



COUNTRY PRESENTATION: NAMIBIA

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Background and Context

Namibia is a large country with great distances between towns. It has one of the greatest income disparities between rich and poor in the world. Windhoek, the capital, and a handful of other places in the country enjoy all of the privileges and advantages found in the so-called developed countries. In particular, Namibia is noted for its good infrastructure with excellent roads and telecommunications systems. However, the majority of the population of Namibia live in traditional African homesteads in rural areas, making their livelihood through subsistence living.

At Independence in 1990, Namibia made rapid changes in the formal education system in order to provide access and education for all. There were few qualified teachers and of these, even fewer who had mastered the newly adopted official language of English. It is against this background, that we find Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has become vital so that the potential of all Namibians can be realised to enable them to make a meaningful contribution economically to their families, their communities and the nation, as well as to assist Namibia in meeting its Vision 2030 and the UN's MDGs.

Use of ODL in Namibia

Currently, Namibia uses ODL in the provision of tertiary level degrees, diplomas and certificates at the University of Namibia (UNAM) Centre for External Studies (CES) and the Polytechnic of Namibia (PoN) Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning (COLL). Opportunities to upgrade results for the majority of school leavers, who are not successful in achieving sufficiently high enough results in grade 10 and grade 12 for admission to tertiary institutions, are provided by NAMCOL. NAMCOL also has developed and is in the process of developing relevant tertiary level certificates in such fields as Local Government Studies and Small Business. The National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) offers the Basic Education Teacher's Diploma to enable unqualified teachers to upgrade their qualifications to teach from Grades 1 to 10. Various private institutions operate providing secondary and tertiary certificates, diplomas and degrees.

The government funded institutions come under an umbrella organisation called Namibian Open Learning Network Trust (NOLNet), which was formed on request of the government in order to share scarce expertise and resources in ODL. Two committees of NOLNet that are particularly innovative are the e-Learning Committee and Education Radio. The e-Learning Committee has developed the concept of an e-Learning Centre which supports educational institutions in e-Learning but reduces duplication of effort and start-up investment. The concept is now being replicated in Kenya, Cambodia and the Philippines. The e-Learning Committee of NOLNet is now recognised as being leader trainers in e-Learning throughout West, East and Southern Africa. However, within Namibia itself, we are still grappling with implementation of e-Learning within our institutions. Education Radio is a multi-sectoral endeavor in which radio programs on topical issues in health, agriculture, education, etc. are produced on CDs and played on the national radio station and community radio stations.

National Priorities related to ODL/Areas where COL can assist

1. Employment Creation

A national priority is finding ways to provide skills leading to employment. There is a major problem with large numbers of school drop-outs and school-leavers having few, if any, skills to offer prospective employers. Most school leavers who complete grade 12 have lower results than required for admission to tertiary education for further training. Appropriate and cost effective use of ODL in providing skills would play an invaluable role in reducing unemployment and furthering development within Namibia.

2. Quality of Education in General

Although Namibia gives priority to basic “education for all” in policy and government expenditures, the reality is, outputs and returns are poor. Teacher training is another area that requires great improvement and is undoubtedly a major factor contributing to the overall poor returns in education. There is a great demand for basic, secondary and tertiary education provided by ODL, however in most outlying areas learner support could be improved.

3. Making Better Use Of Media

Although education radio has been developed and is expanding in its use, ways need to be identified to put it to more and better use. The population of Namibia is very small, just over 2 million, yet, there are approximately 800,000 cell phones. How can we make use of SMSs

and cell phones more? Mindset is currently working on innovative ways to use cell phones to improve Mathematics education through games. We need to find creative and innovative ways of using media technology more effectively.

4. ODL Policy

NOLNet is in the process of developing and institutionalising an ODL policy upon request of the government. COL has provided consultant expertise to assist in the development of this policy. Options have been examined and stakeholders have decided upon the preferred model, but a costing of the options must now be completed in order to justify the best option and finalise the way forward. COL's support to complete the costing would be greatly appreciated.

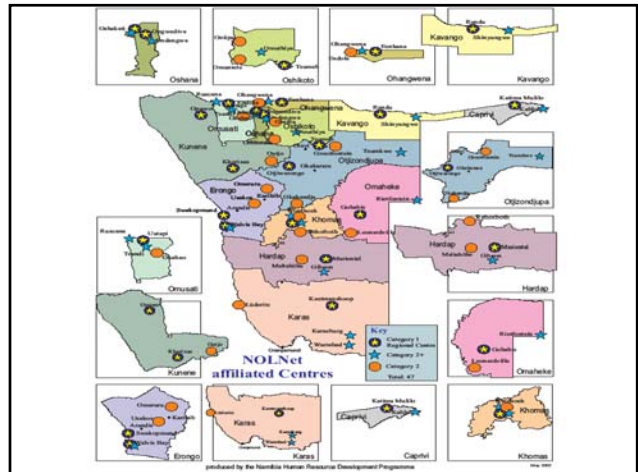
5. VUSSC

Namibia is struggling at this point in time to institutionalise course materials produced by COL boot camps to maximise their use. We must link up with industry and the National Training Authority.

Conclusion

Namibia has benefited greatly from being part of the COL family. COL has broadened our vision about ODL and opened new doors. We are looking forward with anticipation to ways in which our collaboration with COL and other member countries will further our endeavors in ODL in Namibia. We are also hoping that perhaps some of our innovations, such as the concept of the e-Learning centre will be useful to other COL members.

OPEN & DISTANCE LEARNING IN NAMIBIA



CHARACTERISTICS OF NAMIBIA

- Great distance between towns
- Great disparity between rich and poor
- Good infrastructure
- Majority of population live in rural areas making livelihood through subsistence living
- At Independence in 1990, few qualified teachers, and very few who could speak English

USE OF ODL IN NAMIBIA

- UNAM CES & PoN COLL provide various tertiary level certificates, degrees and diplomas
- NAMCOL provides grade 10 and grade 12 diplomas and other tertiary level certificates
- NIED offers BETD for unqualified teachers to teach from grade 1 to 10
- Private institutions

