

THE 2019 NOLNet COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE 4th NATIONAL OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING CONFERENCE

PREAMBLE

At its 4th National Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Conference, held under the theme “The Role of Open, Distance and eLearning in the 4th Industrial Revolution” from 24-25 October 2019 at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), the Namibian Open Learning Network Trust (NOLNet) acknowledges that Open, Distance and eLearning (ODeL) is characterised by the use of technology, the role it plays in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), and how the sector should position itself to deal with the positive and negative impacts likely to be brought about by the 4IR. The evolution from the First Industrial Revolution to the Third Industrial Revolution showed how the advent of technologies shaped our lives, but, more importantly, how the use of technologies has become indispensable for enhancing the delivery of services in propelling us to more revolutions, such as the 4IR. NOLNet, therefore, recognises the concerted efforts from ODL practitioners to promote the development of an industrialised country and create a society capable of transforming from conventional to more digitalised approaches.



NOLNet ODL conference: 24-25 October 2019

Keynote papers and research outputs presented at the conference substantiated that ODeL plays a critical role in the 4IR. In essence, it fosters and accelerates national development, and is indeed a powerful tool for meeting the educational and training needs of our people. As such, it is an enabling vehicle for the country to meet the goals of the Harambee Prosperity Plan and Vision 2030.

The Right Honourable Prime Minister, Dr Saara Kuugongelwa–Amadhila, officiated at the conference. The conference elaborated comprehensively on the subject matter of the 4IR and deliberations were based on the following four sub-themes: International Experiences and Trends, the University-Industry Partnerships in the Changing World of Work, Implications of the 4IR for Namibia’s Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Sector, and Industrial Revolution and Sustainable Futures. Following the keynote addresses and research outputs presented, the conference emphasises the following key issues that emanated from the deliberations over the two days:

1. International Experiences and Trends

The conference reaffirms that harnessing new developments in technologies through the use of open education resources, education provision will become more open and inclusive. The conference further reaffirms that the human element of equity, empathy and ethics, behind the 4IR, should be embraced. Augmented and virtual reality technologies have great potential to improve learner experience.

2. University-Industry Partnerships in the Changing World of Work

The conference notes that education and training in the 4IR cannot be business as usual thus there is a need for a paradigm shift in the mandate of universities from mere teaching and research towards innovation and entrepreneurial approaches.

The conference calls for the decentralisation of activities to allow for flexibility and growth within institutions, and for the latter to partner with industry to manufacture indigenous products on a large scale. It further calls for the strengthening of collaborations between institutions; the mobilisation of resources for research; the alignment of the history of Africa for future solutions to promote lifelong learning, using ODL methodologies; and science and innovation to be used as a driver to pave the way for the 4IR.

Conclusion

Looking at the road ahead, Namibia, through NOLNet and its partner institutions, will make waves in the current and future industrial revolutions. This resonates substantially, and was evidenced at the 4th ODL Conference, as far as the implications of the 4IR and sustainable futures are concerned. ODeL practices were reaffirmed and acknowledged as strong enablers in responding to the educational and training needs of the Namibian citizens. In essence, it will accelerate the realisation of the National Development Plans and Vision 2030. Therefore, strengthening collaboration and smart partnerships among training institutions is recommended.

Issued 25th October 2019

PARTNERS

