# NATIONAL OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY

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<th>Policy number</th>
<th>Version1 of 2016</th>
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<td>Coordinating NOLNet member</td>
<td>Executive Secretary</td>
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<td>Policy custodian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact persons and contact details</td>
<td>Victoria Amakali, Executive Secretary: NOLNet E-mail: <a href="mailto:amakali@namcol.edu.na">amakali@namcol.edu.na</a></td>
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<td>RPL Policy (check with eLearning Policy) Quality Assurance Policy</td>
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The NOLNet Secretariat and the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) fraternity would like to thank all members of the different institutions (NAMCOL, NIED, NUST-COLL and UNAM-CODEL) for their valuable inputs during the different stages of developing this policy framework for open and distance learning.

We would further like to acknowledge the consultants, the NOLNet Board of Trustees, Management Committee members and stakeholders who started the process of drafting the initial policy framework and thereby acknowledged their contribution to this important work. The contribution by the Southern African Development Community – Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) to finalise the policy is highly valued. As the Ministry of Education is the main funder of all NOLNet partners, their contribution to the development of this policy is hereby acknowledged.

Lastly we acknowledge that the intellectual property of the Southern African Development Community is aligned to the Regional Open and Distance Policy Framework.
In 2005, the Namibian Open Learning Network (NOLNet) convened an international conference in Windhoek under the theme: Towards Education for All: The critical role of open and distance learning in national development. This was the first ODL conference to be held in our country, Namibia. The participants issued a communiqué, referred to as the Windhoek Declaration – calling for increased government support to promote developments in the field of ODL. In response to this initiative, Cabinet directed NOLNet to develop a National Policy for Open and Distance Learning in Namibia. With support from the Commonwealth of Learning, the National Policy on Open and Distance Learning was compiled to guide the development and delivery of ODL in the country.

As we all know, education was a privilege for the elite few during the colonial era in Africa; hence the Southern African Development Community (SADC) recognises that distance education is key to improve access to education and to reduce the inequalities in the provision thereof. We are therefore pleased to note that our policy is aligned to the Regional ODL Policy Framework policy, which was adopted by the SADC Ministers of Education in Gaborone in April 2012.

As we move towards the realisation of our National Development Agenda, Vision 2030, we need to ensure that all various forms of education in the country are well regulated and aligned to other national development policies, such as the National Developmental Plan (NDP) and the National Human Resource Plan.

The provision of education through the conventional stream alone at whatever level is not possible because of shrinking government financial resources. The conventional system is totally over-stretched and cannot cater for the large number of our people. The use of ODL is therefore a viable and affordable means of expanding the provision of education to many of our citizens.

Finally, we urge ODL institutions, practitioners and learners to continue promoting ODL as a viable and mainstream education delivery system and not view it as second to the conventional system.

Let us continue to reach the unreached through this innovative mode of delivery.

We wish the implementers of this vital policy all the best with its implementation.

Hon. Katrina Hanse-Himarwa (MP)
Minister of Education, Arts and Culture

Hon. Ivan Kangombe (MP)
Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation
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<th>Acronym</th>
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<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td>CODeL</td>
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<td>COLL</td>
<td>Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning</td>
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<td>ETSIP</td>
<td>Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme</td>
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<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immuno Deficiency Virus</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
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<td>ISO</td>
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<td>M&amp;E</td>
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<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>NAMCOL</td>
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<td>Open Educational Resources</td>
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<td>ODL</td>
<td>Open and Distance Learning</td>
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<td>NUST</td>
<td>Namibia University of Science and Technology</td>
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<td>QA</td>
<td>Quality Assurance</td>
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<td>RPL</td>
<td>Recognition of Prior Learning</td>
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<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern African Development Community</td>
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<td>SBSN</td>
<td>Southern Business School Namibia</td>
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<td>UNAM</td>
<td>University of Namibia</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
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DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

Blended Learning: An approach that chooses from all other approaches used in face-to-face education, distance education and eLearning, thus enabling teachers to teach in various ways that both suit their subject and meet the needs of their learners.

e-Learning and Online Learning: O-line learning and e-Learning – terms that have emerged to describe the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance distance education, implement open learning policies, make learning activities more flexible and enable those learning activities to be distributed among many learning venues. These are forms of learning that utilise networked computer technologies and applications both to access learning materials and to enable participants, teachers as well as learners, to communicate with one another in one-to-one, one-to-group and one-to-all situations. They also refer to the design, development and delivery of learning programmes by electronic means.

Inclusive Education: A process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion from education and from within education. The goal is that the whole education system will facilitate learning environments where teachers and learners embrace and welcome the challenges and benefits of diversity. Within an inclusive education approach, learning environments are fostered where individual needs are met and every learner has the opportunity to succeed (UNESCO). The ultimate goal of inclusive quality education is to end all forms of discrimination and foster social cohesion.

Learner: Any person of any age who is in the process of formal, non-formal or informal learning. So the term “learner” could refer to “student”, “trainee”, “worker” and so on. When a learner submits himself for assessment, he may also become a “candidate”.

Learner Support: A generic term covering a range of services that may be offered to learners, including –
- academic support, covering the support that a teacher provides to learners as an integral part of their academic study of a course, including feedback on their performance, clarification of areas where they indicate that they have difficulties or where it is likely that learners will have difficulties, etc.
- educational and learning support, covering such areas as learning skills (writing, note taking, revision and examination skills, etc.), learning styles, etc.
- advice and guidance, covering such areas as career advice and guidance, course choice, further study option, post-graduation support, etc.
- counselling, covering areas of life that may impinge on study success, for example, health problems, how to deal with family problems or problems at work, and
- administrative support, covering areas such as the clarification of regulations and procedures, processes to gain financial aid, rectification of operational failures (e.g. non-delivery of course materials), etc.

ODL Institution: An institution, either public or private, mandated to offer open and distance learning programmes.

Open and Distance Learning: An approach to learning that focuses on freeing learners from constraints of time, space and place while offering flexible learning opportunities. It allows learners to work and combine family responsibilities with educational opportunities. Distance education is any educational process in which all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone geographically removed from the learner, with all or most of the communication between teachers and learners conducted through electronic or print media (UNESCO). Open learning is a philosophy of learning that is based on the principle of flexibility to increase access to and quality in education. An open learning philosophy implies that the provider will find a variety of ways to open access to creditable learning opportunities to a diverse range of learners (SADC).
**Open Educational Resources: Teaching** and learning materials that are freely available on-line for everyone to use, whether you are an instructor, a student or a self-learner.

**Partnership:** A mode of working together with mutual respect with the view of improving quality through sharing resources.

**Programme:** A planned series of future events, items or performances. A core, modular component of education including all the activities (design, organisation, management as well as the processes of teaching, learning and research) carried out in a certain field and leading to an academic qualification.

**Qualification:** Any educational award (degree, diploma, certificate or any type of formal certification) issued by a competent, registered authority attesting to the successful completion of a course or programme.

**Qualification Framework:** A comprehensive policy framework, defining all nationally recognised qualifications in education in terms of workload, level, quality, learning outcomes and profiles. It should be designed to be comprehensible through the use of specific descriptors for each qualification covering both its breadth (competencies associated with learning outcomes) and its depth (level).

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** A practice that enables learners to use credits or qualifications obtained earlier in their lives to exempt them from some of the requirements of a programme of study that they wish to follow. Through Recognition of Prior Learning evidence of ability is produced from learning at a time somewhat earlier than the present. The evidence could come in the form of prior certification, in the form of assembled evidence (a portfolio) and/or through third party verification such as references or testimonies. If the prior learning was from non-formal educational sources, the term Prior Experiential Learning is sometimes used.
1. BACKGROUND

In 2001, the Namibian Open Learning Network Trust (NOLNet) was established at the request of the Government of the Republic of Namibia to reach the Government’s goal of Education for All (EFA). The objective is that publicly funded ODL institutions share their resources and expertise. The following institutions were the founding members of NOLNet:

- The Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL)
- The University of Namibia (UNAM) through its Centre for Open, Distance and eLearning (CODeL)
- Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) through its Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning (COLL)
- The National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) through its In-service Unit

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 to Namibian students, and
- collaborate in the training of full-time and part-time staff in the field of ODL.

In 2005, NOLNet convened an international conference in Windhoek, entitled: Towards Education for All: The Critical Role of Open and Distance Learning in National Development. This conference compiled a communiqué – the Windhoek Declaration – calling for increased government support to promote developments in the field of ODL.

In response to this initiative, Cabinet invited NOLNet to develop a National Policy for Open and Distance Learning in Namibia. Accordingly NOLNet, with financial support from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) engaged a group of international consultants to assist in compiling a draft policy and options for implementation. A draft policy paper was discussed at a consultative seminar held in Windhoek in October 2007. A final version was submitted to Government for consideration in 2008. Since the policy had never been approved, NOLNet now opted to revise the policy and submit the new version to Government for consideration in 2016.

1. PURPOSE OF THE ODL POLICY

The purpose of the ODL policy is to state some general principles that will, over the next decade or so, indicate what Government wishes to achieve as well as what Government would like other agencies to do with respect to the development and implementation of ODL in Namibia.

2. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING IN NAMIBIA

2.1 ODL Institutions

A number of ODL initiatives have been operating in Namibia – some dating back to pre-independence. Currently four publicly funded institutions provide distance education in the country. At the time of hosting the ODL Seminar on 15-16 October 2007 the four founding members of NOLNet, referred to in the background, were involved in offering open and distance learning programmes.

Building on earlier initiatives of the Ministry of Education, the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) was established by an Act of Parliament in 1997 (Act no. 1 of 1997) with the mandate to contribute towards the social and economic development of the country by providing opportunities to out-of-school youth and adults to acquire general education and upgrade their professional and vocational skills. NAMCOL offers a selection of distance-taught junior and senior secondary school courses to enable school drop-outs and those who have failed, to pass their subject examinations in a sufficient number of subjects to qualify for junior or senior secondary school certification, and those who have never studied at secondary level, to complete or embark on a secondary school education. In addition NAMCOL offers various professional programmes on further education/tertiary level.
The University of Namibia (UNAM) was established by an Act of Parliament in 1992 to serve as a centre of higher learning and research. According to Section 4 of the Act, the University aims “to provide extension services” and “further training and continuing education”. These clauses provided the statutory basis for the creation of the Centre for Open, Distance and eLearning as an academic centre of UNAM in order to ensure greater access to higher education and equity for students with various educational needs and backgrounds.

The Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) was established by an Act of Parliament, Act 07 of 2015, after the Polytechnic of Namibia Act, Act No 33 of 1994 was repealed in 2015. On 14 September 2015, the NUST Act was promulgated, thereby transforming the Polytechnic into the new University.

Under Section 5 of the Act, the University is mandated: to contribute to knowledge creation and advance knowledge through teaching, research and scientific investigation, with an emphasis on applied research; to support and contribute to economic and social development through globally relevant, professional, technological and career-focused higher education, and effective community engagement, with an emphasis on industry involvement; to drive, promote and facilitate technology development and technology transfer and innovation and diffusion. As such, the Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning (COLL) is established under this mandate and is internationally recognised and distinguished for the pedagogic innovation that is applied in the design of the NUST study programmes and delivered by means of supported open and distance learning.

The National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) was established in 1991 to spearhead the curriculum reform of the formal basic education system through curriculum design and development and materials development, pre-service and in-service training of teachers and general educational research. These programmes provided a sound base to further develop the provision of ODL within Namibia in order to meet the development and educational needs of the country as laid down in Vision 2030, the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP), and other key policy statements.

Despite the fact that the BETD Inset programme has been phased out, NIED continues to coordinate the continuing professional development of teachers for curriculum implementation and the updating of teacher subject matter knowledge and teaching competencies.

In addition to the four publicly funded ODL institutions there are a number of private and commercial educational institutions that offer a variety of programmes through open and distance learning at different educational levels, such as the International University of Management (IUM), the Institute for Open Learning (IOL) and the Southern Business School Namibia (SBSN).

3. **RATIONALE AND CONTEXT FOR A POLICY ON OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING**

While many countries manage without national policies for ODL, a number of factors have encouraged the development of coherent policies covering open and distance education. These include the –

- challenges that face countries in positioning themselves to exploit the opportunities and challenges brought forward by the development of twenty-first century globalised, knowledge-based economies
- key importance of education in meeting the demands of the emergent global knowledge-based economy for trained human resources
- need to exploit technologies to provide high-quality education efficiently and at a lower unit cost to meet the needs of expanding populations and the emergence of lifelong learning needs
- need to provide flexible educational opportunities that will meet the highly variable needs of a heterogeneous population of learners
- need to integrate ODL and traditional education provision into a coherent framework that meets the varying needs of learners, which is reflected in the convergence of traditional and distance education practices to produce blended learning solutions aimed at providing learners with flexibility and choice
- need to acknowledge through policies and practice the growing tendency to exploit the ability of e-based knowledge economies among partner institutions, and the provision of global, international learning opportunities through international consortia and partnerships
need to ensure that any ODL system is fit for its purpose and able to provide high-quality learning opportunities via efficient and effective management and delivery systems in ways that support learners to achieve their aims effectively and efficiently, with regard to the personal circumstances and needs of learners

- need to integrate ODL provision with national and regional Information and Communication Technology (ICT) policies and frameworks, and
- the recognition that many of the standard features related to ODL practices are powerful vehicles for engineering change and driving reform in the education sector.

In addition to these factors, Namibia has over the last few years produced a number of policies and plans that refer to open and distance learning without either defining this concept or articulating in a meaningful way the affordances of ODL in advancing and strengthening national policies and development plans. Accordingly, there is a need for the development of a National Open and Distance Learning Policy that sets out a framework that is coherent and in relation to plans and policies such as the following:

- Education Act (2001)
- Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP, 2007)
- ICT Policy for Education (2005)
- Namibia Qualifications Authority Act (NQA, 1996)
- Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL, 1997)
- Namibia’s Fourth National Development Plan (NDP4, 2012)
- Namibia University of Science and Technology Act (NUST, 2015)
- National Conference on Education Resolutions (2011)
- National Human Resources Plan (2012)
- Polytechnic of Namibia Act (PoN, 1994)
- SADC ODL Policy (2012)
- Towards Education for All (1993)
- University of Namibia Act (UNAM, 1992)
- Vision 2030 (2001)
- Vocational Education and Training Act (2008)

The National ODL Policy is aligned with the SADC-ODL Policy and aims to address the national development goals consistent with the abovementioned Acts and policy directives.
4. POLICY VISION AND MISSION

4.1 Vision
A country where everybody has equitable access to ODL programmes and opportunities for lifelong learning.

4.2 Mission
To develop, support, coordinate and maximise resources to provide quality, inclusive, flexible, relevant, innovative and sustainable ODL programmes and services.

5. OBJECTIVES

This policy aims to –
5.1 promote functional and sustainable ODL programmes and services
5.2 increase access and success through inclusive ODL programmes and services
5.3 develop ODL programmes and services that will contribute to the creation of a knowledgeable society
5.4 adhere to national and international policies declarations, and
5.5 support national and regional development initiatives.

6. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

6.1 Openness
ODL institutions shall ensure that the implementation of ODL programmes facilitates the minimising of barriers to entry/access.

6.2 Flexibility
ODL institutions shall promote flexibility in the provision of ODL and ensure that ODL structures are dynamic and respond to the ever-changing demands and needs of the learners.

6.3 Learner-centredness
ODL institutions shall ensure that the learner is at the centre of all the activities, ensuring that the environment is conducive to learning and that basic resources are at their disposal.

6.4 Quality and Relevance
ODL institutions shall promote quality, adhere to quality standards and ensure relevant and industry-driven ODL programme development and delivery.

6.5 Cost-effectiveness
ODL institutions shall promote cost-effectiveness in the development and deployment of ODL.

6.6 Collaboration and Partnerships
ODL institutions shall collaborate and partner in the areas of materials development, learner support, quality assurance, credit transfer and articulation of qualifications, research and exchange programmes.
6.7 Efficiency
ODL institutions shall uphold the principle that the objectives be attained in the most efficient way in order to maximise on returns of investment.

6.8 Equity
ODL institutions shall be guided by the principle of equity in the provision of ODL programmes. The policy seeks to actively involve all social groups including people with special needs.

6.9 Sustainability
The capital cost of developing courses and programmes of study and of designing and developing learner support systems, can be considerable. At the same time, the investment of time and effort on the part of learners in embarking on a programme of study that may take them several years to complete is substantial. It is therefore important that programmes be sustained for long enough to warrant the initial investment. In addition, programmes need to be sustained long enough to enable learners who have embarked on a programme of studies to have a reasonable chance of completing their studies before the programme is withdrawn.

7.10 Inclusiveness
The policy is guided by the fundamental value of inclusivity. ODL institutions shall therefore ensure that programmes will actively involve all special groups to reach individuals with special needs.

7. Key Policy Focus Areas

7.1 National ODL Policy Framework

- **Issue**
  Even though it is recognised that ODL has the potential to address Namibia’s educational and training needs in a more cost-effective manner, there is no dedicated national ODL policy. In addition, there is no structure that could coordinate ODL activities at a national level.

- **Issue justification**
  There are many ODL institutions and activities in the country, but with limited coordination and quality assurance due to a lack of national policy guidelines.

- **Policy statement**
  Namibia shall create enabling policy environments that promote the development and effective implementation of ODL programmes and services.

- **Specific objectives**
  - To integrate ODL into the national education and training systems through national policies
  - To ensure the development of ODL policies that are linked to other relevant national policies and are in line with Vision 2030, regional, continental and global commitments to education, training in general and ODL in particular
  - To ensure the development of ODL institutional policies
  - To create ODL coordinating structures in the country, and
  - To monitor the implementation of ODL institutional policies.
7.2 Governance and Management

- **Issue**
  The governance structures and management systems of ODL institutions in the country have varied capacity to respond to the development and mainstreaming of ODL.

- **Issue justification**
  Most of the ODL institutions have the same governance and management structures as conventional institutions. Unfortunately, such structures and systems do not always provide for the flexibility and expeditious responses often required by contemporary ODL systems.

- **Policy statement**
  The governance and management of ODL provision shall be strengthened to deliver their programmes and services through appropriate governance structures and effective management systems.

- **Specific objectives**
  - To develop responsive and efficient governance structures and management systems for ODL institutions, and
  - To develop human resource capacity in governance and leadership, and change management for ODL programmes and services.

7.3 ODL Staffing, Training and Development

- **Issue**
  ODL institutions in Namibia have inadequate ODL-trained personnel.

- **Issue justification**
  Although ODL has been deployed in Namibia for some time, a number of ODL institutions do not have adequately qualified and experienced personnel at various sectorial levels. The situation has been exacerbated by the increased enrolment at ODL institutions that has not been accompanied by corresponding staff development and recruitment initiatives.

- **Policy statement**
  ODL institutions shall ensure that staff recruitment is commensurate to enrolments and diversity of programmes and services and that staff members are appropriately trained.

- **Specific objectives**
  - To build sufficient human capacity in ODL in the country
  - To institutionalise continuing professional staff development programmes in ODL institutions, and
  - To recruit sufficient numbers of trained staff members for ODL institutions.

7.4 Public Perception of ODL

- **Issue**
  The public perceives ODL to be of a lower standard than face-to-face education/learning.

- **Issue justification**
  Despite its long history and wider use across education and training sub-sectors, ODL is perceived as second best in Namibia.

- **Policy statement**
  Namibia shall promote ODL and ensure acceptance of qualifications attained in the country provided they meet agreed standards as prescribed by the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA).
**Specific objectives**
- To increase awareness of the benefits of ODL among stakeholders, and
- To develop strategies for promoting recognition of qualifications obtained through ODL by employers and educational institutions.

### 7.5 Institutional Capacity

**Issue**
ODL institutions cannot meet the growing demand for programmes and services due to insufficient resource allocation.

**Issue justification**
ODL institutions have limited resources to accommodate the growing demand for education and training in terms of human resources, physical facilities, financial resources, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and internet connectivity, as well as instructional resources.

**Policy statement**
ODL institutions shall continue to meet the increased demand for education and training.

**Specific objectives**
- To increase the provision of appropriate physical facilities for ODL institutions
- To increase the development and provision of human and instructional resources and ICTs
- To increase sustainability through strengthening the collaboration with national ODL providers and key stakeholders
- To enhance and strengthen the integration and utilisation of ICTs, appropriate media and instructional resources, and reliable connectivity, and
- To mobilise financial and human resources for the delivery and implementation of ODL programmes.

### 7.6 Learner Support Services

**Issue**
Learner support services at ODL institutions are provided at varying levels of efficiency.

**Issue justification**
ODL learners have special needs and experience a variety of problems related to their studies. These needs and problems can be addressed through the implementation of cost-effective and responsive learner support systems to enhance quality and success in ODL delivery. However, ODL institutions in the country show varying levels of efficiency in the provision of learner support services.

**Policy statement**
ODL institutions shall ensure that efficient and effective learner support systems are developed and implemented.

**Specific objectives**
- To establish appropriate structures for providing learner support services
- To establish and implement effective and efficient learner support systems
- To build human resource capacity to provide learner support services, and
- To adopt innovative approaches to learner support and sharing of best practices.
7.7 Quality Assurance

- **Issue**
  Namibia has a National Quality Assurance (QA) System for Higher Education administered by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). This system was piloted at the University of Namibia and the Polytechnic of Namibia and full implementation thereof is under way. Namibia also has a Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA), which is mainly responsible for administering the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), as well as accrediting institutions and persons; a Namibia Training Authority (NTA), which is mandated to regulate the provision of Vocational Education and Training (VET), and the registrations of (VET) training providers. Even though these three bodies are responsible for quality assurance in the country, their roles are not well defined and their functions seem to overlap. While NCHE is responsible for quality assurance in higher education, NTA for quality assurance in VET, and NQA for administering the NQF and accreditation, it is not clear who is responsible for basic education, formal and non-formal ODL programmes. Nevertheless, all three publicly funded ODL institutions in the country have quality assurance mechanisms in place, although not one of them is registered with the International Standards Organisation (ISO). All ODL programmes offered by Higher Education Institutions will be quality assured by NCHE using the criteria set in the National Quality Assurance System for Higher Education.

- **Issue justification**
  - There is no harmonised Quality Assurance Framework for ODL to facilitate recognition and comparability of qualifications [to make Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and credit transfer among institutions possible]
  - Perceived overlapping functions between NQA, NTA and NCHE are not yet streamlined
  - Namibia lacks a quality assurance mechanism for Grade 10 and 12 qualifications offered through distance education, and
  - The implementation of the National Quality Assurance System for Higher Education and facilitation of registrations with ISO is slow.

- **Policy statement**
  Namibia will develop a comprehensive and harmonised ODL Quality Assurance Framework aligned to the NCHE QA System and the SADC QA Framework.

- **Specific objectives**
  - To facilitate the registration of qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework for the smooth transfer of credits and learners among ODL institutions
  - To make provision for quality assurance mechanisms for Grade 10 and 12 qualifications, and
  - To facilitate the implementation of the National Quality Assurance System for higher education and possible registration with ISO.

7.8 Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Issue**
  There is inadequate implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation (M and E) systems in ODL.

- **Issue justification**
  While institutional audits are conducted at most of the ODL institutions, no M and E frameworks and no clearly defined indicators are in place. The prevailing situation prevents systematic analysis and improvement plans for ODL design and delivery and the resultant improvement plan.

- **Policy statement**
  ODL institutions shall develop and align the M and E Framework to the Education Sector M and E Framework that was developed for the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP).
7.9 Collaboration, Networking and Partnerships

- **Issue**
  Collaboration, networking and partnerships among ODL institutions are not at a desired level.

- **Issue justification**
  There are varying levels of ODL institutional capacity within Namibia. There is a need to expand and strengthen collaboration, networking and partnerships nationally, regionally and internationally.

- **Policy statement**
  ODL institutions shall collaborate, network and partner in the design and delivery of ODL.

- **Specific objectives**
  - To collaborate and partner in the design and delivery of ODL
  - To enhance sharing of information and best practices
  - To establish private-public partnerships in the design and delivery of ODL
  - To maximise the design and delivery of ODL through the sharing of resources
  - To share information and best practices on ODL design and delivery, and
  - To draw on the expertise of partners, including international ODL providers and agencies.

7.10 Funding, Budgeting and Resource Mobilisation

- **Issue**
  The funding for the provision of ODL is inadequate.

- **Issue justification**
  ODL has a relatively long history in the country; however its development has been constrained by inadequate funding. There are no separate budget lines for ODL and in most cases ODL budgets are lumped together with those of other services. Student funding is influenced by the mode of study.

- **Policy statement**
  Government shall allocate adequate funds for the design and delivery of ODL provision.

- **Specific objectives**
  - To create separate budget lines for ODL
  - To develop and implement appropriate funding formulae for ODL, and
  - To develop and implement mechanisms for resource mobilisation.

7.11 Inclusive Education

- **Issue**
  Inclusive Education is not adequately integrated into ODL programmes.

- **Issue justification**
  There are inequities in the provision of ODL in the country, the most notable ones being cultural, rural-urban, poverty-related, HIV and Aids-related, and inequities associated with special needs. This issue has not been adequately addressed due to lack of appropriate strategies and end resources. The best way to address the abovementioned inequalities is the adoption of inclusive education and appropriate funding for ODL.
• **Policy statement**
  ODL shall promote inclusive education in the development, funding and delivery of programmes and services.

• **Specific objectives**
  o To adequately integrate inclusive education into institutional ODL policies
  o To develop innovative programmes and strategies for implementing inclusive education
  o To identify and adopt relevant aspects of existing national policy frameworks that address inclusive education, and
  o To build the academic and professional capacity of staff at ODL institutions to implement inclusive education.

### 7.12 Curriculum Development

• **Issue**
  ODL programmes do not respond adequately to the diverse needs of potential and current ODL learners.

• **Issue justification**
  The design of ODL programmes does not always take into account the diverse needs of learners from different socio-economic backgrounds. There is a lack of relevant curricula and programmes that address the needs of the different sectors of society.

• **Policy statement**
  ODL institutions shall promote the expansion and diversification of ODL programmes and service delivery in order to meet the diverse needs of society.

• **Specific objectives**
  o To ensure that the programmes are aligned to the national development plan
  o To periodically review and revise ODL curricula at different levels in order to offer responsive programmes in the country, and
  o To provide appropriate instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners.

### 7.13 Application of ICT in ODL

• **Issue**
  There is a limited availability, capacity and use of ICT in the development and delivery of ODL programmes in the country.

• **Issue justification**
  Most ODL institutions in the country have, to some extent, adopted ICT in the development and deployment of ODL. However, there is limited utilisation of ICT to increase access and enhance quality of delivery of ODL programmes. The limited application of ICT is largely due to inadequate infrastructure, limited human and financial resources and the lack of relevant policies and strategies.

• **Policy statement**
  ODL institutions shall implement the use of ICT in the development and delivery of ODL programmes.

• **Specific objectives**
  o To acquire and deploy appropriate ICT infrastructure to support the delivery of ODL programmes and services
  o To equip staff and learners with requisite ICT skills
  o To develop ODL institutional ICT policies for effective and efficient utilisation of ICTs and align such policies to the national ICT policies, and
  o To use appropriate implementation of technologies to cater for the diverse needs of learners.
7.14 Research Development and Dissemination

- **Issue**
  There is insufficient research and dissemination of research findings on ODL in Namibia.

- **Issue justification**
  - ODL research is limited and not adequately supported compared to research in conventional education
  - There is limited capacity in conducting national and regional ODL studies
  - There is no documented ODL research programme and agenda
  - ODL institutions are understaffed and therefore unable to carry out research
  - Funding for research is inadequate, and
  - There is a need to build capacity for research in ODL.

- **Policy statement**
  ODL institutions shall invest in research and the dissemination of research findings.

- **Specific objectives**
  - To support ODL-related national and regional research
  - To develop a national, collaborative ODL research programme and agenda
  - To implement research programmes and agendas
  - To mobilise resources for ODL research
  - To build ODL research capacity, and
  - To document and disseminate research findings in ODL.

7.15 Application/usage of OER in ODL

- **Issue**
  There is limited development and use of OER in the delivery of ODL programmes in the country.

- **Issue justification**
  Namibia subscribes to the principles of the UNESCO 2012 Paris OER declaration calling on member states to release materials funded from public money as Open Educational Resources (OER) for the benefit of Namibian citizens. However, little has been done in terms of policy, development and advocacy of OER. There is a need for ODL institutions to develop OER policies which will guide the development and licensing of educational materials. There is also a need for awareness creation for OER through research and publications.

- **Policy statement**
  ODL institutions shall develop policies for the development and use of OER to widen access to learning opportunities through access to free and open self-study materials in printed and digital format.

- **Specific objectives**
  - To ensure the development of institutional OER policies
  - To promote the development and use of OER in ODL delivery, and
  - To promote research and publications in the field of OER.
8. IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

The main policy players in terms of policy implementation will include –

i. The Namibian Cabinet
   - Approve the National ODL policy, and
   - Provide support in the allocation of resources.

ii. The Ministers
   - Table the policy to Cabinet for approval
   - Advocate for resources for policy implementation, and
   - Report progress to Cabinet on the implementation of the ODL policy.

iii. The Ministries of Education
   - As the custodian of education and training, the ministries are expected to ensure efficient implementation of the policy and hold institutions accountable
   - Make the required resources available through the creation of separate budget lines for ODL
   - Influence agencies responsible for scholarships and bursaries to ensure sufficient funds for ODL students in a fair manner
   - Provide direction and leadership in the implementation of the policy and monitor the implementation of the policy at national level
   - Provide leadership to ensure that provisions of the national ODL policy are implemented at institutional level
   - Facilitate the development of a National Implementation Plan for the policy, and
   - Report progress on the implementation of the policy framework to the Ministers of Education.

iv. NOLNet
   - Launch the ODL policy in collaboration with the Ministries of Education
   - Play a facilitating role to ensure that members of institutions implement the ODL policy
   - Provide leadership and technical assistance in the development and implementation of the policy framework
   - Facilitate the implementation of the ODL policy at institutional level through capacity building
   - Coordinate, supervise, monitor and evaluate the implementation of policy frameworks at institutions
   - Mobilise resources for the effective implementation of the policy framework
   - Report on the progress of the implementation of the policy framework to standing committees of NOLNet, Management Committee and Board of Trustees, and
   - Review the National ODL policy every five years to ensure relevance and progressiveness.

v. ODL institutions
   - ODL institutions will spearhead the implementation of the national policy through broad-based participation and report progress to the Ministry of Education through annual reports
   - Design and deliver high-quality ODL programmes in line with the National ODL policy
   - Ensure equitable access for its students, and
   - Adopt and adhere to the National Implementation Plan at institutional level.

vi. Regulatory authorities
   - NQA, NTA, NCHE and NCRST
     - Ensure that ODL institutions and programmes are accredited, registered and articulated in line with national regulation frameworks, and
     - Ensure that ODL quality criteria be included in relevant frameworks.

vii. Other stakeholders
   - Depending on their institutional mandate, other stakeholders will support efforts of Government and ODL institutions in the implementation of the National ODL policy.
10. REFERENCES


- ETSIP: Republic of Namibia, Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP), Planning for a Learning Nation: Programme Document Phase I (2006-2011), February 2007. ETSIP “represents the education and training sector’s response to the call of Vision 2030. Its key purpose is to substantially enhance the sector’s contribution to the attainment of strategic national development goals, and to facilitate the transition to a knowledge-based economy” (ETSIP, par. 10)


- SADC ODL Policy, (2012). Regional Open and Distance Learning Policy Framework, Southern African Development Community.

- University of Namibia Act, (1992). Aims of the University, University of Namibia, Windhoek.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Policy/Act/Institution</th>
<th>Mandate/Key Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Education Act 2001</td>
<td>To provide an accessible, equitable, qualitative and democratic national education service; to provide for the establishment of the National Advisory Council on Education, National Examination Assessment and Certification Board, Regional Education Forums, School Boards, Education Development funds to provide for the establishment of schools and hostels; to provide for the establishment of the Teaching Services and the Teaching Service Committee; and to provide for incidental matters.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Act No. 16 of 2001)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Education and Training</td>
<td>ETSIP represents the education and training sector’s response to Vision 2030. Its key purpose is to substantially enhance the sector’s contribution to the attainment of strategic national development goals, and to facilitate the transition of a knowledge-based economy.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sector Improvement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>programme (ETSIP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Higher Education Act</td>
<td>To regulate higher education; to provide for the establishment, objectives, functions and composition of the National Council for Higher Education; to provide for the registration, deregistration and closure of private higher education institutions; to provide for the funding of public higher education institutions; to provide for the establishment and functions of a panel of enquiry into the affairs of higher education institutions; and to provide for matters incidental thereto.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2003 (Act No. 26 of 2003)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ICT Policy for Education</td>
<td>To provide a basic foundation on which to build the actual efforts that will bring ICT knowledge to students in Namibia.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Namibia Qualification</td>
<td>To provide for the establishment and powers of the Namibia Qualifications Authority, and matters connected thereto.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Authority Act</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Act No. 29 of 1996)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Namibian College of</td>
<td>To provide educational opportunities for adults and out-of-school youth through a range of open and distance learning methodologies.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Open Learning</td>
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</table>
The University is mandated to:
(a) contribute to knowledge creation and advance knowledge through teaching, research and scientific investigation, with an emphasis on applied research;
(b) support and contribute to economic and social development through globally relevant, professional, technological and career-focused higher education, and effective community engagement, with an emphasis on industry involvement;
(c) drive, promote and facilitate technology development and technology transfer and innovation and diffusion;
(d) engage in national and international partnerships and cooperation with other universities, organisations and institutions; and
(e) preserve and promote the traditional and constitutional principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom in the conduct of its internal and external affairs subject to this Act and other laws.

As such, the Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning (COLL) is established under this mandate and is internationally recognised and distinguished for the pedagogic innovation that is applied in the design of the NUST study programmes and delivered by means of supported open and distance learning.

The NCHE is responsible for –
- accrediting, with the concurrence of the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA), programmes of higher education provided at higher education institutions
- monitoring the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions
- taking measures to promote access of students to higher education institutions
- undertaking such research with regard to its objectives as it may think necessary or as the Minister of Education may require, and
- advising the Minister of Education of its own accord or at request of the Minister on -
  * the structure of the higher education system in general
  * quality promotion and quality assurance in higher education
  * the allocation of public moneys to higher education institutions
  * the governance of higher education institutions
  * any other aspect related to higher education, and
  * performing such other functions as may be entrusted to the NCHE by or under this Act.
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<th></th>
<th><strong>National Open and Distance Learning Policy</strong></th>
<th>To expedite the implementation of development strategy through a fresh approach.</th>
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<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Namibia’s fourth National Development plan (NDP4)</strong></td>
<td>The policy provides a framework under which Adult Learning and Education is to be practised in the country. The policy aims at ensuring the establishment of the National Council on Adult Learning as a statutory body responsible for the promotion, coordination, policy implementation and monitoring of adult learning. However, the policy is not fully operational yet, since the council has not yet been established.</td>
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</table>
| 10 | **National Policy on Adult Learning 2013** | The strategy of this policy is to increase employment opportunities through human resource development and sustained economic growth. The policy also promotes the development of the informal sector and self-employment. Key to this strategy is the provision of work-related adult learning, which includes –
- vocational training for unemployed adults and out-of-school youths
- work-related training for adults in formal sector employment, and
- skills development for small and medium enterprises, especially in the informal sector. |
<p>| 11 | <strong>National Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning 2010</strong> | To strengthen Namibia’s human resources and make it a stronger nation. |
| 12 | <strong>Namibia Training Authority (NTA)</strong> | The Namibia Training Authority endeavours to ensure a sustainable skills delivery system under which quality vocational and technical skills are imparted to young Namibians through vocational education and training programmes which meet the current and emerging needs of industries in our nation’s economy, today and into the future. |
| 13 | <strong>SADC ODL Policy</strong> | To ensure that the region has standardised and harmonised education and training policies and programmes. |</p>
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<th></th>
<th><strong>University of Namibia Act (Act No. 18 of 1992)</strong></th>
<th>The Centre for External Studies (CES) is mandated by the University of Namibia to provide accessible, quality higher education through open and distance learning. The Centre's vision is to become the leading open and distance learning centre in the country and beyond by enabling students to achieve their full potential through accessible, innovative and flexible learning. Its mission is to provide accessible quality higher education and create opportunities for professional development to adult members of the community by the provision of open learning through distance and continuing education programmes. CES manages regional centres in the country to enable adult learners to access educational opportunities easily. The Centre continues to develop approaches that will help students to become independent and lifelong learners.</th>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>Vision 2030</strong></td>
<td>Vision 2030 is a policy framework for long-term national development and presents a clear view of where Namibia is and where it wants to be by 2030. It foresees a prosperous and industrialised Namibia, developed by her human resources. Vision 2030 aims at improving the quality of life of the people of Namibia to the level of their counterparts in the developed world by 2030.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td><strong>Vocational Education and Training Act (Act No. 1 of 2008)</strong></td>
<td>To establish the Namibia Training Authority, the Board of the Namibia Training Authority and the National Training Fund; to regulate the provision of vocational education and training; to provide for the funding of vocational education and training; to provide for the imposition of vocational education and training levies; to provide for the appointment of inspectors and designation of quality system auditors; and to provide for incidental matters.</td>
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