



The development and delivery of learning content at NAMCOL and the importance of student support services in the provision of Open and Distance Learning

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The Namibian College of Open Learning develops learning content for all its Secondary and Tertiary Level Programmes, whilst content for its Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes is developed by the Namibia Training Authority (NTA).

The process of development and delivery of learning content constitute one of the core outputs of the College. Over the years, NAMCOL has been selling study material to secondary schools and the general public through both the Government textbook tender system and its bookshops. This exercise has proven to be popular with students and the general public. In order to enrich the quality of this service delivery, the College has successfully concluded the development of secondary education study guides for the new secondary education ordinary level curriculum.

This is a two-year curriculum for Grades 10 and 11. Moreover, the College developed full colour study guides to compete well in the market. These guides have been submitted to the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) for evaluation and when approved, it will be placed on the textbook catalogue to be available to all schools in the country and the public at large. Once the new higher - level curricula are available, the College will start developing higher- level study guides as well. With the eye on the future, the focus is on developing e-Learning content to supplement the print-based material.

Another development of note is that NAMCOL has developed 2000 radio lessons and 340 video lessons over the years. The radio lessons are aired on the NBC national radio station and several community based radio stations, while NAMCOL also streams radio lessons online from its on-campus studio.

The video lessons are broadcast on national television, NBC channel 4, and also stored on DVD and than made available to students and public through the Colleges' resource centres and bookshops at limited cost.

Online learning content for secondary education is developed and made available on the Notesmaster Namibia platform, while the tertiary learning content is developed and available on the Moodle platform.

In that regard, it is important to note that the Notesmaster platform is freely accessible to any person who wishes to access the interactive learning resources. The content is released as Open Education Resources under the Creative Commons license. In this way, educators and students can use the content and rework it or copy it in their own material or any other means, and share their material also with others for free.

As for the Moodle platform, this intervention is available to tertiary education students and tutors only. So far, two programmes, namely; Certificate in Early Childhood Development (CECD) and the Post-graduate Diploma in Open School Operation and Management (PDOSOM) have been loaded on the platform. CECD was piloted as an online course for the last two years, where e-tutors and students have been given free tablets, 3G dongle and data; and it will be introduced as a full online course together with PDOSOM in 2019. This development suits NAMCOL's profile as an open learning institution. And, pursuant to its mandate and character, the vision is to open up all programmes for those who want to study online, offered either in blended mode or fully online.

The development of study materials, both print and eLearning is a collective exercise where subject matter experts from other institutions join hands with NAMCOL's programme developers to form course teams. These teams include course writers, content editors, language editors, instructional designers, programme developers and programme managers. NAMCOL believes in the development of high quality study material that have gone through all the quality measures in order to be suitable for learners and other customers. The College has published many books and has gained experiences in publishing over the years. In the development of some secondary education material, the College has

partnered with Cambridge University Press (CUP) to learn from the best and co-publish these books with CUP. This partnership includes capacity building from CUP and has enhanced NAMCOL's internal capacity tremendously.

With high quality development and delivery of learning content come the responsibility of providing sustained online support to students taking courses online. Students are inducted for online navigation and accessing the course. Equally, tutors are trained to facilitate online courses and keep regular communication with students.

In view of challenges that might arise with Internet connectivity and bandwidth, NAMCOL is also considering the provision of electronic content offline for students and tutors. This foresight will ensure that there is no disruption in learning when the electronic systems experience downtime.

It is important to note that NAMCOL is a Public Enterprise and hence, it is the right of taxpayers to benefit from the College's investment. Therefore, study materials are sold below market value and made available to all Government schools through Government tender and the Government textbook catalogue.

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