

IDENTITY POLITICS 'KILLING COOPERATION BETWEEN PARTIES'

IRÉNE-MARI VAN DER WALT

Professor Johan Coetzee of the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) says identity politics and tribal association are preventing cooperation between political parties.

"They are intolerant and have identity politics. Even if you just look at the names of the political parties, you can see the identity politics. Some of them are associated with specific tribes and it [tribalism] is very active in Namibia," he said after a panel discussion about voter education at the university last week.

Coetzee believes the juvenile nature of Namibia's political parties contributes to their inability to join forces for the good of the Namibian people. "In Windhoek, we saw it at local government level - they worked to-

gether and then it fell apart. We are not at that point where parties have the tolerance and the political maturity to work together, irrespective of their differences. That capability must still develop," he said. "There is no inward looking in parties - parties are so small that they haven't learnt to work together. Each one focuses too much on what it can win and lose," he added.

A closer election result may be just what many parties need to develop and shed their youth. "That is what is happening in South Africa with the Government of National Unity, where they consolidated democracy. In that aspect, as soon as the ruling party gets less votes, you will get this kind of development and it is possible that you will see it after this election, but not before," Coetzee said.



Professor Johan Coetzee

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Quota-based thinking

He also warned that political representatives may lose sight of their commitment to public service in party systems that serve as echo chambers. "There is a party-centric growth which has the result that a politician is not responsible to the people out there, as long as you are on the party's list and your priorities are high up in the party, then they don't care what anyone thinks of them," he said. He also shared that the mechanics of the National Assembly election could favour a quota-based manner of thinking. "The entire country is one constituency for a political party. That means that if I make quota in the parliamentary elections - the moment that I have a certain amount of votes, I will have a seat in parliament and I will be somewhat sorted."

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» 'Jong kiesers moet realisties wees'

Debatte mag oplossing wees vir apatiese kiesers

Met Namibiërs wat vanjaar na die stembus gaan, word die verkiesings bemoelijk deur kiesers se gebrek aan belangstelling.

› Irene-Mari van der Walt

Presidensiële debatte is volgens professor Johan Coetsee van die Namibië-Universiteit vir Wetenskap en Tegnologie (Nust) 'n oplossing om apatiese kiesers in Namibië te takel.

Hy het dit Woensdag gesê tydens 'n paneelbespreking in die aanloop tot die einde van kiesersregistrasies vir die presidensiële en nasionale verkiesings in November.

"Die onwilligheid om aan debatte deel te neem is 'n simptoem van die probleem van apatiese kiesers.

"Ons moet presidensiële debatte hou en ons moet wonder waarvoor kandidate bang is as hulle nie bereid is om deel te neem nie," het hy gesê.

Coetsee het op sy beurt ook die jeug oor die vingers getik vir hul onwilligheid om aan die komende verkiesings deel te neem.

"Slegs 8% van die jeug word in die parlement verteenwoordig – hoekom laat julle toe dat hulle met elke verkiesing daarmee wegkom?"

Ten spyte van sy huiwering om regeringsbeleid oor die aangeleentheid te versterk, meen hy die ingryping

Professor Johan Coetsee

NUST

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deur die Verkiesingskommissie van Namibië (ECN) om 'n sperdatum vir die verskillende politieke partye se manifeste vas te stel, kan kiesers help om 'n ingeligte keuse by die stembus te maak.

Te midde van wêreldneigings dat jongmense nie aan verkiesings deelneem nie, meen hy dat veral hierdie groep probleme in hul gemeenskappe moet identifiseer en in prioriteitsvolgorde moet lys.

Daarna moet hulle volgens Coetsee die inisiatief neem om politici te nader om aan hulle te verduidelik hoe hulle van plan is om hierdie kwessies op plaaslike vlak te takel.

"Julle hoef nie vir hulle te wag nie, laat hulle vir jou sê wat hulle gaan doen," het hy gesê.

'n Verteenwoordiger van die Konrad

Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), Natalie Russmann, het gesê dat hulle opgemerk het dat die moraal onder kiesers goed was, maar dat daar steeds 'n gebrek aan kiesersopvoeding is.

Sy verduidelik dat jong kiesers huiwerig is om te stem omdat hulle nie weet vir wie om te stem nie.

Die woordvoerder van die Namibië Instituut vir Demokrasie (NID), Ginola Nauseb, het tydens die praatjie gesê talle kiesers glo niks sal verander as hulle stem nie.

Hy verduidelik dat baie kiesers glo dat hul stemme brood en botter op die tafel moet sit.

Kristine Shetunyenga van Social Enabled Education (SEE) Namibia het hierop gereageer en gesê dié siening word aangevuur deur kiesers se desperaatheid.

"Die rede waarom so baie mense dit as 'n transaksie beskou, is omdat hulle desperaat is. Ons het meer as 80 000 mense wat 'n kritieke behoefte aan kos het," het sy gesê.

Shetunyenga het ook jong kiesers gewaarsku om realisties te wees om te verhoed dat hulle deur politici om die bos gelei word.

'n Kiesersbeampte vir die ECN in die Khomasstreek, Finelda Khuruses, het gesê die ECN kan nog geen data oor kiesersregistrasies bekend maak nie, aangesien hierdie proses tot 1 Augustus voortduur. – irene-mari@nmh-hub.com.na