



## DEASA COUNTRY REPORT – NAMIBIA

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## **List of Acronyms**

**AGYW** – Adolescent Girls and Young Women

**BOU** - Botswana Open University

**CDT** – Courseware Development Team

**CODEL** – Centre for Open, Distance and eLearning

**COL** - Commonwealth of Learning

**COLL** - Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning

**CQAC** - Common Quality Assurance Criteria

**DEASA** - Distance Education Association of Southern Africa

**DEATA** - Distance Education Association of Tanzania

**DREAMS** - Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-Free, Mentored and Safe

IUM – International University of Management

**MoU** - Memorandum of Understanding

**NAMCOL** - Namibian College of Open Learning

**NOLNet** - Namibian Open Learning Network Trust

**NSSCO** - Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary

**NUST** – Namibia University of Science and Technology

**STEM** - Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

**ODL** - Open and Distance Learning

**OUM** - Open University of Mauritius

**UNAM** – University of Namibia

**QA** - Quality Assurance

## 1. Introduction

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) with its partner institutions were very fortunate to continue with their operations through various e-learning methods. This report showcases some notable achievements and commitments of the institutions in rendering quality support to the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) students. Although NOLNet through its partner institutions continue to make quality contributions to the Education for All (EFA) goal, alternative ways of executing activities and interventions were adopted amidst the pandemic. This DEASA report is represented by several ODL providers in Namibia. These are the: Namibian College of Open Learning (**NAMCOL**); Centre for Open, Distance and eLearning, University of Namibia (**UNAM-CODEL**), Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning and Namibia University of Science and Technology (**NUST-COLL**), Center for Distance and e-Learning, International University of Management (**IUM-CDeL**) under the umbrella of the National ODL Network Trust, the Namibian Open Learning Network Trust (**NOLNet**).

## 2. DEASA Key Performance Areas

### 2.1 Research Activities

During the assessment period, NAMCOL contracted the South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE) to conduct a study of reviewing the roles and functions of the College, as a way to inform its current mode of delivery of programmes as well the relevance thereof. One principle recommendation from this study was the transition of NAMCOL into a public Open University. At the same time, SAIDE undertook a Market Survey to determine the need of the following programmes: Diploma in Sign Language; B.Ed. Honors in Early Childhood Development; B.Ed. Honors in Primary Education; Community Health Workers Certificate in Psychosocial Support; and Diploma in Working with Children and Youth. The study revealed the demand for these programmes.

In its efforts to promote publication among staff, an article on the Dropout Survey entitled “Factors that influence learners’ decisions to dropout of subjects at the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL): Distance learning mode” has been published in the 2021 Issue 2

of African Educational Research Journal (AERJ). The article focused exclusively on grades 10 and 12 learners who dropped out of subjects they have registered for at NAMCOL.

With its current vision of becoming an Open University, the College continuously aims for the highest standard of service delivery, more especially when it comes to the use of online materials. Hence, a survey that assessed the use of online materials by the tutors and students/learners was conducted in 2020. The study revealed the need for the College to put in more efforts in ensuring that the Moodle and NotesMaster platforms are user friendly. Furthermore, the survey emphasised the need to train users of these online platforms in such a way that they are comfortable in using these platforms.

NOLNet through its 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).

Additionally, NOLNet awarded grants to one research team that conducted joint investigations in the area Student Support. The team comprises two (2) staff members from NAMCOL and one (1) from NUST, undertook a research study titled “*Constraints to the Effective Implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy of Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL)-Khomas Region Case Study*” the aim of the grant was to promote and enhance collaborative studies amongst partner institutions. A comprehensive research paper was presented to the NOLNet Management Committee and the Board of Trustees. The paper awaits to be presented at any local or international conferences and published subsequently.

COLL staff members excelled during the year under review with several published journal articles and book chapters.

**Shikulo, L.** (2020). *Chemistry – Oudindoli*. 1<sup>st</sup> edition. *Namvalue Investments, Namibia*.

**Shikulo, L.** (2020). The Epicentre of African Wisdom: True identity for claiming our natural global position. *Namvalue Investments, Namibia*.

**Shikulo, L. & Lekhetho, M.** (2020). Exploring student support services of a distance learning centre at a Namibian university, *Cogent Social Sciences*, 6(1):1-15.

Kandjengo, S.N. & **Shikalepo, E.E.** (2020). Open and Lifelong Learning as a Formula for Capacity Building of Men on the Side of the Road. *American Research Journal of Humanities & Social Science (ARJHSS)*, 3(9):15-21.

Nambira, G. & **Engelbrecht, A. D.** (2020). Critical Factors Influencing Women Advancement to Managerial Positions in Corporate Business Industry at Standard Bank Khomas Region Namibia, *International Journal of Academic Accounting, Finance & Management Research*, 4(5):1-10.

Due to restructuring changes as described in the introduction, CILT at UNAM had a reduction in Academic staff members with the potential to research and publish in ODL areas. Therefore, a lower research output resulted from this development.

#### **Publications for 2020 and 2021 at UNAM**

Haipinge, E., & Kadhila, N. (2021). Rethinking A Framework for Contextualising and Collaborating in MOOCs by Higher Education Institutions in Africa. *Journal of Learning for Development*, 8(1), 204-220.

Gunness, S., Tarling, I., & Haipinge, E. (2021). Gathering Expert Opinions on Self directed Learning and Online Assessment Using OER—A Delphi Approach for Redesigning Student Assessments. In *Radical Solutions for Education in Africa* (pp. 59-86). Springer, Singapore.

Haipinge, E., & Olivier, J. (2019). Paving the way towards success in terms of the 4th Industrial Revolution: The affordances of multimodal multiliteracies. *The Role of Open, Distance and eLearning in the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR)*, 39.

Haipinge, E., Beukes-Amiss, M., & Uunona, G. (2019). Monitoring and reflecting on the impact of quality assurance interventions through Action Research: A case of CODEL at the University of Namibia.

Hamunyela, M. N., Nekongo-Nielsen, H., & Tjiramba, E. (2019). Methods of health education used by indigenous communities in Kunene and Otjozondjupa Regions of Namibia. *The Namibia CPD Journal for Educators*, 5, 195-214.

Nyanga, E., Nengomasha, C. T., & Beukes-Amiss, C. M. (2018). Disaster Preparedness and Management at the National Archives and the National Library of Namibia. *African Journal of Library, Archives & Information Science*, 28(1).

The IUM CDeL is in the process of developing a research action plan for e-learning that will contribute to the University's research agenda in the area of Technology Enhanced Teaching and Learning looking at specific issues of Teaching and Learning Technologies, Open Educational Resources and Perceive ease of use on the Learning management system.

### **Ongoing Research and Development Activities**

IUM CDeL team continues to explore available tools to be integrated with the LMS, so we provide both our Lecturers and students with best Solutions that will enhance our online teaching and learning environment. Following are two plugins that the team is currently exploring as to see how best we can implement them within our LMS system.

- VPL- Virtual Programming Lab

This is an activity module that manage ICT related programming assignments. This plugin enables both lecturers and students to edit the programs source code in the browser. Students can run interactive programs in the browser, can run tests to review the programs, allows searching for similarity between files, and allows lecturers to set editing restrictions and avoiding external text pasting.

- Code Runner

This is a Moodle question type that allows Lecturers to run a program in order to grade a student's answer. By far the most common use of Code Runner is in programming courses where students are asked to write program code to some specification and that code is then graded by running it in a series of tests. Code Runner questions have also been used in other areas of computer science and engineering to grade questions in which many different correct answers are possible and a program must be used to assess correctness. Code Runner questions always run in an adaptive mode, in which students can click a Check button to see if their code passes the tests defined in the question.

## **2.2 Capacity Building**

At NAMCOL, A Research Day was held during the review period. The aim of the Research Day usually was to provide a platform for staff to share their research studies with other staff

members. By hosting the Research Day, staff members are encouraged to write research papers either by themselves, or in collaboration with other staff members or institutions, which can eventually lead to them publishing such papers.

Individually as a Centre or in collaboration with partners such as the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), CILT benefited and coordinated various capacity building interventions over the year under review.

Facilitator	Nature of training	Beneficiaries
CILT	Training on Office 365, Moodle LMS, Zoom Video Conferencing, Panopto lecture capture, Learning Design and online facilitation	CILT staff, UNAM lecturers, UNAM post-graduate students, partner institution staff
CILT	Rapid Development Process learning design model on how to transition face-to-face teaching to online and blended modes	UNAM lecturers, lecturers at University of Technology and Arts of Byumba, Rwanda

**While at NUST, One staff member from COLL was awarded her PhD degree** during the year under review, while four staff member was awarded their Master's degree. **Two staff members are registered for their Master's degrees, and three staff members are busy reading their doctorates.**

On the other hand, IUM CDeL ensures that staff development and training for academic, technical and support staff keeps abreast with changes in e-learning in order to facilitate effective production of e-learning materials and resources thereby supporting a high quality learning environment for students. The University ensures that staff development and training for academic, technical and support staff keeps abreast with changes in e-learning in order to facilitate effective production of e-learning materials and resources thereby supporting a high quality learning environment for students. The university also provides support and training in order to enable all students, regardless of previous technological experience, to make most effective use of e-learning tools. The directorate of ICT Services together with the Distance and E-Learning Centre held series of successfully training session for both Tutors/Lectures and Students. The training was on the use of the LMS functionalities and also for the online Content Development of University courses, with the aim to enhance and capacitate staffs on the use of LMS. A video tutorial had been made available to all lectures on how to setup live classes using Google meet, and integrate it with



the LMS. The Centre had suggested Google meet because it requires less internet connection which will enable both lecturers and students to connect with ease and have their live classes uninterrupted.

Furthermore, NOLNet 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.

## **2.3 Partnership and Collaboration**

NAMCOL signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) for the development of eLearning content as well as radio and video lessons for secondary education for grades 8 to 11. In addition, an MoU was signed with the Savings Bank Foundation for International Cooperation (SBFIC) for the testing of English language skills.

Furthermore, another MoU between NAMCOL was signed with the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). The MoU established a framework for cooperation in areas of research, quality assurance and programme development. Lastly, an agreement was also signed with the Commonwealth of Learning for the support of online content development on the NotesMaster platform.

While at NUST, the Coordinator for Instructional Design and Technology has been appointed as a member of the Advisory Board of the *Network of Open Educational Resources (OER) and Multimodal Self-Directed Learning in Southern Africa (NOMSA)*. She has been selected for this role because of her expertise within the context of OER and multimodal learning.

This Network aims to research and build OER and multimodal learning capacities in the Southern African region. The North-West University's UNESCO Chair administers the Network on Multimodal Learning and OER, its Executive Committee, and an advisory board consisting of Southern African Development Community members.

On the other hand, CILT collaborated with the following partners on the below-mentioned activities

Stakeholder/ Partner	Nature of collaboration	Activities
COL	Contribution agreement (funding)	Development of innovative learning design models and OERs ( <a href="https://rdp.colvee.org/">https://rdp.colvee.org/</a> ): Training of lecturers on adoption of learning design models; research on learning design, community of practice on Learning Design (LD).
AdaptIT	Collaborative activities through a Memorandum of Agreement	Benchmarking on use of Moodle in Higher Education; training of Moodle novice users through creation of user manuals and tutorials

Furthermore, ODL institutions through NOLNet collaboratively 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.

IUM CDeL established in 2021 has been collaborating with the ICT support departments and aim to seek further collaboration with stakeholders and build partnership that are aimed at improving online teaching and learning experience for both staff and students. The partnership programme include the hosting and services provision by Information and Communication Technology Services Department (ICTSD). Collaboration with stakeholders in the area of online learning and the collaboration with the HEI regulatory authority bodies like NCHE, NQA other international bodies that outlines the quality of the qualification programmes offered through distance, online and blended mode by IUM CDeL will enhance the quality education. Due to the nature of the online learning and teaching, IUM CDeL has been trying to collaborate with Internet Service Providers to make it possible for students and staffs to engage in teaching and learning online. The provision of internet, electricity resources and ICT devices are very much fundamental to the provision of distance and

online education in this era. Therefore, the collaboration and partnership with ISP and ICT devices suppliers in the country will bring great advantage to advance the online education in Namibia.

## **2.4 Policy Development and Facilitation**

NAMCOL developed a policy register that outlines all institutional policies, guidelines and procedures. The register also indicates dates when policies were developed, approved and new dates for review.

The year under review no new policy development and facilitation were taking place at NUST. The institutional OER Policy is still in the development stage.

While at UNAM, the following policies were approved and disseminated within the institution during 2021:-

- Open, Distance and eLearning (ODeL) Policy: dealing with the implementation of ODL and integration of eLearning in the delivery of learning and teaching for all modes of learning
- Open Educational Resources (OER) Policy: promoting the development and use of OERs in teaching, learning and research

The IUM CDeL is in the process of implementing an eLearning use Policy to guide our eLearning strategy that will provides a focus for the University wide teaching and learning development using appropriate technology on delivering courses online. The aim is to improve the range of pedagogic use of e-learning by academic staff and students and to support the delivery of blended and flexible learning, and to maintain the academic rigor of both undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Key to achieving this aim will be: 1. Providing a robust and responsive learning Management system 2. Providing suitable resources to implement the Strategy, at both faculty and University levels 3. Enabling academic staff to take the lead in developing and delivering e-learning 4. Continuing to carry out research into e-learning to ensure that IUM emerges to be a recognized Centre of excellence. An eLearning strategy is needed to guide and encourage faculties and departments to explore the use of technology in their teaching and learning process, and to help focus resources including infrastructure, staff development and support. The implementation of this strategy will be supported by the Centre for Distance and eLearning in conjunction with academic faculties/departments and information and communication Technology (ICT) services directorate.

## 2.5 Quality Promotion

Quality Assurance Awareness is an initiative aimed at promoting quality and raising awareness among staff on quality assurance matters. For the period under review, NAMCOL has embarked upon a series of training initiatives to capacitate and create awareness among staff in all departments at the head office on quality assurance matters.

The college has developed and implemented the institutional Quality Assurance (QA) manual. The manual stipulates how all QA activities are integrated into a single system that aims at ensuring continuous improvement of our service offerings and educational programmes.

At NUST, Quality assurance is an ongoing process at the university, especially at the Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning (COLL). The Courseware Development Team ensures that the development of study guides adheres to quality assurance criteria in each step of the development stage.

Interestingly, CILT at UNAM promoted quality assurance and enhancement in online learning through the following strategies:

- Development of online teaching guidelines with quality standards to inform minimum standards to be met.
- Development of quality assurance framework and mechanisms stipulating roles of various stakeholders in the quality assurance and monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment activities online.
- Embedded quality standards in the Rapid Development Process resources (<https://rdp.colvee.org/9-evaluating-the-course/> ) and in the subsequent training workshops.

The University Centre for Distance and eLearning, in conjunction with the Directorate of ICT Services visited the campuses to conduct an assessment on the usage of the LMS for blended learning. The main purpose of the visit was to: -

- To inspect the setup in halls and requirements for blended learning facilities - To inspect and resolve the lecturer's issues raised by the campuses.
- To conduct an assessment as to why some lecturers are unable to use/ load materials on the LMS for student to use.

- To inspect the setup of internet connection for the LMS requirements, and assess why the LMS keep going on and off as indicated by the various lectures on the campuses;
- To create awareness on the use of LMS for Teaching and Learning purposes.
- To install Digital Podiums to be used for online Teaching and Learning -
- To install computing servers with great capacity to handle the loads –
- To install reliable fiber/high speed internet to provide access to the end users;

The University delivers and maintains a robust, well-supported LMS and its components. A regular review to monitor changing academic requirements and the increasing sophistication of available tools are part of the ongoing support structure. IUM CDeL ensures that a variety of appropriate and robust online assessment tools, which match Lesson learning objectives, are accessible to all teaching staff. Where these tools are not currently available the University should take the lead in their development. The University ensures that the available ICT infrastructure provides a high quality, scalable and reliable 24/7 service (for both on campus and off campus learners) through its networks, servers, and the LMS and also ensures that the Institutional LMS is upgraded appropriately to provide staff and students access to up-to-date tools and services.

Furthermore, NOLNet through its committee on Quality Assurance 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.

## **2.6 Stakeholders Engagement Plan**

During the period under review, the NAMCOL approached the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to review the discussion paper on the transformation of the College into an open university as well as to provide technical support for the consultancy. COL has indicated its support for the project and has committed a consultant to work with NAMCOL on the feasibility project. The consultancy report was released and will be discussed with the key stakeholders in the next reporting period.

At UNAM, CILT has a Strategic Objective called Strengthen Strategic Relationships with Business, Industry, and Key Stakeholders, which was driven through the following initiatives:-

- Increase national and international partnerships and relationships with international institutions and industry
- Implement the Work Readiness Programme, to prepare students for industry placements
- Maintain the partnership database to reflect active agreements between UNAM and stakeholders.
- Facilitate the signing of new agreements with the Office of the Vice Chancellor (VC) for the purpose of Corporate Work Integrated Education (CWIE)

IUM provide educational programmes that are aimed to provide human resource capacity that is in demand for the industry and ready to solve current and future industry challenges. As required, the relevant stakeholders of the specified industry sector should endorse all programmes in Namibia. The high educational institution regulatory bodies in Namibia guides the IUM CDeL qualification programmes. Therefore, the University will continue to collaborate and engage with our stakeholders in order to provide the needed graduates with the required competence in the job market.

## 2.7. New innovations

At NAMCOL, the Moodle platform facilitated the introduction of online submission, marking and moderation of assignments in 2020. The same platform, promoted the online facilitation of sessions which allowed easy communication between tutors and students; sending of videos, notes and other information. In addition, a Diploma in Sign Language interpreting was introduced to train professionals to assist the section of society that feels excluded (Hearing Impaired). Furthermore, the College introduced fully online courses, such as; Certificate in English Communication (CEC), Certificate in Early Childhood Development (CECD), Postgraduate Diploma in Open School Operations and Management (PDSOM), Diploma in Early Childhood Development (DECPPE), Bachelor of Arts in Youth and Community Development and Certificate in Developing and Teaching Online Courses (CDTOC) as a short course.

At NUST, under the theme, **Innovation for Economic Revitalisation**, COLL came up with new and innovative ways to save cost and support structures when the university decided to

continue with Remote Teaching, Learning and Assessment (RTLA) to ensure that every distance education student is reached and supported. The academic and administrative departments worked around the clock to ensure that students in remote areas were reached and supported. The Courseware Development Team (CDT) joined forces with the Teaching and Learning Unit to ensure that the academics are trained to develop courses online and support students.

COLL started the 2020 academic year positively and **continued with the online submission of assignments on the MOODLE Learning Management System**. Based on the center's proactive approach, the transition from paper-based to the online submission of assignments was manageable when the lockdown was over, and the university continued with RTLA.

Furthermore, after the lockdown, the COLL academic and administrative support staff ensured that the distance education students could continue their studies. The team ensured that all DI students were linked and connected through Microsoft Teams to replace the face-to-face weekend tutorials. Another improvement was that the full-time lecturers at COLL offered MS Teams to all DI students, irrespective of where they were in Namibia.

Another significant milestone achieved by COLL was the implementation of the **flipbook** in the second semester of 2020. As a university of science and technology, the centre decided to convert the PDF study guide into a flipbook to support distance education students. Students have the freedom to download the flipbook or to print a hard copy if they prefer.

Additionally, COLL regional staff played a significant role in assisting full-time, part-time, and distance education students in writing their comprehensive tests at various regional centres. Students no longer traveled to the Main Campus in Windhoek for assessments under controlled conditions due to the travel restrictions. The COLL staff ensured that the comprehensive tests were administered under controlled conditions and dispatched for timely marking at the various centers.

On the other hand UNAM, CILT developed two key initiatives during 2021:-

- the innovative Learning Design Model called Rapid Development Process (RDP) simplified as per the Figure 1 below
- Learning Design Knowledge Hub in Figure 2.

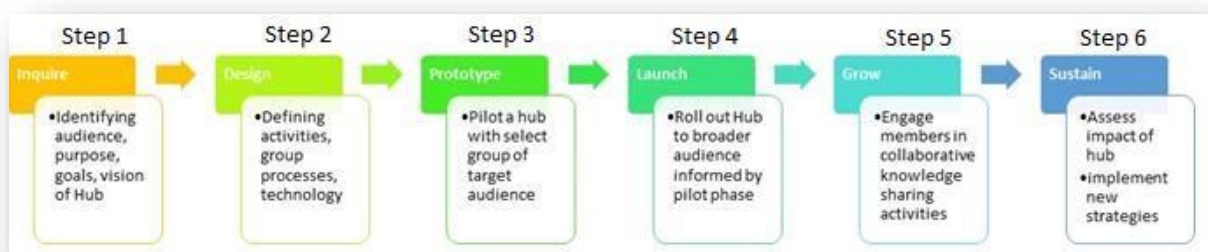
The RDP innovation is supported by an online reference website (<https://rdp.colvee.org/>) with resources ascribed as a Creative Commons license for use by educators.





**Figure 1:** The Rapid Development Process learning design model

Although the RDP model was workshoped to educators at various institutions, namely University of Technology and Arts of Byumba, Rwanda; University of Namibia; International University of Management (IUM) and the Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), further interventions are required to facilitate the adoption of this model into practice. This will be conducted through the implementation of the Learning Design Knowledge Hub (LDKH), whose implementation process can be summarised as per Figure 2 below. Steps 1 and 2 have already been completed. The process now awaits the activation of step 3.



**Figure 2:** Implementation process for Learning Design Knowledge Hub



### 3. Challenges

The COVID - 19 hampered progress for most of the institutions's activities in 2020, as some activities had to be cancelled or put on hold. Completion of some activities was also delayed and this negatively affected the delivery of some services.

COVID-19 presented challenges that affected our normal operations, but at the same time, new opportunities became viable. Virtual classrooms offered opportunities for many study programs that were ordinarily reserved for full-time students only could now be offered through Distance and eLearning regional centers of the institutions. Most of the institutions could not participate in any events due to the restrictions and measures due to COVID-19.

Challenges experienced were not unique to the institutions as they pertain to the impact of COVID-19 on their activities and services. These included:-

- The pressure to transition from one mandate (serving ODL mode of study) to another (serving all modes of study with an entirely new mandate)
- The expectation to develop orientation and training programmes for both students and lecturers to transition their teaching online
- Developing guidelines and quality standards to persuade accreditation bodies and other stakeholders about the quality of online learning
- Limited opportunities to research due to heavy workloads in supporting rapid transition to online learning
- Cancellation of research conferences and other in-person activities, and holding of research conferences virtually, which most participants were not used to
- Supporting curriculum transformation and restructuring activities of the University that have ODeL implications
- Dealing with the aftermath of the restructuring such as the closure of regional ODL centres that resulted in students travelling longer distances to nearest campuses, or relying on online platforms for all communication and accessing ODL services – some students faced the usual challenges of limited connectivity
- Dealing with mental health challenges brought about by loss of family, friends and colleagues by both students and staff.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, institutions managed to make noticeable progress in contributing to the development of quality distance education programmes. The 2020 academic year has been challenging, but the institutions could continue their operations. Alternative modes of service delivery were initiated to enable most of the institutions' operation to continue. All distance education students continued their education with RTLA and continued support from the academic and administrative support. COVID-19 has taught us educators to be innovative and flexible in our service delivery to our clients.

CILT and UNAM in general was characterized by sudden unplanned change and planned transformations such as restructuring. These changes were also a blessing to aspects such as the accelerated adoption of eLearning in learning and teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has a positive impact on the mandate of CILT as academics and students are now more open to the ODeL than they were before. With the revised mandate of CILT where, unlike CODEL that focused on ODL matters and the administration of the affairs of distance-mode students, the focus is now on serving the needs of all students regardless of their modes of study, this could be a policy and practice direction worth paying attention to by fellow ODL institutions across the region. The proliferation of technology in supporting learning for both face-to-face and distance, to apply online and blended learning is softening the boundaries between learning modes, thereby bringing questions of whether it is still relevant to distinguish these modes. Is the D in ODL still relevant, or should the focus of the field and its research initiatives be on how to make all learning more "Open" to all students – using technology or otherwise?

Going forward, ODL institutions in Namibia will remain focussed on finding ways to prosper with the support of NOLNet and Ministries of education, while learning from the extensive experiences of the ODL community globally.