value of evidence is that it allows us to see both. It tells us where progress is being made, where barriers remain and where we must improve.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is important that we also consider the scale and coverage of this survey. The survey identified 24,242 graduates who were confirmed as available for participation, of whom 9,063 graduates responded.

This represents a response rate of approximately 37.4 per cent.

This means that the report provides valuable evidence about the experiences of thousands of graduates, while also reminding us that there is room to strengthen participation in future surveys. We should therefore interpret the findings with both appreciation and responsibility. The responses give us an important picture of graduate outcomes, but broader participation would provide an even more comprehensive basis for national planning, institutional improvement and policy development.

The response rate is not merely a technical statistic. It also tells us something about the importance of maintaining accurate graduate records, strengthening alumni networks and ensuring that institutions remain connected to their graduates after completion.

If we want to understand what happens to graduates after they leave our institutions, we must be able to reach them. The survey findings indicate that approximately 65 per cent of respondents were employed, while approximately 33 per cent were unemployed. These figures provide an important basis for reflection on the transition from higher education into the labour market.

At the same time, the figures should be read carefully alongside the report's definitions and categories, including any graduates who may fall outside the employed and unemployed classifications. What matters most is that the findings show both progress and a continuing challenge: many graduates are entering employment, but too many are still struggling to secure work or to make a

successful transition into the labour market. The figures are therefore not simply numbers to be reported. They are a call to action.

Ladies and gentlemen,

One of the clearest messages emerging from the survey is the importance of relevance. Graduates value programmes that provide strong academic foundations while also developing practical competencies, workplace exposure and specialised skills. This is consistent with what our economy increasingly requires. We need graduates who can think critically, communicate effectively, solve problems, work with others, use technology, adapt to changing circumstances and continue learning throughout their working lives.

The question before us is therefore not simply whether our young people are graduating. It is whether they are graduating prepared for the world into which they are entering. This is where the relationship between higher education and the world of work becomes particularly important.

Government is strengthening its commitment to work-integrated learning, including internships, apprenticeships and other forms of experiential learning, while deepening partnerships between higher education institutions, Government and industry. In support of the efforts of the Office of the Prime Minister to promote more consistent internship opportunities across Offices, Ministries and Agencies, our Ministry has developed a Work-Integrated Learning Framework.

The intention is clear: to create more structured opportunities for students and graduates to gain practical experience, while strengthening the relationship between what is taught in our institutions and what is required in the workplace. Where possible, these opportunities should also be meaningful and fairly supported. Work experience should not become an additional barrier for young people who cannot afford to work without remuneration.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This discussion must also be understood within the broader transformation taking place in our higher education financing system. Under the leadership of Her Excellency the President, Government has introduced a new higher education funding arrangement effective from 2026.

For students pursuing their first primary qualification at public higher education institutions, Government provides 100 per cent subsidisation of registration and tuition fees, from NQF Level 1 up to Level 8. For students pursuing their first primary qualification at private higher education institutions, Government provides support based on a predetermined fee structure. This means that the applicable registration and tuition fees are funded according to the approved or predetermined amounts, rather than through an unlimited subsidy of all fees charged by the private institution.

This distinction between public and private institutions is important. It ensures clarity about the nature and extent of Government support while expanding opportunities for students to access higher

education across the sector. These measures represent a significant expansion of access. But access is only the beginning.

When we remove or reduce financial barriers to entering higher education, we must also pay close attention to what happens after entry, whether students complete, whether they acquire relevant competencies, whether they transition successfully into work or further learning, and whether they are able to contribute meaningfully to society. That is why this Graduate Survey is so important at this particular moment in our national development.

Education cannot exist in isolation from the economy. Graduate employability is a shared responsibility. Government creates the policy and enabling environment. Higher education institutions provide education and develop competencies. Industry and other employers create opportunities for workplace exposure and employment. Professional bodies help maintain standards and relevance. And graduates themselves must remain willing to learn, adapt, innovate and pursue opportunities. None of us can close the education-to-employment gap alone. It requires partnership.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The survey also challenges us to think differently about what we mean by success in higher education. Success should certainly include access and graduation. But it should also include the ability of graduates to apply their knowledge, continue learning, find meaningful work, create value, participate in society and, where appropriate, create sustainable livelihoods through enterprise and innovation.

This means that we must ask ourselves some difficult but necessary questions.

Are our programmes sufficiently responsive to changing labour-market needs?

Are students receiving adequate career guidance before choosing fields of study?

Are we providing sufficient opportunities for practical experience?

Are we equipping graduates not only to seek employment, but also to identify opportunities and develop viable enterprises?

And perhaps most importantly:

Are we anticipating the skills that Namibia will need five, ten and twenty years from now?

These questions are particularly important as Namibia advances its ambitions for industrialisation, digital transformation, innovation, economic diversification and the development of new sectors.

Under the Sixth National Development Plan, Government places emphasis on strengthening entrepreneurship and creating stronger linkages between graduates, financial institutions and opportunities for enterprise development. Our institutions therefore have an important role to play in nurturing not only knowledge, but also initiative, creativity, problem-solving and confidence. At the same time, we must strengthen research and innovation.

Our universities and other higher education institutions must continue to generate knowledge that responds to Namibia's developmental priorities. They must also help us anticipate

emerging occupations, technologies and skills, including those that may not yet have clear names or established career pathways. That is how higher education becomes not only responsive to the economy, but also helps shape the economy of the future.

Distinguished colleagues,

The findings before us must ultimately lead to action. A survey should not end with the launch of a report. Its real value lies in what we do with the evidence. The findings should inform curriculum review, programme development, quality assurance, accreditation, institutional planning and policy decisions. Graduate tracer studies should increasingly become part of our normal quality-assurance culture.

I therefore encourage each participating institution to interrogate its own findings carefully, identify areas requiring attention and translate the evidence into practical institutional responses.

I would also like to emphasise the importance of improving our national graduate-data systems. We need stronger alumni engagement, better tracking of graduate outcomes and deeper collaboration between the education sector, employers, professional bodies and the National Planning Commission.

Good data does not make decisions for us. But good data helps us make better decisions. The survey before us has also highlighted an important national lesson: we cannot improve what we do not measure, and we cannot plan effectively if we do not understand the experiences of those we are seeking to serve. The response rate

of approximately 37.4 per cent should encourage us to strengthen our systems for future surveys. We must improve the accuracy of graduate contact information, maintain stronger relationships with alumni and make it easier for graduates to participate in national research.

At the same time, we must recognise the contribution of the 9,063 graduates who did respond. Their participation has provided valuable insight into employment, unemployment, further study, entrepreneurship and the transition from higher education into the world of work.

For future surveys, I therefore wish to see broader participation across the higher education sector. Subject to the appropriate legal and institutional processes, I call upon all higher education institutions whose graduates meet the survey criteria to participate fully in future national graduate surveys. A more comprehensive participation base will strengthen the quality of our evidence and enable Government and the sector to make better-informed decisions about higher education, skills development and national planning.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The findings of this report bring us back to the central purpose of higher education: to equip people with the knowledge, skills and capabilities to participate meaningfully in society and contribute to the development of our country.

The experiences captured in this survey, whether of employment, unemployment, further study, entrepreneurship or continued job-seeking, remind us that our responsibility does not end when a student receives a qualification. Our responsibility is to create an education system that gives every graduate a strong foundation from which to build a meaningful future.

Our graduates are among Namibia's greatest national assets. Their experiences should inform our policies, their outcomes should guide our decisions, and their achievements should encourage us to continue strengthening the connection between education, opportunity and national development.

The 2024 National Graduate Survey Report therefore gives us more than statistics. It gives us a mirror. It shows us where we are making progress, where challenges remain and where we must do better. Let us use that evidence constructively, not to assign blame, but to improve the system; not simply to measure outcomes, but to strengthen them.

As Government expands access to higher education, we must ensure that access is accompanied by relevance, relevance by opportunity, and opportunity by meaningful outcomes. That is how education becomes a genuine investment in Namibia's people and in Namibia's future.

I once again congratulate the National Council for Higher Education, the participating institutions, the research and technical teams, and the graduates who contributed their experiences to this important body of evidence. May this report stimulate honest

reflection, informed policy, stronger partnerships and practical action across our higher education sector.

It is now my honour to officially launch the 2024 National Graduate Survey Report.

I thank you.