

Namandje takes on Nust over VC appointment

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Observer

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Lawyer Sisa Namandje has confirmed to the Windhoek Observer on Monday 16 November that an urgent application to High Court is being prepared.

This is over Namibia University of Science and Technology (Nust) Council's decision to overlook Professor Frednard Gideon for the post of Vice-Chancellor (VC) even though he outperformed Dr Eroid Naomab. This comes after the Nust Council announced last Friday that Naomab is the new Nust VC for the next five years, effective January 2021. Namandje who will represent Gideon under his law firm, Sisa Namandje & Company, says the decision by Nust Council was invalid, and therefore he will be personally spearheading the case. "We have advised Prof. Gideon on the invalidity of the council's decision not to appoint him. That's all we can say at this stage," Namandje stated.

Quizzed on when the exact date of the court application will be, Namandje replied, "Very soon." According to the results of the psychometric assessment, of which Windhoek Observer is in possession, both candidates were declared competent with Naomab's performance ranked as moderate with some limitations.

On the other hand, Gideon's results shows that on all five core capabilities, he meets the requirements as moderate to high level. Moreover, the results on the competency potential indicate a desirable level to be effective in the role. Additionally, the results on the integrity tests shows a willingness to follow organisational rules and policies.

According to quantitative scores based on the closed interviews, Gideon was the leading candidate for the position, while Naomab was leading the quantitative scores for the public presentations. However, the weighted average of the two quantitative assessments were 68 percent for Gideon and 64 percent for Naomab, which meant that both candidates did not meet the required 70 percent that was set for choosing the top candidate.

Affirmative Repositioning (AR) leader, Job Amupanda, has expressed concerns over some of the council members who were involved in the decision to overlook Gideon. "There is definitely laxity in the governance machinery at Nust. I understand that some of those who took this strange decision failed matric. This must be the first executive in Namibia to be recruited by voting," Amupanda told the Windhoek Observer.

He added that it further shows that Nust is an instrument in the hands of the political elite starved of "academic freedom and institutional autonomy".

"It is scandalous to say the least. What would be of interest is what happens after this."

This comes as Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation, Itah Kandjii-Murangi, earlier condemned the decision by Nust council indicating that the choice to vote and ignore the outcome of the pre-determined assessment processes was “totally out of line and at odd with the practices of good governance”. The minister added that the appointment was made in total disregard of the various assessment outcomes.

However, Kandjii-Murangi, later made a U turn, saying the Council’s explanation why Naomab was the preferred candidate over Gideon, was sufficient.