



ANNUAL REPORT: 2020-2021

VISION

To become a leading Trust in the facilitation and coordination of open and distance learning activities through collaboration and networking amongst partner institutions.

MISSION

NOLNet is committed to making quality contributions to the achievement of Education for All in Namibia through optimising collaboration and networking of open and distance learning resources.

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Acronyms

BoT	Board of Trustees
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLDC	Community Learning and Development Centre
CILT	Innovation in Learning and Teaching
CODeL	Centre for Open, Distance and eLearning
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
COLL	Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DAE	Directorate of Adult Education
EFA	Education for All
ERM	Electronic Records Management
ERP	Educational Radio Projects
EXCO	Executive Committee
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KFA	Key Focus Area
MC	Management Committee
MoEAC	Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
MHETI	Ministry of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAMCOL	Namibian College of Open Learning
NJOLT	Namibian Journal of Open Learning and Teaching
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
NLAS	Namibia Library and Archives Services
NOLNet	Namibian Open Learning Network Trust
NUST	Namibia University of Science and Technology
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
OERs	Open Educational Resources
QA	Quality Assurance

ROSA	Regional Office for Southern Africa
SADC	South African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TRC	Teachers' Resource Centre
TVET	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
UNAM	University of Namibia
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

Open, Distance and e-Learning communities across the world have been encountering the unprecedented impacts of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and the education sector has suffered considerable disruptions in this regard. The Namibian Government had to temporarily close educational institutions in an effort to contain the spread of the pandemic. The Namibian Open Learning Network (NOLNet) was very fortunate to continue with its operations despite the challenge brought forth by COVID-19. This report showcases some notable achievements and commitments of the Trust in rendering quality support to the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) students. Although NOLNet continues to make quality contributions to the Education for All (EFA) goal, alternative ways of executing activities and interventions were adopted amidst the pandemic.

The reporting period has been directed and guided by the NOLNet Strategic plan for 2017 – 2022 which lapses on June 30th this year. The strategic objectives for 2020/2021 Financial year included promoting sustainability in ODL, strengthening centre resources, enhancing the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) amongst partner institutions, building research capacity, among others, have been negatively impacted by the outbreak of COVID-19. Conversely, the successful hosting of a Research webinar which was convened wholly online, the first of its kind, illustrated rigorous partnership and collaborations between the partner institutions. This implies the significance of adapting and embracing the new normal. The period under review enforced us educators to explore strategic ways to address challenges amidst COVID-19 for continuity of learning in the country and beyond.

On other matters, a sharp decline in the enrolment figures of ODL students for 2020/2021 was recorded within our partner institutions, particularly for secondary education. Statistically, the enrolment figures for secondary education were 30,484, having decreased by 7601 (19.9%) students from 38085 in 2019/2020, while

tertiary education was 11,339 have decreased by 1298 (10.2%) students from 12637 in 2019/2020. The figures illustrate how ODL was impacted by COVID-19 and subsequently how ODL practitioners should double efforts to ensure that more students are embracing the ODL concept. More strategic ways need to be explored in order to get more students on board.

Certainly, I would like to extend my gratitude to the two-line Ministries and all partner institutions for having kept the Trust's partnership vibrant, for their collaborative efforts to ensure that Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through ODL are indeed realised. Special gratitude goes to all the NOLNet representatives from various partner institutions, who tirelessly served the Trust with dedication under challenging circumstances.

Finally, I would like to commend my predecessor, Dr Delvaline Möwes, for her exceptional leadership which I took over for the past 12 months. Dr Möwes has been one of pillars of the ODL fraternity both nationally and internationally. She has played a significant role at NOLNet in various capacities, including being a country representative for the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA).

Last but not least, I would like to invite you all ODL practitioners, stakeholders and the public at large to join us at the 56th DEASA Conference, hosted by NOLNet from 2nd – 4th November 2022 at Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST).

Sincerely,

Mr. Erkkie Haipinge

Chair of the NOLNet Board of Trustees

2. INTRODUCTION

This Annual Report shows how NOLNet fulfilled its key strategic objectives during 2020/21 Financial Year. A year that brought a number of challenges and opportunities in the Education fraternity due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The report outlines fundamental achievements of the Key Focus Area (KFA) as stipulated in the Trust's strategic plan and crucial activities of the National ODL Policy. The Secretariat and Standing Committees implemented the activities with the support and assistance of the Management Committee (MC), while being strategically guided by the Board of Trustees (BoT). It constitutes the final report to be submitted to the Line Ministries in terms of Section 7.4 of the Deed of Trust and the report is prepared in line with the following KFA;

- Centre support and capacity building
- Sustainability
- Advocacy strategies and research
- Quality Assurance (QA)
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in ODL

3. GOVERNANCE

The Board of Trustees (BoT) comprises of seven representatives from NOLNet's partner institutions and provide strategic guidance and oversight to the Management Committee (MC) and the Secretariat. The MC, on the other hand, supports the Secretariat in the day-to-day activities of the Trust through the various standing committees.

3.1 THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The BoT comprises members representing each partner institution. During the reporting period, the BoT held three meetings. Mr Erkkie Haipinge, Deputy Director of eLearning and Learning Design Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) at the University of Namibia (UNAM), served as Chairperson and was deputised by Dr Delvaline Möwes, Director of the Centre for Open and Life Long Learning (COLL) at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). For the review period, the BoT considered and approved the following:

- *approved the hosting of the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA) Conference.*

DEASA is a regional body on ODL for Southern African Development Community (SADC) Member States, aimed at promoting and enhancing ODL in the region. The forum aims to share information, collaborate in obtaining and developing quality distance education programmes, and organise relevant professional activities.

In pursuance of quality ODL in the SADC Region, DEASA hosts annual conferences that provide the platform and scope for strengthening collaboration amongst the SADC countries and other stakeholders. The annual conferences and AGM are held on a rotational basis by DEASA members, the SADC Member States. Namibia as a member state is expected to host this important Conference in November 2022. The last time Namibia was honoured to be host was the 47th DEASA Conference that took place in September 2012 at Swakopmund. This year, exactly ten years later, it is again Namibia's turn to host the 56th DEASA Conference through NOLNet.

- *approved the renewal of the new term of office for the Executive Secretary (ES)*

The renewal of new term of office for the ES was considered and approved by the Board during the reporting period. The contract was renewed for the next three years and was based on the performance appraisal.

3.2 THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Management Committee provided guidance and advice to the Secretariat in the running of NOLNet's affairs, among other things. Ms Anna-Marie Schaller-Nangolo, Deputy Director for Open and Distance Learning at CODEL, UNAM, served as Chairperson of the Management Committee, while Mr Wynand Diergaardt, Deputy Director for COLL at NUST, served as Deputy Chairperson.

The MC:

- convened three (3) meetings during the reporting year. At these meetings, the MC deliberated on NOLNet's operational matters, formulated directives, and provided guidance on the execution of activities by the Secretariat and the standing committees
- The MC, inter alia, convened a working session to review the ODL policy implementation plan. During the review session, MC came up with new approaches and strategies to enhance and accelerate a speedy implementation of activities. This include among others rigorous and regular monitoring mechanisms of activities such as submissions of progress report on monthly basis as opposed to quarterly reporting. Conduct briefing session on the policy to the stakeholders and a consultative seminar with ODL providers in the country. The strategies are deemed critical to create awareness of the benefits of ODL in education and training system.
- approved the research webinar for partner institutions under the theme "getting your paper published in a reputable journal".

3.3 THE SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat is responsible for managing the day-to-day administration of the Trust as a way of sustaining its affairs, and is answerable to the MC and BoT. The office of the Secretariat is based at NAMCOL's Head Office. The College provides administrative and technical support to the Secretariat. The Secretariat coordinated and assisted the standing committees in the performance of their duties as per the terms of reference that govern their operations.

3.4 STANDING COMMITTEES

The success of the Trust is directly attributed to the participation and performance of the standing committees and the Secretariat. NOLNet has seven standing committees and each consists of representatives from all partner institutions. Both the Secretariat and the Standing committees are responsible for the implementations of the Trust's Key Focus Areas and strategic objectives.

4. KEY FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

4.1 KFA 1: Centre support and capacity building

This KFA enables the Trust to effectively strengthen centre resources, ensure accessibility for students to all the affiliated centres and strengthen ODL capacity amongst all the partners. The standing committee on Centre Support is responsible for the provision of quality support services to ODL students who make use of the 64 NOLNet-affiliated centres countrywide. It also ensures that those centres are adequately resourced, while the QA and training committees oversee matters related to capacity-building.

4.1.1 Strategic Objective: Strengthen Centre Resources

Key activity 1: *Delivery of materials and equipment to the centres*

- The committee on Centre Support delivered various materials to the affiliated centres. Amongst the donated materials are 300 language booklets that was donated by NAMCOL to NOLNet.

Key activity 2: *Conduct a needs analysis at the Community Learning Development Centres (CLDCs)*

- The Directorate of Adult Education (DAE) in the MoEAC assisted the committee on Centre Support to conduct a needs analysis for skills development of the CLDCs. A need for sewing machines was identified for eleven CLDCs. Eleven (11) sewing machines were purchased at the value of N\$ 30 000.00 and donated to the CLDCs in response to the outcomes of the needs analysis. The sewing machines were donated to the following CLDCs:

Table 1: Sewing machines donated to 11 CLDCs

Centre	Region
2 x Khorixas CLDC	Kunene
2 x Tallismanus	Omaheke
2 x Tsandi CLDC	Omusati
1 x Warmbad CLDC	Karas
2 x Namibia Deer Sewing Course (Maxuilili Public Library)	Khomas
2 x Omuthiya CLDC	Oshikoto

4.1.2 Strategic Objective: Enhance quality management systems amongst partners

Key activity 1: *Invite QA agencies to train partners in preparation of institutional QA audits*

The committee on QA hosted a workshop in October 2020 regarding institutional QA audits. This workshop was facilitated by officials from the QA statutory bodies (National Qualification Authority (NQA) & National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)). The aim of the workshop was to capacitate staff members from partner institutions with knowledge and skills in preparation of institutional QA audits and also to enhance quality management systems amongst partner institutions.

Key activity 2: *Identify training needs and gaps amongst partners and develop a training plan*

The Training Committee conducted a training intervention on Library and Records Management in March 2021 at Nkurenkuru. Twenty-five (25) participants from the two (2) Kavango regions attended the workshop. The aim of the training was to enhance the competency, capability and potential of staff members in the areas of Electronic Records Management (ERM), Filing, Cataloguing and Classification, Retrieval of information, Database Management, Customer Service and Performance Evaluation of Library Services.

4.2 KFA 2: SUSTAINABILITY

4.2.1 Strategic Objective: Improve Financial Management

Key activity 1: *Ensure good financial management*

Grand Namibia audited NOLNet's books for the financial year (FY) that ended 30 June 2021. The financial statements and the management letter were received and an unqualified audit report was presented to the Board.

The financial budget, totaling N\$ 1,617,438.92 was approved by the Board for the 2021/2022 FY. The budget decreased with 1.15% in comparison to the previous budget for the 2020/2021 FY.

4.3 KFA 3: ADVOCACY STRATEGIES AND RESEARCH

This KFA enables the Trust to promote sustainability in ODL, strengthen national ODL advocacy strategies, build research capacity amongst partners and encourage research paper writing and publications. The two committees are expected to strengthen advocacy for ODL activities at all levels, promote collaborative research amongst NOLNet's partner institutions, as well as capacitate staff members from the partner institutions regarding research-related matters.

4.3.1 Strategic Objectives: Build research Capacity amongst partners

Key activity 1: *Facilitated research seminars for partner institutions*

- The Research committee hosted a research webinar in September 2020, wholly online under the theme "Getting your paper published in a reputable journal". Twenty-six (26) participants attended the webinar and it was facilitated by two Senior Researchers from NUST and UNAM respectively.
- The seminar targeted an indiscriminate mix of novice, knowledgeable and interested researchers with the intention of motivating them to continuously indulge in research and develop the habit of drawing articles from their research projects and have them published in reputable journals.
- The hosts of the webinar recommended that NOLNet should consider establishing its own online journal with the assistance of the facilitators. The proposed name for the journal: The Namibian Journal of Open Learning and Teaching (NJOLT).

4.3.2 Strategic Objective: Encourage research papers and publications

Key activity 1: *Promote collaborative research*

- The Research committee identified the following research areas for the 2020/21 financial year to promote collaborative research;
 1. Teaching, learning and assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic: prospects/opportunities and challenges in ODL
 2. Technology in ODL
 3. Governance and Management
 4. Student Support in ODL
- A research grant to the value of N\$ 25 232.00 was awarded to three staff members for a collaborative research which was framed on the fourth research area (**Student Support in ODL**). The research project focused on the **“Constraints to the Effective Implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy of Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), Khomas Region Case Study”**. The study was completed and an article will be published in the next reporting period.
- Additionally, a collaborative research paper titled **“Exploring Mechanisms for Assuring the Quality of Open and Distance Learning in Public Higher Education Institution in Namibia”** by Dr N. Kadhila (UNAM), Ms N. lipumbu (UNAM) and Dr C. Tuaundu (NUST) was published in the NJRST 2 (2020): 47 – 62.

4.3.1 Strategic objective: Promote Sustainability in ODL

- The Committee on Publicity and Information hosted a public lecture on Accreditation and Assessment of Qualifications in ODL in June 2021. The lecture was facilitated by an Accreditation, Assessment and Audit Officer from the NQA.

- The purpose of this lecture was to explain the accreditation procedures of qualifications obtained through ODL institutions in Namibia. Information shared through this public lecture was aimed at promoting ODL across Namibia and ensuring acceptance of qualifications obtained through ODL. Twenty (20) participants from the partner institutions and other ODL providers attended the lecture.
- Furthermore, NOLNet also participated in a baseline study for Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) member states regarding the status of ODL, and the ODL Policy in particular. The study was commissioned by the SADC Secretariat and the United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA) between July and September 2020.
- The purpose of the study was to ascertain the status of ODL within the 16 member states in the SADC. The findings of the study were consolidated in this report. The report included responses with regards to preparedness during the COVID-19 and post COVID-19 periods.

4.3.3 Strategic Objective: Promote NOLNet's mandate and activities

Key activity 1: *Develop a marketing and publicity plan*

Through the committee's marketing strategy; the following campaign methods to raise awareness about ODL Courses and qualification were employed.

- The committee printed and distributed 200 NOLNet brochures that contain ODL Courses in Namibia offered by the partner institutions. Brochures were distributed to all 64 NOLNet affiliated centres.
- The committee produced and Publicize newspaper articles that features achievements and success stories of the Partner institutions.

- NOLNet facebook page was created to help with marketing of the Trust's Mandate and activities on social media.
- The committee captured NOLNet ODL events e.g. ODL public lecture, Research webinar and QA audit workshop of which some form part of the content of the newsletter.

The committee continued to liaise with Omalaeti Productions to maintain and update NOLNet's website. During the review period, the following documents were uploaded on the website:

- Annual Report for 2019/20
- A brochure providing information on ODL courses in Namibia
- NOLNet Newsletters
- Information regarding research grants for collaborative studies
- Call for abstracts for collaborative research grants

4.4 KFA 4: Quality Assurance

This focus area deals with the promotion of QA activities at all levels.

4.4.1 Strategic Objectives: Ensure effectiveness and efficiency of NOLNet standing committees

Key Activity 1: *Audit the activities of NOLNet standing committees*

- The committee developed audit criteria in preparation for conducting an internal audit on the activities of the e-Learning Committee during the next reporting period. The Audit criteria were recommended and approved by the MC.

4.5 KFA 5: ICT in ODL

The standing committees on e-Learning and Educational Radio Programmes (ERP) spearhead this area. They mainly promote and coordinate ICT and eLearning activities of NOLNet's partners and arrange eLearning interventions for the MoEAC.

4.5.1 Strategic Objective: Promote the use and sharing of OERs

Key activity 1: *Develop OER implementation plan*

The National OER Policy was approved by the Board during the previous financial year. The e-Learning standing committee developed the draft of the implementation plan and the execution of tasks is expected during the next financial year. The implementation of the OER policy will promote the development and use of OERs and ensure the development and implementation of institutional OER policies.

4.5.2 Strategic Objective: Enhance the use of ICT amongst partners

Key activity 1: *Produce and broadcast educational radio programmes and others responding to national issues*

Educational radio is a multi-sectored initiative which was started by the MoEAC. Its function is to produce educational radio programmes of good quality that are to be aired on various radio stations throughout Namibia. To date, the educational radio programmes have been broadcast on the following stations: *NBC National Radio, UNAM Radio, Ohangwena Community Radio (Eenhana), Karas Community?? Radio (Keetmanshoop), NAMCOL Campus Radio (Windhoek) and Live FM Radio (Rehoboth)*. The ERP standing committee envisages that all radio stations across the country will be recipients and disseminators (by air) of the content it produces to reach a wider audience.

Due to the outbreak of Covid-19, the production of radio programmes was put on hold during the reporting period. No part time producer was hired for script writing during the year under review. Thus, no new programmes were produced. However, repeat broadcasts of existing, and still very relevant educational radio programmes, were undertaken by the different radio stations.

5. CHALLENGES

The Trust encountered the following challenges during the review period:

- Dearth of quorums at meetings and lack of commitment toward NOLNet activities continues to prevail. This makes it difficult for committees to apply consistent, good quality and collective decision-making.
- The poor performance of some of the committees resulted in the Secretariat executing the tasks of the committees. This created challenges for the Secretariat to carry out the day-day operations of the Trust.
- The steady implementation of the ODL Policy. The policy review might be delayed, if the situation exacerbates. Therefore, the execution of tasks needs to be accelerated to meet the policy's review date.
- Statistics for ODL registered students decreased when compared to the previous academic year at some partner institutions. This resulted in little per capita contributions from the partner institutions for students enrolled in ODL courses for the period under review. Therefore, there is a need to sensitise the public and raise their awareness regarding the ODL programmes.

6. CONCLUSION

This report outlines the implementation of the strategic activities executed by the Secretariat and standing committees. This was made possible under the

leadership of the MC and the BoT. The outbreak of COVID-19 challenged the implementation of the planned activities and posed serious threats to the achievement of strategic objectives. Despite the threats encountered, the Trust managed to achieve a few of its strategic activities as indicated in the report.

Rigorous collaboration and partnerships between the partner institutions and the two line ministries played a huge role in the successful implementation of activities. Hence, the Trust will continue to remain committed in enforcing networking and collaboration amongst partner institutions to ensure that the Trust's mission is indeed realised.

The coordination of the KFAs and the implementation of the ODL Policy by the Secretariat and standing committees continue to be the centre of the Trust's activities.

In spite of the challenges experienced during the reporting period, the Trust remained committed to the culture of promoting sustainability, good governance and transparency. Conversely, NOLNet owes its achievements to all its partners and stakeholders, notably the representatives of various bodies of the Trust, for their commitments and overwhelming support throughout the review period. Finally, the Secretariat wishes to express its appreciation for NAMCOL's generous efforts to provide smooth administrative, technical and logistical support to NOLNet since its inception.

Going forward, NOLNet will remain focussed on finding ways to prosper with the support of the partner institutions and Ministries, while learning from the extensive experiences of the ODL community globally. It is within the trust mandate to ensure that collaboration and networking remain the pillars of making quality contributions to the achievement of EFA.

ANNEXURE A: BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Mr Erkkie Haipinge: Deputy Director: CODEL, UNAM (Chairperson)

Dr Delvaline Möwes: Director: COLL, NUST (Vice-Chairperson)

Dr Heroldt Murangi : Director: NAMCOL

Mr Mzingisi Gqwede: Director: DAE, MoEAC

Dr Patrick Simalumba: Director: NIED

Ms Sabina Neumbo: Chief Librarian: NLAS

Mr Erkkie Haipinge: Deputy Director: eLearning CODEL, UNAM

ANNEXURE B: MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Executive Members

Ms Anna-Marie Schaller-Nangolo - Deputy Director, CODEL- UNAM (Chairperson)

Mr Wynand Diergaardt - Deputy Director, COLL-NUST (Vice - Chairperson

Dr Francine Keendjele - Deputy Director, Learner Support – NAMCOL

Mr Paulus Kashiimbi - Deputy Director, NIED

Ms Florence Kavirindi - Senior Education Officer, MHETI

Ms Theresia Dyakugha - Senior Education Officer, MoEAC

Alternate Members

Ms Bernadete Cloete - Coordinator - Academic Support

Ms Anna-Marie Biwa - Assistant Registrar

Mr Leonard Amunime - CODEL, UNAM

Mr Jan Nitschke - Deputy Director - PMD: NAMCOL

Mr Leonard Amunime – Senior Education Officer, NIED

Ms Rejoice Khama - Senior Education Officer DAE, MoEAC

CHAIRPERSONS: STANDING COMMITTEES

The ongoing success of the Trust is directly attributed to the standing committees and the Secretariat.

Mr Vilho Endjala - Research

Ms Antoinette Wentworth -eLearning

Mr Japhet Kazavanga – Publicity and Information

Ms Rochester Mushabati - Centre Support

Ms Brenda Kaumbangere - Training Committee

Mr Manfred Isack - Educational Radio Project

Ms Lise-Lothe Ngeama - Quality Assurance Committee

ANNEXURE C: SECRETARIAT

Ms Anna Imalwa - Executive Secretary

Ms Stellamaris Patoko - Office Administrator

Editor: Ms Anna Imalwa

Reviewers: Management Committee

Language

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