Strategic alliance towards sustainable innovation and management efficiency

A delegation from NUST, led by the Acting Vice-Chancellor, Morne du Toit, visited the Flensburg University of Applied Sciences (FUAS) last week, to strengthen collaboration between the two universities. During the visit, the delegates held discussions centred on five major themes, namely, educational and media technology, economics and business; technology transfer; and education and institutional development. Furthermore, the need to ensure research and technology transfer and address institutional capacity and the integration of technologies in teaching, learning and assessment in the adoption of a long-term plan, to ensure the collaboration continues beyond the DIES project tenure. The partnership is based on mutually beneficial networks that will result in promoting staff and student exchange and joint research projects, leveraging from expertise from both parties. Moreover, the delegation was privileged to have HE Andreas Gulbeb, Namibian Ambassador to Germany, in their midst. He emphasised the importance of regional integration and the role that universities of applied sciences play in ensuring economic impact through public and private partnerships.

Girls urged to go full STEAM ahead!

More than 60 teenage girls from across Namibia took part in this year’s Women in Science (WiSci) Girls - Science, Technology, Engineering, Art-Design, and Mathematics (STEAM) Camp. The overall aim of the initiative is to overcome gender disparities in the enrolment of science-related fields of study.

The WiSci Camp has been held in Rwanda (2015), Peru (2016), Malawi (2017) and last year, 100 girls from across the world were hosted at NUST, while a parallel camp was running in Georgia. U.S. Namibia has once again been selected to host the camp. However, this year, the focus is on Grade 10 and 11 girls from various regions in the country. Similar camps are running in Ethiopia, Kosovo, Oregon and Estonia this year. According to UNESCO, the gender gap for interest in science studies can begin at an early age and it can widen because of a loss of interest or confidence throughout a girl’s school years. Furthermore, women’s enrolment is particularly low in ICT (3%), natural science, mathematics and statistics (5%) and engineering, manufacturing and construction (8%).

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The activities

During the 10-day camp, which ends tomorrow, the participants have been exposed to various training opportunities related to careers in STEAM, from architecture, recycling waste material, computer programming, cyber security, chemistry, microbiology and water purification to learning how to make bilingual and yoghurt. Furthermore, industry professionals from various fields gave the campers career advice in electrical engineering, radiology physics, information technology, medical doctors and actuarial science, amongst others.

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The partners

The U.S. State Department is the main sponsor of the initiative, in partnership with Girls Up, an initiative of the United Nations Foundation. NUST availed the facilities, staffing and developed a curriculum for the camp. The WiSci Foundation provided smart technology for the campers, whilst staff from the University of Namibia also facilitated some of the training workshops.

Promoting value addition in the mining sector

The Ministry of Mines and Energy (MME) contracted NUST, through its Department of Mining and Process Engineering (DMPE), to develop a national Mineral Beneficiation Strategy (MBS). As part of the development of this strategy, the department held a workshop last week, to engage stakeholders on the progress made so far.

The Namibian mining industry is one of the main pillars of the country’s economy and makes a significant contribution to the country’s export income (about 50%) and Gross Domestic Product (12 – 14% in recent years).

“The objective of this strategy is to ensure that as a country, Namibia benefits more out of the mineral resources by getting greater benefits from the mineral value chain. One key driver for this process is the development of a manufacturing industry that attains feedback from local mining and processing operations. In order to make this possible, various issues need to be interrogated and reviewed. These include economic incentives for investors in the manufacturing industry, skills development, technology, ease-of-doing-business as well as water and energy security. In a fast-paced global village, Namibia needs to ensure that it offers a competitive landing ground for capital as well as offer much needed cost-competitiveness for its products,” emphasised Dr Harmony Musyanya, Head: DMPE.

He added that: “The department is strategically positioned to lead the initiative as it recently successfully developed the Sector Growth Strategy for the semi-precious stones and related industry for Namibia.” To date, the work covered includes, the commencement of a detailed study of the current status of mineral beneficiation in Namibia, as well as the completion of benchmarking visits to government departments and industries in Finland, South Africa and Zambia. It is anticipated that the strategy will guide Namibia in developing its mineral beneficiation and manufacturing sectors, leading to economic growth and job creation.

The workshop was attended by researchers, academics, government representatives and industry experts.