

NSFAF distributes connectivity devices for online learning

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Observer

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The Ministry of Higher Education in collaboration with the Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF) has spent nearly N\$2.3 million for the installation of ICT infrastructure as part of the laptop and data connectivity devices initiative at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), NSFAF acting Chief Executive Officer Kennedy Kandume said.

Speaking at a press conference on Monday, October 5, 2020 held at NUST, Kandume said the government in partnership with the Ministry of Higher Education will eventually spend N\$19.3 million for the laptop initiative and data installation at higher education institutions and the distribution of 10GB connectivity devices to needy students.

The devices cost N\$690 each, of which students are expected to pay 50 percent or N\$345 (once off), while the ministry will pay the remaining balance.

“It has cost us N\$2.3 million for the installation done at NUST. We are glad to announce that the ICT infrastructure is upgraded and devices are ready for distribution and NSFAF initiative survey is ready on our portal for beneficiaries,” the Kandume said.

This comes when the CEO previously announced the ICT infrastructure at high institutions cannot cope with the volume of courses or programmes offered since the implementation of online education due to COVID-19.

The NSFAF boss said the organization had now received 2,000 internet devices out of 28,000 purchased from Telecom Namibia.

“As for the laptops, we are going to sign an agreement with the supplier next week, so that the laptops will also be available in due time,” he added.

However when questioned, Kandume went mum on the supplier’s name and the type laptops students are expected to receive.

Kandume previously said nearly 70 companies had shown interest in a tender to provide students with laptops valued at N\$6,000 per unit. Students will be obliged to pay half of this amount and the ministry will pay the balance of N\$3,000.

Kandume also added that the minimum requirement for one to qualify for the initiative is an NQF level 5. “This requirement is applicable to every student who will be interested in the initiative, not only for NSFAF beneficiaries,” he said.

Speaking during the same event, Minister of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation Dr Itah Kandjii-Murangi said the data devices are for every needy student across the country, exclusive of University of Namibia (UNAM) students.

“The reason why the University of Namibia is excluded is that they already have the data devices packages which they give to their students during registration,” she said.

“COVID-19 opened our eyes in terms of technological requirements for education. This initiative is not only for the time during the pandemic, but we will continue doing it in subsequent years,” she said.