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Thirst for knowledge yields doctorate - by Chrispin Inambao

21 January 2010

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WINDHOEK – Seventeen years of media experience and a fistful of university degrees plus countless certificates have not clouded newly-minted doctoral student Audrin Mathe's vision in his pursuing and obtaining a doctoral degree.

Mathe's thesis is a rhetorical analysis of the making of the Constitution of Namibia.

Long hours of study involving going to sleep way past midnight resulted in a doctoral degree being conferred on Mathe at the University of Cape Town on December 15 in 2009.

His unwritten motto that the pursuance of knowledge is life-long was further amplified when he was accepted this year at Unam for a Masters in Business Administration (MBA).

Oblivious of the proliferation of people being conferred PhD's, Mathe argues this degree should not be seen merely as a "status symbol" but is borne out of a bona fide need for the attainment of knowledge to boost the growing pool of homegrown experts.

Mathe was born and bred at 31, a rural settlement in Caprivi that at the time of his humble beginnings was bereft of running water and electricity and breakfast was unheard of, while students studied by candlelight and life was spartan with few modern amenities.

The communications manager for the Roads Authority who also had a spell at the NBC and worked as a deputy director in the Prime Minister's Office says his PhD should stress the fact mostly to students in rural areas that with hard work, no goal is unachievable in life.

His thesis is groundbreaking in that it reveals the tools of rhetorical construction of distributive bargaining applied during the negotiations for Namibia's Constitution.

Though Namibia's Constitution continues to be studied by students of constitutional and political history whose areas of focus are mainly on the structure and powers of the Namibian government, checks and balances, the separation of powers, guarantees of fundamental rights and freedoms, Mathe's thesis departed from this traditional angle and for the first time ever applied the discipline of rhetoric to the subject matter. His thesis further revealed how the rhetorical creation of common ground influenced the outcome of the negotiations for the Constitution.

His thesis has its roots in the Hansard of the Standing Committee on Standing Rules and Orders and Internal Arrangements of 08 December 1989 that comprised of members of the Constituent Assembly.

One of his doctoral supervisors, distinguished Professor P Salazar, stated he demonstrated through his thesis that constitution making was a protracted process of give-and-take.

This Hansard has largely been a classified document previously unavailable to the public.

On the doctorate that took him three years to acquire, he said it entailed an academic rhetorical analysis that looked at persuasive communication either written or orally.

"I focused on how the Namibian Constitution was formed looking at the language they used in order to persuade each other on their correctness of their arguments," he said.

"We take it for granted on how the Constitution of Namibia was adopted. Up until now we don't know the behind-the-scenes maneuvers between Swapo on the one hand and the opposition parties on the other.



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"The opposition on the other hand wanted the National Council because they saw it as one way in which they could dilute Swapo's powers because they thought they had a lot of support in the regions," he says.

Swapo advocated for an executive president opposed by the opposition and in the end it was a "quid pro quo" which was a process of give and take as they all had to compromise.

On the local media industry, he observes that the local industry is 'not that bad' though he notes most of the journalists acquired their skills on-the-job and lack the theoretical part of journalism though he also noted this is gradually changing as both the University of Namibia and the Polytechnic of Namibia now offer journalism courses.

Mathe used the interview to appeal to young Namibians, particularly with a disadvantaged background, to study engineering and medicine and other "critical" fields that will help Namibia to realize the ideals of Vision 2010 and that they should do this with a passion.

Currently engaged, Dr Mathe is the Roads Authority's manager for corporate communication.

He also worked as the public relations officer at Unam and previously served as the executive assistant to the Secretary General of the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF).

Since 2009, he has served as president of Karate-Zen Namibia. Photography, fishing, karate, reading and travelling are among his hobbies and during his spare time, he teaches communication and media at the Polytechnic of Namibia.

While he offers training on speechwriting and speechmaking he is knowledgeable on campaign strategies.

An Aquarian, which could possibly explain his passion for fishing, Audrin Inambao Mathe was born on 04 January 1974.

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