

# Taking NUST to the people - Dr Niikondo shares his vision

Being a NUST employee for nearly two decades now, Dr Andrew Niikondo is no stranger to the day-to-day operations of the Institution. He took over the reins from Mr Morné du Toit, who has since returned to his position as Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Administration and Finance.

Dr Niikondo joined the Institution as a lecturer in the Faculty of Management Sciences, and gradually worked himself up to become the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic. Last month, he was appointed as the Acting Vice-Chancellor for a six-month period.

Thereafter the NUST Council is expected to make a permanent appointment.

## The Regions

When asked about his goals during his tenure, Dr Niikondo said: "I have plans to take this University to the people because I believe in the concept of a 'people-centred

development'. NUST needs to enhance its focus on the needs of local communities for the necessities of life. This means developing people's skills through education and giving them a chance to use those skills in the local labour market."

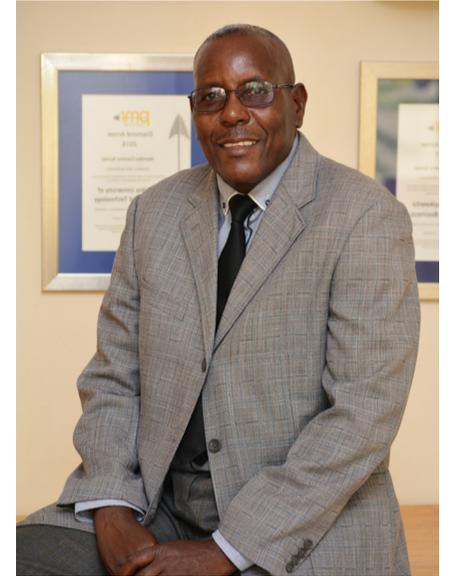
He however acknowledged that this is only practical if development is "taken to the people."

He intends to take NUST to more regions for a "greater well-being for all," he emphasised. Currently, NUST has ten (10) regional centres across the country, where students study via distance learning. Dr Niikondo aims to ensure the services in these areas are improved significantly.

## The Pandemic

The Acting Vice-Chancellor has undoubtedly taken the driver's seat at a time the world is plagued by the COVID-19 pandemic, and this consequently raises the bar. "This situation has severely jeopardised our teaching and learning activities on all spheres, but in line with what has been agreed to at the Online Implementation Committee meeting, deans and management, we have introduced online teaching and learning," Dr Niikondo said confidently.

Furthermore, the academic staff underwent an in-depth two-week training in order to sharpen their skills on the University's e-learning platform, using the Microsoft Teams application. The University continues to seek ways to improve remote learning, during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.



Dr Andrew Niikondo

## Bank Windhoek, NUST and B360 host Online Career Starter Programme for Graduates

In support of social distancing measures aimed at combating the spread of COVID-19, Bank Windhoek, in partnership with NUST and B360 Education Partnerships, have decided to host an online Career Starter Programme.

Designed to provide a sequential path through career development, knowledge and skills essential for success in the job search, the online Career Starter Programme will see a total of twelve graduates, divided into groups of four, take part in the initiative.

The programme will be spread over six weeks, during which each group will have online contact sessions with a Swiss-based mentor. The first group of graduates started their online sessions on Monday, 8 June 2020, while the remaining teams will join on Monday, 15 June 2020. The sessions will conclude at the end of July 2020. The initiative will expose graduates to a range of topics, including Curriculum Vitae (CV) preparation, drafting of cover letters, interview training, organisational structure, entrepreneurship, project management, governance, and ethics.

"Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been encouraged to increase our use of online/virtual learning platforms significantly. As a result, most of our classes are now online. It is also fitting to conduct our Career Starter initiative similarly," said NUST's International Relations Officer, Nico Smit.

Bank Windhoek will support the initiative through a contribution to the purchasing of mobile data bundles throughout the online programme. "All 12 participants will have weekly prepaid data bundles that will allow them to participate in the programme fully. Thank you to Bank Windhoek for making this possible," said Smit.

Bank Windhoek's Human Capital specialists will also virtually engage the graduates with presentations aimed at coaching them on how to prepare themselves for possible employment in a highly competitive job environment. "As a responsible corporate citizen, dedicated to the promotion of education in Namibia, we believe our involvement in this initiative will help assist graduates find suitable employment. We are proud to offer our assistance," said Bank Windhoek's Human Resource Business Partner Manager, Retuura Ballotti. Switzerland-based B360 Education Partnerships, a non-governmental organisation comprising a pool of professionals in numerous disciplines across a variety of industries, will facilitate the online Career Starter Programme. Four Swiss professionals from B360 will mentor the graduates for six weeks.



## Matter of Opinion

Implications of Covid-19 on achieving the SDGs in Namibia

According to the National Planning Commission Director General in the Voluntary National Review: 2018, Namibia has embraced sustainable development as its national planning approach. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has casted a shadow of doubt on whether the country will achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the year 2030, in the face of the inevitable collapse of the global economy that has made trade-related targets look more daunting than before.

This development is of great concern, especially given the fact that even prior to this crisis, Namibia was already falling behind in efforts to achieve them.

### Challenges

The pandemic presents the following challenges to the economy: **Demand- and supply-side shocks:** Namibia will be hit hard because of its dependence on trade as a driver of economic growth, small domestic markets and low levels of diversification, which increase vulnerability to external shock.

**Global recession:** The outbreak is affecting the three major hubs of the global economy – Asia, Europe and the U.S. – which are Namibia's top trading partners. As these economies enter recession, Namibia's trade volume will shrink and decrease the likelihood of achieving the SDG targets.

**Increased economic vulnerability:** The global economic ramification of Covid-19 is the reversal of the previous economic development trajectories prior to the pandemic. Such dramatic turn does not augur well with the efforts to achieve the SDGs by the year 2030.



Mr Mally Likukela

### Recommendations

There are at least three immediate actions and policy responses that Namibian can consider in this regard. These actions must be taken, to ensure that adequate finance is channelled to support progress on the SDGs (i.e. particularly trade-related targets). Firstly, Namibia needs a coordinated stimulus package, which includes reversing the decline in aid and increasing concessional finance.

Secondly, to prevent a debt crisis, Namibia must be allowed to immediately suspend re-payments and reassess debt sustainability beyond the crisis.

Thirdly, the monetary authority must continue to stabilise financial markets by continuing to inject much-needed liquidity.

Furthermore, in partnership with the private sector, government must continue to roll over debt to SMEs and individuals.

\* By Mr Mally Likukela, an Economics Lecturer in the Faculty of Management Sciences at NUST. The views and opinions expressed herein are purely his own.

## Next @ NUST

### Monday, 22 June 2020

Students return to campus in phases. However, the resumption of face-to-face classes will take place in strict observation of recommended Standard Health and Hygiene Guidelines. These include amongst others, having no more than 50 students per class/lecture and observing social distancing protocols of at least 1.5 meters between persons at all times. Enquiries: [jkandima@nust.na](mailto:jkandima@nust.na)

### Monday, 24 August 2020

Short course in Graphic Design and Web Development Certification begins. The programme, offered by the Centre for Enterprise Development (CED), comprises of seven modules which include Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign, Dreamweaver, and Premiere. Deadline for registration is Friday, 31 July 2020. Enquiries: [fkashaka@nust.na](mailto:fkashaka@nust.na)

### Monday, 31 August 2020

Applications for the 2021 academic year close. Visit [www.nust.na](http://www.nust.na) to browse through the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered by NUST. Manual applications cost N\$220 for undergraduate studies, and N\$330 for postgraduate level. Note, online applications are FREE! Enquiries: [admissions@nust.na](mailto:admissions@nust.na)