# DEASA COUNTRY REPORT – NAMIBIA

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# 1. Introduction

This DEASA report is represented by several Open and Distance Learning (ODL) providers in Namibia. These are the: Namibian College of Open Learning **(NAMCOL);** Centre for Open, Distance and eLearning, University of Namibia **(UNAM-CODeL**), Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning, Namibia University of Science and Technology **(NUST-COLL)** and International University of Management **(IUM)** under the umbrella of the National ODL Network Trust, the Namibian Open Learning Network Trust **(NOLNet).**

# 2. DEASA Key Performance Areas

## 2.1 Research Activities

**NAMCOL** conducted a customer satisfaction survey during the review period. The study was aimed at measuring the degree of customers' satisfaction and expectations concerning NAMCOL services. It is worth noting that while customers are generally happy with NAMCOL operations, they have also highlighted areas that need interventions for improvement.

A tracer study of former tertiary level programme students was conducted during the review period. The study focused on the students who studied with NAMCOL from the years 1998 to 2013 in order to establish their whereabouts and for the College to make appropriate interventions to improve its general support services.

An organisational audit survey was concluded during the review period and was aimed at assessing the perception of staff members concerning their working environment and their attitudes towards affirmative action practices at the College.

**The NOLNet** Standing Committee on Research is busy rolling out the activity aimed at promoting collaborative research. So far, two collaborative research papers have been submitted and approved by the reviewers and the Research Standing Committee members. The next step is to facilitate the signing of the agreement and the finalization of the research before the end of the current financial year. The approved studies are titled:

1. Assessing the Quality and Effectiveness of the Counselling Services at NAMCOL

2. Exploring internal mechanisms for assuring quality of open and distance learning within higher education institutions in Namibia

During the past year, members of **UNAM-CODeL** were involved in various research activities that focused on the following topics and themes:

- Factors that lead to school dropout in Namibia
- Distance Education undergraduate students' experiences of project work suspension in Namibia
- Perceptions of beneficiaries of the Adult Education Programmes in informal settlements of Windhoek
- Barriers to parental involvement in children' education
- Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing
- The role of libraries in contemporary African society
- Contextualising MOOCs for Higher Education in Namibia
- Promoting reusable learning objects in Moodle LMS
- Quality assurance in open and distance learning
- Organisational knowledge management
- Scholarly Communication: the value of repositories and e-portfolios

### 2.2 Capacity Building

**NAMCOL** wishes to foster a learning culture to enhance organizational and individual employee development.

The Namibia labour market has become increasingly competitive, therefore, the College took a decision to invest in its workforce by providing scholarships to acquire qualifications and latest skills. During the review period, the College approved scholarships to staff members to the value of N$ 515,508. Seventeen (25) staff members received scholarships to pursue the following qualifications; Doctorates (4); Masters (4); Bachelors (7); Diplomas (6); and Certificates (4). Similarly, three study loans to the value of N$30 000 were awarded to staff.

Several staff members enrolled for online courses with different Universities in the following areas: supply chain, payroll and administration, project management and

digital marketing. These courses were aimed at empowering staff members with the knowledge and skills needed to perform their duties effectively.

To stay abreast with new and current cutting edge technologies, the **NUST-COLL** Courseware Development Team equipped themselves with the use and application of gamification like Kahoot! This is a free game-based learning platform that makes it fun to learn in any subject, in any language, on any device, for all students of all ages. The team is now trained on the creation and use of Kahoot! for implementation, which was very well accepted by students in Mathematics and Business Management.

**The NOLNet** Standing Committee on eLearning conducted a pre-conference workshop for local, national and international delegates who attended the NOLNet ODL conference in October 2016. The workshop took place under the theme "building a culture of sharing to increase access to education and affordable learning resources through OERs".

The Standing Committee on Training successfully facilitated a computer literacy training for 18 librarians and library assistants. The training took place as from 8th-12th February 2016 at the NUST, Centre for Enterprise Development. During the month of March 2017 training was organized for partners to be trained on instructional design.

The Standing Committee on Quality Assurance organized a training session for NOLNet partner institutions on aspects of self-evaluation audits.

A one-week training workshop on research for staff members of the different NOLNet partner institutions took place in June 2017. The training workshop was sponsored by SADC-CDE. Approximately 39 staff members from the partner institutions were trained. The training covered research instrumentation and qualitative and quantitative data analysis using excel.

**UNAM-CODeL** has a robust training calendar that structures the provision of training on an annual basis. This training caters for the needs of CODeL staff, University lecturers as well as staff from partner institutions. The following training interventions were carried out in the period under review:

**Training received by CODeL staff by outside providers**
- Workshop on Institutional Research Evaluation (IRE) by the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) at NIPAM, Windhoek (2015)

- Workshop on upscaling Digital Learning at UNAM, facilitated by GIZ (2015, Windhoek)
- Course on "Designing, doing and publishing case studies" (2015, African Doctoral Academy, University of Stellenbosch)
- Workshop on on-line Instructional Design and Facilitation
- Workshop on upscaling digital learning (GIZ, Windhoek)
- Training on Moodle front end
- MOOCs training workshop
- Scopia video conferencing software training
- eLearning strategy development training (GIZ, Windhoek)
- Week-long training on ICT integration in teaching and learning in Singapore (COL, Singapore government)

**Training organised by CODeL**

| Facilitator | Nature of Training | Beneficiaries |
|---|---|---|
| eLearning Unit | Training on Moodle LMS, Video Conferencing, e-Ticketing system, Panopto Lecture Capture, Mahara ePortfolio, Urkund plagiarism detection, eLearning and online facilitation | CODeL staff, UNAM lecturers, UNAM under-graduate and post-graduate students, partner institution staff |
| ODL Unit | Training on the Instructional Design of Distance education learning materials: use of material template and orientation to the process of material development | UNAM lecturers |

| Cardiff University Learning Technology experts | Print-to-digital material development; digital capabilities, Mobile learning, Video pedagogy, e-Assessment and Community of Practice | CODeL staff, UNAM staff (lecturers and librarians), partner institution staff |
|---|---|---|

### 2.3 Partnership and Collaboration

**NAMCOL** hosted Mr. John Lesperance, Education Specialist – Virtual University of the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) at the Commonwealth of Learning during the assessment period. The main objective of the visit was to explore possible areas of cooperation to advance the VUSSC agenda and to identify activities that VUSSC and COL could undertake in Namibia.

The current **NAMCOL**/Open University of Tanzania MoU is under review. Inputs have been sought from both institutions and a separate SLA is being drafted to share specific course materials. The College has also engaged UNESCO to support the implementation of its Inclusive Education Policy activities. The College has also approached the Open University of Mauritius for collaboration on Employability Skills and Foundation Courses. The agreement should be finalised by August 2017

UNISA invited the Director: **NUST-COLL** to deliver a Keynote Address at their 4th Biennial Open and Distance Learning Conference for Science, Engineering and Technology, when she delivered her address titled: ***Re-Imagining University Engagement through Innovation, Pedagogy and Technology-enhanced Learning.***

As part of a DAAD partnership between **NUST** and the Flensburg University of Applied Sciences, the Director: **COLL** was invited to Germany to share COLL's best practice in its eLearning and Courseware Design and Delivery Model.

**NOLNet** and **NAMCOL** collaborated and arranged for a training on Publishing. The workshop was facilitated by Dr Ephraim Mhlanga.

The **NOLNe**t Standing Committee on eLearning held a two-day mini conference. The mini conference aimed at creating an open collaborative platform from partners to share:

- Expertise and experience during eLearning implementation.
- Information about new ideas; and
- Current status of eLearning.

**UNAM-CODeL** organized a one week materials development training from 14th - 18th August 2017 where **NOLNet** member institutions were invited to participate. However due to the challenge of busy schedules of the Subject Matter experts who were invited for this training, the overall participation throughout the week was very poor**.**

Collaborations at **UNAM-CODeL** with international partners focused on eLearning and digital strategies and skill development.

| Experts | Affiliation | Key Activities |
|---|---|---|
| Torsten Trede (Training consultant) | GIZ | Development of the eLearning implementation strategy |
| Heike Koch, (Onlien facilitaiton expert) Seynabou Fachinger (Project manager) | GIZ | Training of CODeL and UNAM pilot group on eLearning and online facilitation; planning of training courses |
| Matt Smith, Karl Luke, Dewi Parry (Learning technologist) | Cardiff University (through Phoenix collaborative project) | Capacity development and development of community of practice between UNAM and Cardiff University in areas of digital learning. |

### 2.4 Policy Development and Facilitation

**NAMCOL** facilitated the development of two policies namely, an eLearning policy and the Inclusive Education Policy and Funding Framework.

The College went through a review of the 2011-2015 strategic plan and the development of a new blueprint for 2016-2020. The strategic plan for the next five years was approved by the NAMCOL Governing Board.

The **NUST-COLL** Coordinator: Instructional Design and Technology facilitated the OER Policy Development Workshop to capacitate staff members of all NOLNet Partner Institutions to develop an OER Policy for their respective institutions. Similarly, the **NUST** eLearning Policy is being revised, while Senate also approved the development of the **NUST** OER Policy, spearheaded by **COLL.**

The **NOLNet** Standing Committee on eLearning organized an eLearning policy development workshop for partner institutions. During the two days, partner institutions developed institutional eLearning policies.

This Standing Committee also hosted an OER policy development workshop in November 2015. Partner institutions took part in the OER policy development process. The workshop was facilitated by Mr. Neil Butcher.

The **National ODL Policy** developed by **NOLNet** stakeholders was presented to Cabinet and approved.

Upon the adoption of a plagiarism detection software, Urkund, **UNAM-CODeL** needed to develop a new policy to guide the use of plagiarism detection software at the University. A Policy on Academic Integrity was development and approved by Senate in September 2017. **UNAM-CODeL** is also busy developing its OER Policy in partnership with NOLNeT, the first draft of which is in place.

### 2.5 Quality Promotion

In 1998, **NAMCOL** signed an agreement with the Botswana College of Distance Open Learning (BOCODOL) to collaborate on quality assurance matters. Ever since, the two institutions have audited each other every two years. An audit on the operations of BOCODOL was conducted in July 2016.  In the meantime, the two institutions developed Common Quality Criteria to inform audits between the two institutions.

As per the quality assurance policy and the quality assurance audit framework between NAMCOL and BOCODOL, the College conducted a self-evaluation and also had an external audit by BOCODOL during the period under review.

A quality assurance awareness day was held during the review period. This event was aimed at creating awareness and build capacity among staff for them to understand, appreciate and embrace quality in their daily work.

Furthermore, the College commissioned the Namibia Institute of Mining and Technology (NIMT) to conduct an audit on TVET operations. The audit yielded very crucial findings on the operations of TVET at the College relating to the quality of training, infrastructure, competency level of trainers as well as of the training materials. Based on the audit report, the College devised a strategy to address the identified shortcomings.

**NOLNe**t Standing Committee on Quality Assurance organized a one-day information sharing session. The committee also organized a session for NOLNet partner institutions to be trained on general Quality Assurance matters and also the training focused on the self-evaluation exercise.

**CODeL** has both consultative and collaborative relationships with various entities and strategic partners who contribute to strengthening the Centre's quality assurance initiatives and practices. These include the University of Namibia's Centre for Quality Assurance and Management (CEQUAM), Centre for Professional Development, Teaching and Learning Improvement, and the various Faculties that offer programmes through Distance.

Other quality promotion initiatives include international benchmarking visits to other universities in SADC, attendance of local and international eLearning conferences and collaboration on national projects with other practitioners in the field.

3. **New Innovations**

**NAMCOL's** content development on the Notesmaster Learning Management System continued during the review period in the following subjects: Grade 10: Entrepreneurship, Mathematics, Oshindonga and Geography and Grade 12 English, History, Economics and Biology.

Notesmaster Namibia has won an international award, called the World Summit Award for best practice and innovativeness. The award was in the category of Learning and Science. The official handover of the award took place at the World Summit Global Congress in Singapore in June 2016.

The eLearning strategy and implementation plan have been developed to guide future eLearning activities. An eLearning policy has also been developed.

The development of the CECD online course on Moodle was completed during the reporting period. The pilot testing of the CECD online material is progressing well. 27 students, 8 tutors and 6 full-time staff members were issued with tablets as part of the pilot project.

The online content for the CECD was piloted during this reporting year. The College provided 30 students with tablets and internet data to be able to access and use the materials. The piloting is at an advanced stage and should be completed in June 2017. Initial reports on the pilot process indicate that students are doing well in using the material and we expect that this would have a positive impact on their results. A final evaluation report will be compiled after the pilot is completed in June 2017.

In collaboration with the Commonwealth Youth Secretariat and the University of West Indies, the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) has developed the Bachelor of Science Degree in Youth Development Work. The College has shown interest in offering the qualification to serve as a pathway for the DYD graduates. The College has devised an implementation plan to offer the qualification from January 2017.

Each year the **NUST-COLL** Team introduce new initiatives and operational processes to stay abreast with current trends with the integration of technology in teaching, learning and assessment. The 2016 and 2017 academic years again presented opportunities for new innovations as follows:

1. **Barcoding of Study Guides**

The barcoding of the study guides is a new initiative that will enable staff in Windhoek to keep track of stock in all Regional Centres and monitor the distribution of study guides on a daily basis. This technology assists to maintain tight and accurate control over the stock inventory. This feature was already available on ITS, but extensive training was conducted in 2016 to upskill the staff in the COLL Stores and to activate the feature. With the barcoded study guides already available, the COLL- and ITS team is ready to pilot in 2018. An added advantage will be that students will receive a barcoded assignment return sheet to be attached to the assignment. This will speed-up the capturing of received assignments by scanning the barcode instead of capturing each assignment manually. The added advantage of this feature will result in a decreased turn-around time of submitted assignments. This barcode is linked to the student database and will contain specific academic information, i.e. contact details; course and

course code a student is registered for; assignment specification for a particular course; and student number.

## 2. iPad Pilot Project

The **NUST-COLL** iPad Pilot Project (iPaPP) was officially launched on 7 March 2017, whereby Emergency Medical Care (EMC) 3rd year students and lecturers received iPads to pilot a rigorous integration of technology in teaching, learning and assessment. An Open Campus presentation was held on 16 August 2017 in collaboration with the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences to showcase and share the huge success of this pilot with the rest of the campus community. Harnessing the potential of 21st century pedagogy, collaborative learning and graduate attributes of critical thinking and practical application of theory were demonstrated as some of the most important achievements of this pilot project, when the lecturers and students presented their experiences of online learning.

## 3. Conversion of Print Instructional Material to eFormat

The **NUST-COLL** Course Development Team revised the model used to convert print instructional material to eFormat by merging various course design models to come up with a new model that suits the **NUST-COLL** context. As such, the team facilitated one-on-one working sessions with prospective eTutors based on the innovative strategies: *Rethinking Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century.*

A **NOLNet** ODL conference took place in October 2016. The conference was held from 19th – 20th October 2016 in Swakopmund, under the theme *"Promoting Lifelong Learning in Open, Distance and eLearning through Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education"*, the Namibian Open Learning Network Trust (NOLNet) reaffirms that the ODL community takes great pride in the valuable impact made in the Namibian Education Sector since independence. NOLNet therefore recognises the continued potential and commitment of ODL practitioners to promote the development of a knowledge-based economy and create a society capable of bringing about scientific, technological, social and economic development and advancements.

Keynote papers and research outputs presented at the Conference confirms the empirical evidence that ODL plays a critical role in national development and is indeed a powerful tool for achieving the educational and training needs of our people, and as such, is an enabling vehicle to meet the goals of the Country's Harambee Prosperity Plan and Vision 2030.

**UNAM** spearheaded the merger between the formerly Centre for External Studies (mainly responsible for ODL) and the Centre for eLearning and Interactive Multimedia (responsible for eLearning) into the Centre for Open, Distance and eLearning has

facilitated the diffusion of innovation into ODL. The following have been new innovations that **CODeL** has implemented for the academic years 2016 and 2017:

i. **Online assessment:** CODeL introduced the online submission of assignments and online testing for all its Distance mode programmes in 2017. Moodle is the learning management system used which also enables the grading of student assignments online.

ii. **Plagiarism Checking:** all assignments submitted through our learning management system (Moodle) are checked for plagiarism through a text-comparison software called Urkund. This has helped lecturers and the Centre to identify, amongst others, academic writing challenges and measure the quality of students' information literacy, detect plagiarism, and to gauge the quality of assignments developed by lecturers.

iii. **Flipped Classroom pedagogy:** the Centre acquired a lecture recording programme called Panopto that enabled the video recording of lectures using laptops. These video lectures are then shared with Distance students through our Moodle learning management system. Panopto enhances lecturers' online presence and bridges the gap between lecturers and students.

iv. **Video Conferencing:** CODeL uses an open source video conferencing software called Big Blue Button to deliver live online lectures. This tool is particularly used in the delivery of teaching on the post-graduate programmes where most lecturers are at the head Campus in Windhoek, whilst students are scattered across the country. Students are therefore able to go to their nearest Campus and join classes virtually.

## 4. Challenges

**NAMCOL** experienced challenges in the development of eLearning OER content for Notesmaster as Programme Developers find it difficult to meet timelines with all other print, radio and video content development.

**NOLNet** is experiencing a severe lack of commitment from members of the various Standing Committees.

With the introduction of online assessment, **UNAM-CODeL** experienced various challenges due to contextual factors and change management issues (adaptation to change).

a. Connectivity: many students experienced challenges regarding access to Internet, which hampered the process of online submission of assignments

b. Digital literacy: students also experienced challenges when submitting their assignments online due to limitations in their computer skills. Issues such as uploading of wrong files, submission of assignments on wrong courses and failure to meet deadlines have been common

c. Policy Framework: the introduction on new innovations like the use of a plagiarism checker required the revision of the existing policy on plagiarism to be revised to accommodate the changes introduced.

d. Training: the introduction of online assessment necessitated the need for all lecturers and students to be trained in the use of Moodle LMS. This was particularly challenging due to the fact that UNAM has various campuses across the country, whilst the CODeL staff were located at the head Campus in Windhoek. Limited funding and limited staffing made the timely training of lecturers a big challenge.

## 5. Conclusion

Despite the above challenges, DEASA member institutions in Namibia strive to fulfil the DEASA KPA's and maintain partnerships and collaboration with other educational institutions for capacity building.

Namibian institutions fully support the DEASA KPAs and the theme for this conference by recognising the crucial role of ODL providers in the SADC region. These institutions are aware of the ODL providers' role to continuously develop and manage services that are of benefit to the ODL education and training sector and are national in scope. They do this through the use of innovative, collaborative and consultative processes with the aim of building knowledge networks and a collective approach to meeting the challenges and opportunities presented by ODL students.

With time, greater commitment and well defined synergies, there is hope that DEASA member institutions in Namibia will excel at scale in research activities, capacity building, partnership and collaboration policy development and facilitation, quality promotion and new innovations.