



Republic of Namibia

Keynote Address

By

***Dr Richard Nchabi Kamwi, MP
Minister of Health and Social Services***

**AT THE INAUGURATION OF LECTURE HALLS IN
THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCE**

**University of Namibia, Windhoek
17 November 2009**

Programme Director

Vice Chancellor, University of Namibia- Prof. Lazarus Hangula

Chairperson, Department of Global Health at the University of Washington - Dr. King Holmes

Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences - Dr. Lischen Haoses-Gorases

I-Tech Washington based Director Ms. Ann Downer

I-Tech Namibia Director Ms. Deqa Ali

University Academic & Administrative Staff

Distinguished Invited Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentleman

I am greatly honoured to witness and officially inaugurate the renovated lecture halls in the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Namibia. I commend the efforts of the Vice Chancellor, management and staff of the University for their commitment to academic excellence.

In addition to human capital, infrastructure in the form of lecture halls, laboratories and equipment form a key characteristic of academic excellence. Indeed, by so doing, you had provided a conducive environment in which lecturers' and students' learning methods are supported by the physical space and teaching aid.

It is against this background that I value the university's efforts towards creating such an environment, by investing N\$4 million in the renovation of the new lecture halls.

As the only health education training institution at tertiary level in the country, my ministry holds the University of Namibia and its Faculty of Health Sciences in high esteem. The Ministry of Health & Social Services primarily relies on UNAM for suitably qualified nurses and radiographers as well as medical doctors to some extent. In addition, the Social Services Directorate of my Ministry also relies on UNAM's Faculty of Humanities & Social Services for social workers.

Up until this year, the Faculty of Medical & Health Sciences offered a two year pre-medical programme. Through this programme, students who successfully completed the two years enrolled with South African universities for the rest of their medical education. A number of students who went through this programme are now working with the Ministry, while some of the private medical practitioners are contracted by the ministry to perform particular tasks on designated days every week or when the need for their services arises.

Programme Director

My ministry is exceedingly delighted about the new School of Medicine of the University of Namibia. The much anticipated School will officially open its doors to the public come February

2010. With effect from February, 2010 the Medical School will annually admit 55 students to pursue the Bachelor of Medicine and the Bachelor of Surgery (MBCChB). The degree comprises five years of training in basic sciences and clinical areas followed by a two year internship jointly supervised by the School of Medicine and the Medical Dental Professions Council of Namibia. I believe this programme will go a long way in addressing the shortage of medical doctors and other medical specialists in the country.

Indeed, I am delighted, with the appointment of high quality academics who will teach at the school. I have read in the media that many of these academics not only have years of experience in medical education, but come from renown medical schools such as the University of Pretoria Medical School in South Africa, and the University of Waterloo Medical School in Canada to mention but a few. As a country and as a University, we must be proud of attracting academics of such promising caliber.

According to the Ministry of Health and Social Services Human Resources for Health Strategy for 5 years which is in line with the National Development Plan 3, we are expected to produce 339 medical doctors. In fact, this is in line with the World Health Organization guidelines which stipulate 2.5 doctors per 1000 population. The establishment of our own School of Medicine will go a long way in reducing this shortage.

I am aware of the enormous challenge this presents to the University. UNAM finds itself in a catch-22 situation, having to be responsive to the needs of the country's health sector, while at

the same time having to conform to internationally accepted norms and standards in terms of staff/student ratio.

The internationally accepted staff/student ratio for science related courses, under which medical & health education fall is 1 to 15. This means a (one) lecturer for every 15 students. This ratio presents great challenges when it comes to meeting the demands of the national health sector, in terms of providing the necessary resources. I therefore call upon the private sector and other stakeholders to please consider joining the efforts of Government in order for us to meet with the intended objectives of Vision 2030 and our national university.

Finally, I wish to thank the University Management and staff, the Estates Services Department, and the Faculty of Health Sciences for the role they collectively and individually played in the renovation of these halls.

Programme Director

The Vice Chancellor

Ladies and Gentlemen

I now have the honour to declare the lecture halls in the Faculty of Health Science officially inaugurated.

I thank you.