

Chapter 9

Higher Education Co-operation

Several Dutch universities and institutes for higher education have supported tertiary training and education in Namibia, starting before independence and continuing until the present day. The programmes were financed from various sources, most through one of many Dutch government programmes. The activities varied greatly: staff development and staff exchange; development of programmes, curricula and teaching materials; diploma, Masters and PhD degrees for hundreds of Namibians. The main subjects were gender and development, public administration, business management, land management, media technology and in service training for science teachers.



Marianne Ros

Marianne Ros studied History at the Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen. In 1994 she came to Namibia. She lived in Nyangana and taught History at the newly established St. Boniface College in Sambyu until 1998. With her husband she then moved to Windhoek where she became part of the founding team of Catholic AIDS Action (CAA). Developing its Prevention Office, she co-ordinated the My Future is My Choice programme for CAA, in collaboration with UNICEF and various Ministries, until 2001. She now lives in the Netherlands and works for a Foundation that aims to stimulate integration processes within Dutch society.

“People make a good relationship”



Land distribution and land management are hot topics across southern Africa. The expropriations and subsequent underutilisation of farms in Zimbabwe have made headlines throughout the world. To a lesser degree South Africa, Namibia and Angola face the similar problems regarding redistribution of land to what is referred to as ‘the previously disadvantaged’ black farmers.

Recognising the need for trained professionals in land management Dr. Tjama Tjivikua decided to start a programme in land management at the Polytechnic of Namibia. “We started with 22 students in 1997 and in 2005 there were 240 students,” says the Rector. The programme has attracted students from across southern Africa because of its relevance, uniqueness and high standards.

“But without the help of the Dutch government and ITC this would have never happened.” A close co-operation started in 1996 which took Tjivikua to the Netherlands at least twice. Dutch specialists travelled to the Namibian capital Windhoek to train staff and advise on curriculum design and implementation. “I realized that if we don’t manage this properly it might fail and that would reflect badly on the students, the Polytechnic and donors. Actually, if one doesn’t do something properly, one shouldn’t do it at all.”

The Dutch government invested significantly into the new course with which the Polytechnic wished to distinguish itself from others, for instance the University of Namibia. “What makes a partnership work are the people involved. Other things like money or infrastructure are complementary. We didn’t have a lot of money but it was good money since the human relationship was right.” The initial project almost failed, remembers the Rector vividly pointing out difficulties with protocols and procedures that had to be observed between the governments. “But the relationship with ITC was so good that we could continue.”

Besides the land management courses, an intensive co-operation was established with the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa (NiZA) to fully implement a journalism and media technology programme. Their financial and expert assistance was “really valuable”, says Dr. Tjivikua. “I pushed the establishment of a Media Technology Department from the beginning, but didn’t initially sense full support when others realized that it would be very expensive. But in my vision, the media are quite important and nowadays all about technology.”

Through co-operation both the programmes in land management and media technology are now established in departments at the Polytechnic. But donor funding for the Polytechnic is decreasing. “With respect to the land management department, for instance, two funding cycles have ended. As I see it, seed funding is there to create something and from there onwards a programme should run on its own. An institute like the Polytechnic then has to care for its own baby.”

Interview and photo by Arjen de Boer

Higher education in Namibia

Higher education in Namibia started in 1980, when the Academy of Tertiary Education was established. Prior to this, students pursuing higher education went abroad, mainly to South Africa. The Academy offered classes in Teacher Training and Secretarial Courses. In 1985 higher education was split up in three: The Academy of Tertiary Education, a university component, organised around faculties of social science, education, nursing and teacher training; Technikon Namibia (offering diploma and certificate courses) and The College for Out of School Training. Shortly after independence it was decided to divide these three components into two independent higher education institutions: The University of Namibia (UNAM) and the Polytechnic of Namibia (PoN).

Namibia's university, UNAM, was established by an act of Parliament in 1992, headed by a Chancellor (being the Head of State) and a Vice Chancellor for day-to-day management. Professor Peter Katjavivi was founding Vice Chancellor until 2003, when he was appointed Namibia's ambassador in Brussels and is also accredited in the Netherlands. UNAM's heraldic motto reads "Education, Service and Development"; its programmes are to meet national human resources requirements through quality teaching, research, consultancy, and community services. In the course of the years UNAM went through a number of major transformations, such as switching from Afrikaans to English as a medium of instruction, and reorganisation of the various faculties. UNAM has currently seven faculties, has developed nine outreach centres for distance education, and a Northern Campus at Oshakati. Nowadays approximately nine thousand students are registered.

In 1994 Technikon Namibia and the College for Out of School Training merged to become the Polytechnic of Namibia. Vocational training courses were gradually phased out and today it is a university of professional education. Its mission is to contribute to sustainable national development through excellence in technologically oriented career education and training, applied research and service. At the time of its inception only 2 500 students were enrolled, currently it hosts about 6 300 students. Polytechnic's four Schools offer approximately 200 courses.

Since Namibia's independence several Dutch higher education institutions (both regular universities and so-called International Education institutes) responded to requests from the young Namibian counterparts to assist them in their development, focusing mainly on strengthening the capacity and quality of organisation and staff. This resulted in a considerable number of university co-operation programmes, financially supported through various donors amongst them UNESCO, the European Commission and SAIL (on behalf of Netherlands Government). SAIL, Stichting Samenwerkingsverband IO-instellingen en LUW, was founded in 1994 to unite Netherlands' five institutes for International Education plus Landbouw Universiteit Wageningen (amongst them MSM, ISS and ITC, which are mentioned in this Chapter). SAIL funded by, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, implemented international activities in the field of higher education. Four of these programmes are presented below.

Also some Dutch NGOs entered into education co-operation such as the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa, with the Polytechnic. Altogether hundreds of Namibians studied in the Netherlands. They were financed through projects or the Netherlands Fellowship Programme. This last programme is executed on behalf of the Netherlands Government by the Netherlands Organization for International Co-operation in Higher Education (NUFFIC) in The Hague.

UNAM and UNITWIN

Ties between Utrecht University (UU) and UNAM commenced in the year UNAM was established, 1992. The UU is a large university in the centre of the Netherlands, with almost 27 000 students, over 8 000 staff members and 176 academic programmes. Initiated by UU, four universities in western Europe and four in southern Africa, including UNAM, established the University Twinning (UNITWIN) Network for Southern Africa. UNESCO chaired the UNITWIN Network. It is a university twinning and networking scheme aimed at developing interuniversity co-operation by promoting transfer of knowledge and academic solidarity across the world. Through this network, some bilateral projects between selected faculties of UU and UNAM were realised.

A life time experience for a Namibian ambassador

One of the UNAM lecturers, who did his PhD, Dr. Samuel K. Mbambo, is now Namibia's Ambassador in the Russian Federation. Looking back on his time in Utrecht he recalls:

"I enjoyed every moment of my stay. It was an eye opening life experience to me. Coming from an apartheid system where humanity was based on skin colour; it was the first time in my life to share educational environment and facilities as a student with the apartheid most 'sacred colour': white. After my stay in Utrecht I went back to Namibia with another look at people: we are all the same irrespective of our different appearances."

A life time experience for Dutch anthropologists

During these almost ten years of co-operation about fifty Dutch anthropology students did their MA research in Namibia, mostly the Kavango and Caprivi Region. Not much anthropological research had been done here before. Living with host families the students studied among other issues teenage pregnancy, alcoholism and health (often in the context of traditional and cosmopolitan medicine), ecology and development.

To share the results on a wider scale in Namibia a special UNITWIN series of these MA theses was published, while the students themselves organised a photo exhibition on their experiences in both the Netherlands and Namibia.



Graduation ceremony at the Maastricht School of Management

The course for Master of Business Administration is an outreach programme at the University of Namibia in Windhoek. At the end of course the students travel to Maastricht to defend their thesis. The photo shows Namibian ambassador to the Netherlands, Dr Peter Katjavivi, surrounded by happy graduates. Dr Katjavivi was the Vice-chancellor of UNAM, when the agreement was signed with the Maastricht School of Management. Photo by Regina Moen.

One of these projects was carried out by the Utrecht Department of Cultural Anthropology and UNAM (International Office, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Multi Disciplinary Research Centre). Contemporary social problems and topics indicated as relevant by the Namibian partners were studied in the field.

Besides this research also staff development took place by supporting two UNAM lecturers in obtaining a PhD in a “sandwich model” studying partly in Utrecht, partly in Namibia. Other co-operation pertained to the appointment of a UNAM Professor of Religion and Theology Dr. Christo Lombard as UNESCO Africa Chair in Utrecht in 1999, and the collaboration between the Law Faculties of UU and UNAM.

UNAM and ISS supported through SAIL

The Institute of Social Studies' (ISS) involvement with Namibia dates back to pre-independence times when in the mid-1980's ten SWAPO women attended a Woman and Development diploma course, specially designed for them, at ISS. Later two of them obtained an MA degree in this field at this institute. The commitment was prolonged in 1997 when the ISS, through SAIL, entered into an agreement with UNAM's Multidisciplinary Research Centre (MRC) to develop the Gender Training and Research Programme, aiming at interfaculty and interdisciplinary curricula and research and promoting gender awareness among the general public. Besides ISS, involved until 2004, other donors contributed to the programme as well.

Activities ranged from grassroots level interventions, drama workshops to sensitise communities, training army and policemen as well as domestic workers on women's issues, to development of academic staff capacity in teaching, research and analysis. ISS staff went on short-term assignments to Namibia, while Namibian colleagues came to the Netherlands to attend tailor made and regular MA and PhD courses.

At present the diploma course of the Centre is well established, and is assisted by (amongst others) two PhD - and eight MA graduates in Gender and Development. Moreover, 'Gender' has been made part of the

compulsory 'Social Contemporary Issues' course for all first year UNAM students. The MRC wants to extend its curriculum with an MA programme.

Under another programme, financed through other funds, UNAM and ISS introduced the MA programme in Public Policy and Administration (MPPA) at the Faculty of Economics and Management Science (FEMS) in 1999. It addresses the need of training civil servants and NGO-staff in good governance. With FEMS infrastructure and facilities for successful delivery of the MPPA in place, ISS is at present gradually withdrawing its share.

UNAM and Maastricht School of Management

Enhancing management capacity lies at the root of the collaboration agreement between UNAM and the Maastricht School of Management (MSM) signed in 1999. Through a Masters of Business Administration Outreach programme at the University campus in Windhoek students are provided with management training.

This MBA programme was designed for executives, having a Bachelors degree and several years of working experience as manager in e.g. government or semi-government, or commercial sectors. MBA students attend evening classes for a period of 18 months. The average age of the students is 38 years.

Towards the end of the programme, students go to Maastricht for a two-week visit to defend their research paper. Nearly one hundred, mainly Namibian, students have graduated since 1999, amongst them the wife of a former Prime Minister and a former mayor of Windhoek.

Ministry of Basic Education and Free University Amsterdam (VU)

Following its original charter, the VU aims to be inspiring, innovative and involved. In this context it has been active in development co-operation for many years.

Strengthening science and mathematics education

On this and the facing page a number of photos show how, during a workshop in Katimo Mulilo, teachers are taught to use readily available objects and materials to explain scientific principles to their pupils. The In-service Training and Assistance to Namibian Teachers (INSTANT) project ran from 1991 to 1997 and was funded by the European Commission. The implementing agencies were the Ministry of Basic Education, Culture Youth and Sport and the Free University of Amsterdam. Photos by Ian Macfarlane.

Amsterdam Free University

The 'Vrije Universiteit' (VU) Amsterdam' was established in 1880 by orthodox protestants.

'Vrije Universiteit' means 'Free University', referring to freedom from both state and church interference. It comprises twelve faculties and has teaching facilities for 18,000 students. It is one of two Amsterdam based universities.



Working with scales and weights



Workshop for measuring the volume of a container



Testing of roofing materials



After theory, the physics parameters of the car of an official of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports are determined.



An experiment to determine the strength of various grasses.



Determining the strength of a locally fired brick

The ITC, established in 1950 under the name International Training Centre for Aerial Survey (hence ITC), is an autonomous institute for Higher Education, nowadays called the Institute of Geo-science and Earth Observation. Situated in Enschede in the eastern part of the Netherlands, it is the oldest and largest International Education institute in the Netherlands. It aims at capacity building and institutional development specifically in countries that are economically and/or technologically less developed.



Future technicians for land reform

The co-operation between the Polytechnic of Namibia and the International Training Centre for Aerial Survey in Enschede is one of the most comprehensive collaboration projects in higher education between Namibia and the Netherlands. ITC helped establish a number of courses related to land management that also attract students from other Southern African countries. The photo shows fieldwork in a low cost housing area. Photo courtesy of Polytechnic of Namibia.

Field work in Land Management

Land reform is an important issue for the development of southern Africa. The transfer of commercial land to indigenous farmers and the modernisation of land ownership in communal areas need well-trained professionals. The picture was taken during field work of land surveyors. Photo courtesy of Polytechnic of Namibia.

From 1991 to 1997 it was the main implementing partner of the EU funded INSTANT project (IN Service Training and Assistance for Namibian Teachers) in Namibia, in collaboration with the Ministry of Basic Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (MBEC)

Strengthening science and mathematics education, was the main focus of the project, and regarded as one of the priorities within the education sector at that time, considering that these subjects were severely neglected before independence while the majority of teachers were inadequately or inappropriately qualified for their task. The project provided a sizeable team of VU experts who worked together with Namibian science and mathematics teachers, in guiding the educational reforms in science and mathematics in secondary education.

Activities concerned mainly curriculum- and teacher development. In-service education and training workshops were provided across the country; teacher support materials were developed and implemented; text books for schools were written; practical equipment for school science experiments provided and science fairs organised. INSTANT managed to play an important part in ensuring that within a few years science and mathematics became more prominent subjects available to all, and with a much more practical and experimental approach.

The INSTANT teacher-training workshops ultimately led to the establishment of the Namibian Mathematics and Science Teachers Association (NAMSTA).

After completion of INSTANT in 1997, the VU remained involved, on a smaller scale, in a follow up project called 'The Mathematics and Science Teachers' Extension Programme (MASTEP, 1999-2004). Together with INSTANT-trained local mathematics and science educationalists, 300 mathematics, biology and physical science teachers were upgraded to IGCSE-level teachers. This was achieved through a national in-service distance programme organised by the Centre for External Studies at UNAM.

From 1994 to 1996 the VU also assisted UNAM's Multidisciplinary Research Centre Social Sciences Division (SSD). The applied social sciences services section of the

SSD worked together with the Ministry of Wildlife and Tourism on the LIFE programme (Living in a Finite Environment). Funded by USAID and with technical support from the Worldwide Fund for Nature, LIFE focussed on community-based natural resource management and the emerging conservancy movement. In addition there were a number of students of the VU who undertook research projects in Namibia as part of their MA-degree programme.

Polytechnic of Namibia and ITC, supported through SAIL

Among the many changes Namibia's independence brought about, were also new constitutional provisions, laws and policies on land reform. Land managing institutions consequently faced the immense task of implementation. At the same time the country lacked cadre including suitably trained and educated land managers. The Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (MLRR) found a partner in the International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) which resulted in an ad hoc diploma course in land use planning being organised in Namibia by MLRR between 1995 –1996 and funded through SAIL.

Recognising the need to strengthen the capacity of land managing institutions as well MLRR and ITC sought a partner for the development of a comprehensive educational programme in Land Management. The Polytechnic welcomed this initiative, and from 1996, a series of educational and training programmes in Land Management were developed, funded under SAIL as well. The collaboration also contributed to the institutional strengthening of the MLRR.

Since 1999 the Polytechnic has a Department of Land Management, which is part of the School of Natural Resources and Tourism, and offers a number of Certificate, Diploma and a Bachelor of Technology in Land Management programmes. It supports most levels of cadre needed in land management institutions, and has 17 staff members. Initially a large proportion of the students consisted of MLRR staff. While training for the Ministry still continues, gradually more Grade 12 students have opted for the programme. Because of

NiZA, the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa

In 1997, three Dutch organisations, which had been actively supporting the anti-apartheid struggle since the 1960's, merged. These organisations, the Holland Committee on Southern Africa (KZA), the Dutch Anti-Apartheid Movement and the Kairos became NiZA. NiZA, remaining united with the people of southern Africa after the fall of the apartheid regimes, seeks to help people find structural solutions in their fight against poverty, injustice and inequality. It primarily collaborates with organisations in southern Africa which promote freedom of expression, free media, human rights, peace building and economic justice, in order to strengthen their capacity and influence the policy-making process in the south and the north.

its excellent reputation it attracts students from other southern African countries as well. The Department, which began with 20 enrolments in 1997, now has over 200 students, of which some 50 graduate each year. Annually two Polytechnic or MLRR students went to ITC Enschede to obtain their Masters Degree.

As the SAIL International Education Programme terminated in 2004, efforts have been made to attract European Commission funds, through its Rural Poverty Reduction Programme, to proceed capacity building and develop a Masters programme at the Polytechnic. Meanwhile ITC plans to assist the Polytechnic with a joint education programme, widening the scope of the curriculum in Land Management to urban, environmental and agricultural fields.

Polytechnic and NiZA

Since 2000, the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa (NiZA) co-operates with the Department of Media Technology at the Polytechnic. In a three-year diploma programme students are trained in different aspects of the media profession. The Polytechnic is currently in-

vestigating the start of a degree programme following the diploma. NiZA provides funds so the Department can hire local and regional consultants to assist in the development of its curriculum and training manuals (with local content), and train teaching staff and students. Over the years approximately nine experts from Namibia and South Africa have worked in this project, on short or longer missions. Several media agencies have meanwhile formed partnerships with the Polytechnic, some of them providing experiential learning opportunities for students.

The Polytechnic finds it important to develop the community media sector to improve access to information also outside the capital. Highlight in 2004 was the establishment of the Echoes News Wire Service. This innovative student-run media outlet serves as a practical training ground and operates as a real press agency, offering information and contributing to the diversification of the media landscape. Its output is unique because it covers areas which media houses usually have not got the resources for. Established media houses use the Echoes articles against payments. To make Echoes a sustainable enterprise NiZA recently supported a feasibility study into possible income generating activities.

