#### Commercial law 1A - CML1115

Vacation School - 2017

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## Unit 1 - What is law



- \*System of rules
- \*Governing human relations in a community
- \*Recognised by a legal system
- \*Enforced by courts of law



## Basic legal Concepts

#### Juristic Act

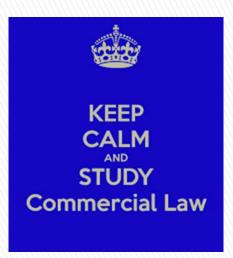
- An Act
- Intended to have legal consequences
- May be Unilateral (1 Party, i.e. will)
- Or bilateral or multilateral



## Basic legal Concepts - legal subjects

#### Juristic Act

#### Human beings



#### Natural persons

- Persons/entities Recognised as holders of rights and subject to duties
- Create in terms of Act of parliament
- Companies, close corporations, banks, etc.
- Voluntary association
- Special enactment of parliament i.e. UNAM



## Basic legal Concepts

- Legal Capacity capacity to be bearer of rights and duties.
- Obligation
- bond between legal subjects (render performance
- Contract agreement between 2 or more people with intention creating obligations
- Delict unlawful act/omission that causes harm to person/property/ or legal personality
- Unjustified enrichment gaining something or obtaining an asset without legal ground



## Basic legal Concepts

Crime - Unlawful conduct for which wrongdoer can be punished by the state.

Execution of property - right to proceed to attach the debtors property and sell it in execution in order to satisfy the judgment debt



## Unit 2 - The Administration of Justice

#### Criminal proceedings

- \* Criminal law
- State acting on behalf of community
- State will prosecute
- Prove beyond reasonable doubt

#### Civil proceedings

- Civil dispute
- Between individuals/entities
- Effects them only
- No
- proof punishment
- Proof on a balance of probability



## Namibian Court System

Chapter 9 of constitution (article 78) provides that judicial power vests in judiciary

Consists of supreme, high and lower courts



### Jurisdiction



High Court

Lower Courts : Magistrate Courts & Regional Courts



## High Court

- Consists of Judge President & Judges
- Hear and adjudicate all civil disputes and criminal prosecutions
- Hear cases involving interpretation, implementation and upholding constitution
- Divorce proceedings
- Mental capacity applications
- Sequestration & liquidation applications
- Validity or interpretation of will



## Lower Courts

- Presided over by magistrates
- Criminal and civil jurisdiction
- Magistrate courts
- Cannot hear certain cases i.e. divorce
- □ Illiquid claims > N\$ 25 000
- Liquid claims > N\$ 100 000
- No rape, murder or treason cases
- Criminal cases maximum of 5 years imprisonment or fine of N\$ 20 000.



### Lower Courts

- Regional Courts
- Can try murder and rape but no treason
- Can impose jail term of N\$ 20 000
- \*Fine of N\$ 100 000



#### Rules of natural Justice

- Audi alterem Partem listen to the other side.
- Nemo judex in sua causa no one may act as a judge in his or her own case.



### Officers of the Court

#### Legal practitioners

- \*Conveyancers
- Notaries Public
- \*Advocates
- Other Court officials
- Sheriff
- Messenger of the court



## Unit 3 - Sources and classification of Law

#### Sources of law

- > Common law
- > Legislation
- > Customary law
- > Judgments of court
- > Secondary sources i.e. old authorities foreign law text books
- > International law



## Common law

- Originating source of our law
- Roman Dutch and English law in Southern Africa
- German Law & English law also influenced our law
- Many Common law principle have been replaced by legislation or case law



## Legislation

- Most important source of law in Namibia
- Law made by competent authority
- Also known as statutes & Acts of Parliament
- Most important legislation is Act 1 of 1990 - constitution
- Constitution is supreme law of Namibia



## Custom

- Rules of conduct that have become binding over the years
- Must be reasonable
- Must have existed for considerable period
- Recognised and observed by community
- Must be certain and clear



## Customary law

- Also known as indigenous law
- Passed through generations
- Article 66 of constitution recognises it to extent its not in conflict with the constitution or statutory law and may be repealed or modified by Act of Parliament

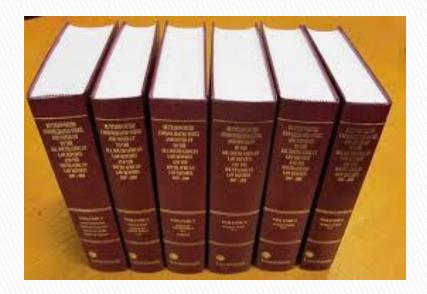


## Judgements & law Reports

Judgements - judicial precedents

Law Reports - selected cases for

publications





## Doctrine of stare decisis

- Each court bound by its own decision previous decisions unless if it was wrong
- Courts bound by decision of a higher court unless if based of mistake
- Will not apply were legislation was promulgated after previous decision
- Implies hierarchy of courts
- Implies judgments must be reported



## Ratio decidendi

- Reason for decision
- Binding force
- Must be followed & is subject of the doctrine of stare decisis
- Statements that fall out side ratio decidendi = obiter dictum



## Classification of law

#### Public law

\*Governs
relationship
between state
and its subjects

#### Private Law

Foverns relationship between individuals



### Classification of law

#### Substantive law

 Determines the content and meaning of different legal rules

#### Procedural law

- Regulates the enforcement of substantive law
- Deals with how case must be handled when a legal rule is violated



## Unit 4 - General Introduction to contracts

#### Definition of a contract

- \*Agreement
- \*Between 2 or more parties
- With serious intention to
- Bringing about an obligation





## Requirements of valid contract

- Consensus
- Contractual capacity
- Performance possible
- Performance is lawful
- Formalities complied with





## Valid, Void & Voidable

- Valid contract all 5 requirements of a valid contract met
- Void one of the requirements of a valid contracts is absent
- Voidable all requirements of a valid contracts are present but can be set aside by one of the parties i.e. misrepresentation, duress or undue influence

**VOIDABLE CONTRACT** 



#### Unilateral & Bilateral Contracts

- Unilateral only one party to the contract has duty to perform and the other party a corresponding right
- Bilateral both parties have duties and corresponding right



#### Unit 5 - Consensus

- Agreement about the same subject or thing
- Reached only if:
- Parties have serious intention to create legal obligation
- Content of obligation is common
- Complete agreement as to persons
- Parties aware of legal consequences



## Requirements of valid offer

- Complete and definite
- Serious intention to be legally bound adverts no offers unless if it contains a reward
- Directed to an offeree
- Offer must have come to the knowledge of offeree



## Falling away of an offer

- Revocation
- Expiry
- Rejection
- Death or legal incapacity of either party before acceptance



## Revocation of an offer

- May be withdrawn provided that it not yet been accepted
- Must be communicated to offeree
- In the same manner as the offer was expressed
- Cannot be withdrawn if offeree has already begun to perform



## Expiry of offer

- Expires when time limit for acceptance expires
- If no time limit is set offer remains open for a reasonable period



## Rejection of an offer

- If rejected offeree cannot later change his/her mind
- Can be reject by express rejection or making a counter offer
- Counter offer: rejection of original offer and offeree becomes offeror



# Death or legal incapacity of either party before acceptance

- Offer expires
- Unless if the offeror intended other parties to be substitute d for himself/herself or the offeree



## Option & Right of preemption

### **Option**

- Offer to conclude specific contract
- Additional contract to keep first offer open for specified period
- Option giver is obliged to sell

#### Right of preemption

- Right obtained when concluding a contract with another in terms of which the grantor, in the event he decided to sell a specific thing must first offer it to the holder of the right of preemption
- Granter of right not obliged to sell



## Acceptance of an offer

- Expression of will
- To accept the offer without qualification
- Can be expressly made
- Tacitly
- Spoken or written words





# Requirements for a valid acceptance

#### Must be:

- Unconditional and unequivocal
- ✓ In response to an offer
- By the person to whom an offer is made
- Communicated to the offeror in the manner prescribed
- Made while offer still exists



# Unit 6 - Time and place of conclusion of contract

### Information theory

- Agreement is reached the moment when and at the place where consensus is reached
- Acceptance by telephone



### Expedition theory

- Contract comes into existence at the moment when and where the offeree posts the letter of acceptance
- Contract becomes binding
- Subsequent rejection will be breach of contract
- Can no longer be withdrawn
- Will only apply if offeror authorised acceptance by posts



### Electronic Contracts

- No electronic communications law
- Expedition theory will not apply as sender may receive undeliverable message
- Until there is legislation information theory will apply



## Factors influencing consensus

- Mistake
- Misrepresentation
- Duress
- Undue Influence





### Mistake

- Misunderstanding
- Mistake perception
- Of the identity of the other contracting party
- Which influences decision to contract



## Types of mistakes

- Regarding the performance or the nature of the transaction
- Regarding the qualities or attributes of the agreed subject
- Regarding identity of the person or offeror's offer reach the wrong person
- Regarding the motive of the contract not material



## Types of Mistakes

#### Contract is void if:

- Mistake relates to fact or legal rule
- fact or legal rule is material
- Mistake is reasonable and excusable



### Mistaken Party must show

- Mistake relates to a material matter
- Was not due to his own fault
- Was reasonable in the eyes of the law



## Misrepresentation

- Unlawful
- Untrue
- Statement about an existing fact or state of affairs
- Made by one party to the other party
- Before or at the time when the contract is entered into
- With the aim of inducing aggrieved to enter into the contract
- Can be by conduct or words or both
- By non disclosure only when there is a duty to





## Effect of Misrepresentation

- There is consensus
- Consensus is defective
- Aggrieved party can chose to uphold/cancel
- Contract is voidable
- if contract is cancelled aggrieved party can demand restitution.



### What Aggrieved party must prove

#### That misrepresentation:

- There was misrepresentation of fact
- Was material
- By other party
- With intention to induce
- In fact was induced



# Kinds of misrepresentation

- Innocent without intention or negligence
- Negligent false statement of fact made negligently (failure to take reasonable steps)
- Fraudulent/ intentional knew statement was untrue or did not honestly believe in the truth of the statement or recklessly made the statement



### Duress

- Unlawful threat
- of harm or injury by one party
- Which causes the other party
- to conclude contract



## Duress - Requirements

- \*force or threat of force
- Threat must be unlawful
- \*Force directed against life freedom, person or property
- \*Harm must be imminent
- \*Fear must be reasonable (objective)
- Threat must come from contracting party



#### Undue influence

- Improper
- Unfair conduct
- That persuades
- The other party
- To conclude the contract



### Undue influence - requirements

- Party must have exercised undue influence over victim
- exercised undue influence in unscrupulous manner
- Pressure weakened powers of resistance
- Contract to the detriment of the aggrieved party



### Unit 8 - Contractual Capacity

- · Capacity to be bearer of rights and duties
- Perform juristic acts

#### Categories:

- No contractual capacity
- Limited contractual capacity need assistance
- \*Full contractual capacity can perform themselves



# Persons with no contractual capacity

- 1. Infans have not reached 7 years
- 2. Insane persons not realising consequences of their acts ( contract is void). If restitution is not possible a claim can be based on unjustified enrichment
- 3. Intoxicated persons (contract is void)



# Persons with limited contractual capacity

# Can perform certain juristic acts but need assistance

- 1. Pupillis
- 2. Married persons
- 3. Unrehabilitated insolvent persons
- 4. Prodigals
- 5. Legal entities



# Pupillis

- Not yet 21
- Not yet married
- Not declared major by the high court (must be at least 18)
- Not emancipated -



### How will the guardian assist the pupillus

- Being present when contract is concluded
- Giving approval
- Giving approval retrospectively

#### When will minor not assistance:

- 1. Can make deposit at post office
- 2. If 16 may deposit and withdraw money from bank account
- 3. If 18 can take out insurance policy
- 4. If 18 can give consent to medical treatment



# Effect of a minors unassisted contract

- Minor is not bound
- Binding on the other party
- With assistance of guardian or after becoming a major can enforce contract
- Contract limps
- Other party may enforce it on following grounds of ratification, estoppel unjust enrichment.



## Married persons

#### Wife has capacity to:

- 1. Register immovable property in her name
- 2. Act as executor of deceased estate
- 3. Act as trustee of insolvent estate
- 4. Bind herself as surety

Section 7 of married persons equality Act - list of acts that require consent



### Unrehabilitated insolvent persons

- Someone whose estate has been sequestrated
- After sequestration trustee is appointed to distribute assets amongst creditors
- Contract voidable at instance of master of the high court
- > May conclude other contracts i.e. marriage



# Prodigals

- Cannot manage their affairs
- Declared prodigal by high court
- Curator appointed to assist prodigal



# Unit 9 - Possibility of performance

- Objective impossibility no contract will come into existence and no claim for counter performance
- Subjective impossibility impossibility is relative and does not render contract void



# Unit 10 - Legal possibility of performance

- Contracts prohibited by statute
- Contracts contrary to the common law
- 1. Contracts contrary to good morals
- 2. Contracts contrary to public interest
- Contracts obstructing the administration of justice
- Contracts in restraint of trade



### Contracts in restrain of trade

- Restrict liberty of one or both parties to engage in one or more specified commercial activities for a specified period and or within a specified geographical area
- Protection of Goodwill
- Trade secrets



# Validity of contracts in restrain of trade

- Article 21 (1) (j) of constitution guarantees right to practice profession of their choice
- Law will strive to uphold contract entered into freely
- Conflict between public interest that everyone should partake in trade in business and public interest that contracts must be executed
- Courts regard contractual commitment as stronger of the two
- Valid and enforceable if concluded freely



### Consequences of unlawful Contracts

- Are void
- Cannot claim performance
- Party in possession of the performance is in the stronger position if the parties are equally guilty par delictum rule (parties must have clean hands)



#### Unit 11 - Formalities

- Contributes to legal certainty
- Parties can agree that contract must be in writing and signed by the parties
- Non compliance with formalities results in contract that is void



# Contracts where formalities are required

- Sale of land must be in writing
- Suretyship must be in writing
- Credit agreements must be in writing
- Bill of exchange, cheques and promissory notes must be in writing
- Antenuptial contract must be notarially executed



#### Parol evidence

- When a contract has been reduced to writing
- The written contract is regarded as the exclusive memorial of the transaction
- No evidence may be given in except the document or secondary evidence of its contents



### Unit 12 - Terms of a Contract

- Express written/spoken
- Tacit not expressed
- ✓ Implied terms incorporated by operation of law Can be classified as:
  - Condition
  - Time clause
  - Warranty
  - Cancellation clause
  - Penalty clause
  - Entrenchment clause



# Essentialia, Naturalia and Incidentialia

- Essentialia essential to place a contract in a certain category
- Naturalia automatically incorporated into contract as implied terms unless if parties expressly exclude them i.e. guarantee against latent defects unless if excluded by voetstoots clause
- Incidentialia specifically agreed upon by the parties over and above required by law



#### The Condition

- Renders operation and consequences of contract dependent on the occurrence, or non occurrence of an uncertain future event
- Suspensive Condition suspends operation of contract until happening of an uncertain future event
- Resolutive condition -operative on conclusion of the agreement and has full effect but the continued existence of the contract is dependent on uncertain future even



#### The Condition

- Time clause performance is suspended (Suspensive time clause) or terminated (Resolutive time clause) until or by the happening of a certain future event
- Suspensive time clause duty to perform is postponed until a determined or ascertainable moment has arrived
- Resolutive time clause obligations flowing from contract will have effect only until the arrival of a certain moment or until the expiry of a certain period in time



### Warranty

- Relates to the absence of defects or presence
- Of a good characteristics in the warrantor's product or services
- Does not include sales talk and puffing



#### Cancellation clause

- Known as Lex commissoria
- Entitles contracting party to cancel the contract if other party is in breach of contract
- Cancellation can be done without demand



### Penalty clause

- Fixed sum of money
- Or other benefit is to be paid or transferred
- To the injured party in the event of breach of contract



#### Entrenchment clause

- Agreement may be altered only by means of written amendment.
- Variations must be in writing and signed by the parties or their agents



#### Unit 13 - Parties to a contract

- Agency/representation concludes contract on behalf of another
- 2. Contracts in favour of third parties
  - known as stipulatio alteri
  - One party agrees with another to perform something for the benefit of the third person
  - ✓ Intended to enable beneficiary to step in as party to a contract with one of the original contracting parties
- Third party must first accept benefit before acquiring rights



## Unit 14 Transfer of contractual rights and Obligations

#### Cession

- Transfer of a right by agreement
- Rights can be present or future
- Does not create new obligations
- By agreement
- · Cedent divested of his rights
- Certain rights may not be ceded (options to buy on credit
- Delegation
- Transfer of a duty
- \* From one debtor to another
- Opposite of cession



# Distinction between Cession & delegation

- 3<sup>rd</sup> party in place of creditor
- 3<sup>rd</sup> party in place of creditor
- Transfer of a right
- Change of creditor
- Consent of debtors not needed
- Cessionary in place of cedent

- Debtor delegates duty to perform
- New contract between creditor and 3<sup>rd</sup> party
- Transfer of duty
- Consent of creditor needed
- New debtor in place of old debtor

Cession

Delegation



#### Unit 15 -Termination of a Contract

- Performance
- Agreement release, novation, compromise
- Operation of law set off, merger, extinct prescription supervening impossibility



#### Performance

- Must be in the manner specified by the contract or equivalent manner
- Generally by person obliged to perform
- Must be rendered to the creditor
- Must be made at place agreed
- At time expressed or tacitly determined in contract



### Agreement

- Release -creditor releases debtors from contractual obligations
- Novation replacing existing obligation with a new one which discharges the existing obligation
- Compromise each party giving up on some or all of his /her previous demands



### Operation of law

Set off - 2 debts are discharge/ larger is reduced by the smaller amount

- Parties reciprocally indebted
- Debt must be of a similar nature
- Debt has to be liquidated
- Debt must be due

Merger - concurrence of debtor and creditor in the same person and of the same obligation



#### Operation of law

#### Extinctive prescription - passing of time

- 30 years debts for mortgage bond, judgment debt, taxation, owed to the state in respect of any share of the profits
- 15 years debt owed to the state arising from advance or loan of money
- 6 years debt arising from bill of exchange or other negotiable instrument or notarial contract
- · 3 years any other debt



### Operation of law

#### Supervening impossibility of performance

- o Objectively or absolutely impossible
- Vis major (major force)
- · Casus fortuitus (inevitable accident
- Natural forces or human agency
- Beyond control of parties
- Not foreseen



#### Unit 16 Breach of Contract

- Were debtor/creditor does not perform, performs late or performs in the wrong manner
- Forms of breach of contract
- > Mora debitoris
- > Mora creditoris
- Defective performance
- > Repudiation
- > Prevention of performance



#### Mora Debitoris

- Delay in performance default to perform in time or within reasonable time
- Types Mora ex re & Mora ex persona

#### Mora ex re

- Failure to perform on stipulated date
- No need for any demand

#### Mora ex persona

- No date of performance was stipulate
- Debtor not automatically in mora
- Creditor must demand performance within reasonable period



#### Requirements for Mora debitoris

- There must be a delay in performance
- Debt must be claimable (not have prescribed)
- Default to perform must be due to fault of debtor



#### Mora Creditoris

- Creditor is at fault
- Delaying the debtor's performance without justified cause
- Does not cooperate to make performance possible



#### Defective Performance

- \*Performance contrary to contract stipulations
- \*Takes the following forms:
- Performance not rendered according to contract
- Debtor does something not under the agreement



#### Rescission

- Only used in exceptional circumstances
- Cancellation
- Communicated to other party
- Contract is dissolved
- Innocent party may claim damages



## Cancellation on the ground of mora debitoris

- Where such right is provided for in the agreement
- Breach is serious
- Time is of the essence
- Where the creditor made time of the essence by means of notice of rescission



## Cancellation on the grounds of mora creditoris

- Debtor may cancel contract under same circumstances as creditor may cancel
- Debtor is entitled to the ordinary remedies for breach of contract



### Damages

- Claimed whether contract is upheld or cancelled
- Only patrimonial / pecuniary (no damages for pain and suffering)
- Purpose is to put creditor in position he/she would have been if the debtor performed according to contract
- Requirements:
- breach of contract
- Loss suffered
- Reasonably foreseeable
- Factual causation
- Duty to mitigate



### Repudiation

- Debtor indicates that he/she rejects contractual obligations
- Expressly/tacitly
- Must be clear intention to repudiate



#### Prevention of Performance

- Debtor released from his obligations where performance becomes impossible
- Where debtor intentionally/negligently prevents performance by making it possible
- Must be an absolute impossibility



#### Remedies of Breach of contract

 Specific Performance - where a court order compels performance

#### Takes the form of:

- > Order to do something
- > Restore something
- > An interdict to refrain from doing something
- > Order to pay money instead of performance Will not be ordered where
- \* Performance is impossible
- \* Will cause disproportionate loss
- Difficult for court to supervise
- \* Damages will adequately compensate the plaintiff



## Unit 17 - remedies for breach of contract

- Specific performance where a court order compels performance
- \* An order to do something
- Restore something
- \* Interdict to refrain
- Order for the payment of money instead of performance
- \* Courts have discretion to refuse it



## Specific performance will not be ordered if:

- Performance becomes impossible
- Will cause disproportionate loss
- Difficult for court to supervise
- Award of damages will be adequate compensation



#### Rescission (cancellation)

- Specific remedy
- A creditor may use in exceptional cases
- Takes effect from time it is communicated
- Notice to cancel may be given in writing or orally
- Contract is dissolved
- Parties must restore anything received
- Innocent party may claim damages



## Cancellation on the grounds of Mora debitoris

- Where breach is serious
- Where time is of the essence
- Where creditor made time of the essence by means of a notice



## Cancellation on grounds of mora creditoris

- Debtor may cancel in same circumstances as creditor
- Debtor is also entitled to ordinary remedies



# Cancellation and defective performance

- Creditor has right to cancel
- If contract has cancellation clause
- Even if defect is trivial
- If no cancellation clause creditor can cancel if performance is serious and creditor cannot be expected to abide by the contract



#### **Damages**

- Purpose is to put creditor in position he would have been if debtor performed
- Requirements
- Must be breach of contract
- Loss was suffered
- Causation between breach and damages
- Damages was reasonably foreseeable or agreed to
- Reasonable steps take to mitigate damages



### Penalty stipulation

- In proof and calculation of damages
- To avoid difficulty of calculation parties may agree on penalty clause



# Thank you