1. **The status of Open and Distance Learning in Namibia**

Open and Distance Learning in Namibia plays a major role in providing equal opportunities and access to education. There are five institutions providing Open and Distance Learning in the country, viz. the University of Namibia (UNAM), Polytechnic of Namibia (PoN), Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), International University of Management (IUM) and Institute of Open Learning (IOL).

**University of Namibia: Centre for External Studies**

The Centre for External Studies (CES) provides accessible quality higher education and creates opportunities for professional development to adult members of the community, by the provision of open learning through distance and continuous education programmes.

**Polytechnic of Namibia: Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning**

The Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning (COLL) strives to advance the intellectual and human resource capacity of the nation by extending access to technologically-oriented career education and training, applied research and service, using distance learning techniques and open learning philosophies.

**Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL)**

The Namibian College of Open Learning is an educational institution, established by an Act of Parliament, which provides courses for adults and out-of-school youth. NAMCOL offers both secondary and tertiary programmes.

2. **Establishment of NOLNet**

In response to the wishes of the Government, a smart partnership was formed between the Ministry of Education and the following publicly funded institutions offering Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in Namibia: Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), Polytechnic of Namibia through the Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning (COLL) and the University of Namibia through the Centre for External Studies (CES).

As a result in 2001, the Namibian Open Learning Network Trust (NOLNET) was established.
The objective is that partner institutions share their resources and expertise.

NOLNet’s aim is to enable partners to:

- Communicate with one another about their activities and plans in relation to ODL.
- Coordinate the development of new courses and facilities to avoid duplication.
- Collaborate in the provision of services for Namibian students.
- Collaborate in the training of full-time and part-time staff in the field of ODL.

NOLNet is directed by Board of Trustees and Management Committee that are comprised of members representing the institutions that make up NOLNet. These bodies provide direction to the secretariat, which acts as a link between the two governing bodies and the various committees that carry out the mandate of NOLNet. Goals within the strategic plan are assigned to the secretariat and the standing committees. The secretariat is responsible for optimizing collaboration and networking in ODL and ensuring NOLNet’s sustainability.

These leading institutions play a major role in ensuring that ODL in Namibia is of good quality and benefit all Namibians. The role played by leaders of these institutions range from institutional development in terms of policies, standards, staff development, and resource mobilization, programme planning, implementation and support. Additionally, these institutions ensure that resource centres, community centres and community libraries are equipped with latest books and state of the art equipment to enable students to use at all time. These resources are used by all students involved in ODL and beyond.

3. **What COL has done in Namibia during 2013-2014**

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has assisted NAMCOL and the Polytechnic in the following activities during 2013-2014:

- In 2013, COL funded the training of Technical Vocational Education and Training Programmes (TVET) instructors on assessment, facilitation and moderation. Fifteen (15) members (10 male and 5 female) have benefited from the training.
- Early this year, COL made a commitment to assist NAMCOL with the conversion of the certificate in Early Childhood Development materials into online content. COL will contribute CAD15,450.00 towards the project. The conversion is expected to be completed in November 2014 with the piloting of materials slated for 2015.
- Four staff members have been sponsored to enrol for the certificate in online development through the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.
- Polytechnic Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning (COLL) Coordinator for Courseware Development received sponsorship from COL to represent the Country at the SADC Regional Open Educational Resources (OERs) Policy Forum in Johannesburg, 21-25 May 2013, to discuss the development of country and regional OER policies in Southern Africa.
4. **New Priorities for Namibia**

(a) Several workshops have been held to finalise the ODL policy for the country. There is therefore an urgency to finalise the policy by including contemporary issues such as OER before final submission to the Namibian Cabinet.

(b) Namibia is behind in establishing an Open University; this is a new era where support from COL is seriously needed. A draft concept note has been submitted to the Honourable Minister of Education and feedback is awaited.

(c) The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) also requested the Polytechnic Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning (COLL) to capacitate TVET teachers from the INVEST Africa partnership institutions as eLearning ODL Practitioners. This will be offered through the three-month Professional eLearning Short Course for Online Course Developers and Online Tutors developed by COLL. Feedback is awaited from COL after COLL submitted the required Proposal for this training during April 2014.

(d) The above request from COL was received after COLL was also requested to offer a Skills Development Workshop in eLearning during PCF7, December 2013.

(e) COLL submitted a proposal to facilitate a one-day Pre-Conference Workshop in eLearning Skills Development as part of the September 2014 Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA) Conference, to be hosted by the Open University of Mauritius. COLL is in the process of submitting a request for funding to COL for this capacity building and skills development workshop in eLearning, to sponsor the travel, per diem and accommodation costs for four Facilitators.

(f) COLL is in the process of submitting a proposal to COL Executive Secondment Programme for a three-month secondment/sabbatical opportunity for the COLL Director during 2014/2015.

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