Parallel Session 5B

**Distance Education
and Open Learning**

Articulation of the Namibian College of Open Learning (Namcol) and the Formal Education System in Namibia: a Case Study

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASE	Alternative Secondary Education
CCE	Caprivi College of Education
CED	Certificate in Education for Development
CLGS	Certificate in Local Government Studies
CYP	Commonwealth Diploma in Youth in Development
DNEA	Directorate National Examinations and Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
HIGCSE	Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
JSC	Junior Secondary Certificate
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MoE	Ministry of Education
NAMCOL	Namibian College of Open Learning
NEAB	National Examination and Certification Board
NHDABET	National Higher Diploma in Adult Basic Education and Training
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
UNAM	University of Namibia
UNISA	University of South Africa
VTCs	Vocational Training Centers
WCE	Windhoek College of Education

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1. ABSTRACT

1.   Issues of providing equitable access to post-secondary education are common in many developing countries. These issues are compounded by lack of targeted, deliberate articulation between formal and non-formal streams within certain education systems. Consequently, learners whose formal educational careers are cut short tend to end up in proverbial 'streetville', to borrow a colloquialism. Those who somehow manage to find alternative post-primary education providers are not necessarily assured of the acceptability of the qualifications they may obtain from such providers. Many people and organizations still sniff at qualifications obtained via the alternative secondary education route, thinking that they are inferior. Namibia is also grappling with similar issues. However, at least at planning and macro-policy levels, some of these issues have to a large extent been resolved. Demonstrating how this has been achieved is the remit of this study.

2.   The study discusses the articulation that exists between the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) and the rest of the formal education sector. It takes the angle that this articulation is a successful government intervention, which has removed the divide between formal and non-formal education in the pursuit of supplying education to all through the provision and enabling of complimentary systems. This intervention takes cognizance of the reality that formal education alone cannot cater for the educational demands of the expanding youth, as well as the diverse learning needs of all those who must access educational services.

3.   The study premises its research on a desk review of formal and non-formal trends in sub-Saharan Africa. Fundamentally, it a descriptive study of the case of Namibia and how this country is dealing with articulation issues with a view to preventing learner stagnation. The desk study is complimented by a review of relevant official documentation in the form of annual reports and policies, as well as interviews with selected key drivers in the education system.

4.   The case study starts with a background that locates NAMCOL in two spheres of influence, namely, a) the global educational discourse, with respect to provision of *'education for all'* and b) the educational and historical milieu that gave NAMCOL its definition, character and vision.

5.   The core premise of the case study is that in Namibia, articulation between the two streams of education is fairly well-defined and implemented, with learners having well-defined horizontal and vertical pathways of entry into, and exit from the various levels and streams of their educational trajectory. The overarching goals of this educational set-up is the facilitation of learner movement across the length and breadth of the educational spectrum, extending and expanding access, education for all, human resource capacity building, as well as working towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals MDGSs).

6.   The study attempts to answer the following question: **How can we supply the demand for post-primary education via (an) alternative(s) but without disadvantaging the learners?**

7.   Although the case study casts the articulation of NAMCOL and the formal education sector as a success story, and broadly shows this relationship as beneficial to all involved, it also recognizes that there are challenges that must still be tackled. To this end, the study makes a few recommendations to address those challenges.
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2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

8.　　*' - - - many of the current education systems in sub-Saharan are unable to cater for all the learners. The education systems are stretched with less financial resources and reduced numbers of teachers (many whom are either under- or unqualified), insufficient and poor quality learning resources. It is against this background that there is now a growing acknowledgement of the fact that access to meaningful basic education for all can only be assured through diversity in educational provision. The 'multiple and diverse learning needs' of children, youth and adults can only be met through multiple arrangements, the diversification of delivery systems and alternative modes of participation. (Katohoire, 2006)*

9.　　This quotation captures eloquently the challenge facing many developing countries, in particular sub-Saharan Africa, in the ever-continuing discourse about education provision for all. Countries are faced with shrinking resources and a burgeoning youth thirsting for education. Over the past decade, these challenges have led governments to put into place interventions that seek to address these challenges. These efforts have been documented by a number of academics and researchers (Katahoire, 2006; Siaciwena, *n.d;* Thompson, 2001; At the Crossroads, *2007;* Woldegerima, Mulugeta & Leka, 2002).

10.　　What seems to be emerging from this discourse is that the multiple challenges that face many education systems in sub-Saharan Africa can only be addressed through the utilization of 'alternative complimentary approaches - - - [as a vehicle] of meeting the educational needs of those who are not served by the formal education sector - - -' (Woldegerima, Mulugeta & Leka, 2002).

11.　　Like the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, Namibia continues to search for effective interventions regarding the provision of education to its increasing numbers of young people wishing to access educational services. A critical and deliberate intervention in this regard was the establishment, through an Act of Parliament in 1997 (Act 1 of 1997), of the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL). The Act provides the *legislative* framework for NAMCOL to provide alternative secondary education that is *on par with that offered through mainstream formal education.* It is important to highlight the importance of this point: many people tend to perceive this route of education as 'inferior, second rate or not "as good as" formal schooling (Fentiman, 2007:5). It is therefore instructive that the Namibian government, through its implementing line ministry, i.e. the Ministry of Education (MoE), grasped very early on in the educational trajectory of the newly independent state, the importance of providing comparable and equitable education to all who needed it, BUT through *different routes of access*. This is the basic of thrust of this case study.

12.　　The design of the study was devised by Chuma Mayumbelo, an English Language teacher educator specialist, and former Deputy Registrar of the Polytechnic of Namibia. She was supported by the leader of the Country Team, Mr Alfred Ilukena, the Under Secretary for Formal Education in the Ministry of Education. Also providing support were various officials in the Ministry of Education.
The initial design of the study included NAMCOL learners. However, this element was removed for the following two reasons:

a)　　an excellent tracer study was commissioned by NAMCOL in late 2006, with a view to establishing

b)　　whether learners' experiences at NAMCOL had been beneficial to their current situation and to try

c)　　finding out how many of them had gone on to further education or gained employment. The study was

d)　　published in February 2007.

e)　　four tertiary education institutions were contacted *independently* and they each confirmed that their admission processes and procedures do not differentiate between formal and non-formal candidates. All candidates are treated exactly the same, provided they present an accredited and recognized school-leaving certificate;

f)   the principals of two schools in the Khomas region as well as the inspectorate of the Khomas region were each interviewed *independently*; their narratives confirmed that non-formal learners are re-integrated back into the formal system, albeit not in very large numbers;

13.   All the regional education directors were contacted. Those who responded confirmed *independently* that structures, systems and procedures do exist that facilitates the re-integration of non-formal learners into formal education.

14.   Based on this initial survey, and the high level of consistency of the information gathered, the lead researcher, supported by the Country Team Leader, concluded that for the purpose of this study, sufficient qualitative information had been obtained to support the primary question of the study, namely: 'how can we supply the demand for post-primary education via (an) alternative(s) but without disadvantaging the learners?'

15.   The study is structured as follows:

16.   After the Executive Summary, Section 3 will present the background to the case study. This section will highlight the educational trajectory and problematic of education in Namibia that led to the establishment of NAMCOL This is followed by the methodology in Section 4. Section 5 presents the main findings of the study, which incorporate some of the issues and challenges presented by a dual system of education provision. The key findings of the case study are highlighted in the synopsis below:

a)   *a high-level, well-defined, seamless and synergistic relationship exists between formal and non-formal education, in the form of NAMCOL in Namibia. This relationship provides an enabling environment for learners to exit from the one and continue into the other, and vice-versa, without being unduly disadvantaged in any way;*

b)   *the system provides for the re-integration of non-formal learners back into formal education, although not in very large numbers;*

c)   *Mechanisms and systems for quality assurance exist to ensure comparability between the two streams of education. Thus in Namibia, there exists no distinction between formal education and NAMCOL concerning certification and quality assurance. Both the Junior and Senior Secondary Certificates are certified by the (MoE), irrespective of the stream from which the learners are coming. This is a very important consideration, particularly in the matter of assuring the public and employers that NAMCOL is not an inferior type of institution where the 'not-so-successful' learners are transferred to.*

d)   *non-formal learners are not disadvantaged when applying for admission to tertiary education institutions; they have the same opportunities to gaining entry into tertiary education institutions as their formal stream counterparts.*

17.   Despite these success, the study, however, also found that a number of significant gaps / challenges exist in the system. We highlight a number of them below:

a)   Of some interest is the matter of delivery of the full curriculum at all levels to non-formal learners. Whereas full time grade 12 learners can choose to take subjects at the Higher International Certificate of Secondary Education (HIGCSE), which is the equivalent of A-levels, the same option is not available to NAMCOL learners; they can only take their subjects at the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), which is roughly the equivalent of O-levels.

b)   Also to be noted is the fact that at both junior and senior secondary levels, not all the subjects are available for examination to non-formal learners. This is driven by certain constraints, primary of which is the matter of achieving 'economies of scale'. While this difficulty is

acknowledged, it must be pointed out it presents a dilemma in the matter of equity, which is one of the fundamental key drivers of educational policy in Namibia.

c)   NAMCOL's offers the same curriculum (or a portion of it) as that followed in formal education. The question is raised as to whether this academically driven curriculum is necessarily relevant to non-formal learners.

d)   The MoE has a well-established, excellent and helpful Education Management Information System (EMIS). This system is capable of producing very comprehensive reports on many aspects of the formal education system. However, certain chunks of information relating to non-formal education and to higher education are not available.

18.   On the basis of these, the following recommendations are made:

- for equity purposes, explore and determine the viability of offering all the subjects available and at all levels in formal education to non-formal learners;

- explore the relevance of the currently academically driven curriculum to non-formal learners, and if necessary, introduce an alternative, vocationally oriented curriculum, but whose outcomes, for equivalence purposes, are pitched at junior or senior secondary levels. This would be in line with NAMCOL's mandate, i.e. ensuring that learners are not only equipped with general education, but also to focus on professional skills; vocational skills; managerial skills; and economic self-improvement;

- Integrate essential information on non-formal education into EMIS, e.g., re-integration of such learners into formal education, progression to tertiary education, etc.

3. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

19.   The Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) was established by an Act of Parliament (Act 1 of 1997). The college became operational in 1998. The purpose of the establishment of this institution was to 'take education to the people', to deliver it at their doorsteps, as it were, through the establishment of alternative secondary education (ASE). In the Namibian context, this mode of delivery targets out of school youth, and adults who for one or other reason were unable to complete their secondary education. Additionally, NAMCOL has a mandate to 'design, develop and offer programs intended to upgrade and enhance 'levels of general education; professional skills; vocational skills; managerial skills; and economic self-improvement' (NAMCOL Annual Report: 2000:5).

20.   Prior to the creation of NAMCOL, distance education provision was not unified. It consisted of a number of disparate programs which candidates could take to earn the equivalent of either a grade 10 or grade 12 certificate. In 1994 these programs were rationalized and brought under one directorate, housed within the then Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC).   This directorate was the forerunner of NAMCOL, which became operational in 1998. During the days of the Directorate, fewer than 5000 learners were in 1994 enrolled in programs managed by the Directorate. However, this number started steadily increasing, so that by 1997, over 16 000 learners were being serviced by the Directorate. When NAMCOL became operational in 1998, it had just over 20 000 learners on its books (NAMCOL Statistical Digest, 2004: 6; NAMCOL Statistical Digest, 2005: 7).

21.   Since its establishment, the college has seen steadily increasing enrolment - from 20 018 in 1998, peaking to over 32 000 learners in 2002. Since then enrolment has stabilized to around 25 000 students per year (NAMCOL Statistical Digest, 2004: 6; NAMCOL Statistical Digest, 2005: 7). No other educational institution in Namibia has this number of students on its books, or even approaches it[i].

22.   As can be concluded, these figures represent a steep increase—four-fold in just four years—in the demand for post-primary education. The reason for this increase in NAMCOL's enrolment can be found directly in what is happening in the formal education sector, as indicated in Tables 1 and 2 below (see pages 14 and 15).

3.1. Educational context of NAMCOL

23.   In order to understand why was it necessary for the Namibian government to create a publicly funded institution catering for the needs of people who, for one or other reason, had not been able to complete their formal education, one has to understand three things: a) the type of macro-educational imperatives that underpinned the framework within which NAMCOL was created, b) the political history of the country, and c) what we shall term the 'global educational movement.'

24.   Firstly, if we take a very brief foray into education in colonial Namibia, we see that before her independence in 1990, education in Namibia was a privilege enjoyed by a few whites, rather than a right of all citizens. This practice was rooted in the ideology of apartheid, which fragmented education along racial and ethnic lines, and whose object of education was to 'train', in the most limited sense of the word, Blacks to be useful to their German and South African 'masters'. As Hendrik Verwoerd, the South African premier infamously credited as the chief architect of the odious apartheid ideology crudely put it, blacks were not to be educated 'above the level of certain forms of labor'; they were merely to be 'hewers of wood and carriers of water.' The instrument to achieve this was the infamous Bantu Education Act of 1953, which codified the educational discrimination of blacks in South Africa and Namibia. As can be imagined, this philosophy of education relegated the majority of black Namibians to 'a few years of primary education that generally functioned to reinforce their subordinate role.' (Toward Education For All, 1993:2) Literacy was negligible. The system was fraught with great inequalities, inequities and imbalances, particularly with respect to the allocation and distribution of resources. Prior to 1990, education for white children between the ages of seven to seventeen was free, but blacks parents had to pay for their children in cash or kind (Godana &

Ashipala, 2006). In addition, expenditure on a white learner was 10 times more than on a black child (National Society for Human Rights, www.nshr.org.na).

25.   Shortly before Namibia's independence, the Jomtien Conference happened in Thailand. Delegates and representatives from 155 countries, and 150 organizations adopted the *'World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action'*. This gathering redefined and reoriented education as a **right** of all citizens. Here it was recognized that development, in all its permutations, is driven, indeed, underpinned by a literate populace. Jomtien can be regarded as an extension of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose article 26 states that 'every child has the right to education, regardless of family background, sex, religion or geographic location' (cited in Woldegerima, Mulugeta & Leka, 2002:1).

26.   It was into this global nexus of educational discourse and influences that Namibia became an independent state, embracing the adopted educational principles adopted in Jomtien and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and consequently leading to the production in 1993 of a brief on education, culture and training – *Toward Education for All* – in which are encapsulated the four fundamental goals of **access, equity, quality** and **democracy** that have driven educational provision in the country. A fifth goal, namely **efficiency** was operationalized in 1996 (www.opm.gov.na).

27.   Thus, with the inequalities and imbalances cited above embedded in the inherited education system, clearly, one of the challenges for the newly elected government of Namibia was to address, repair, indeed, arrest, the societal inequalities wrought by the inequities of the education system. Providing broad access to education, as opposed to the limited and limiting pre-independence discriminatory policies and practices thus became a key consideration among policy makers in post-independence Namibia. This was underpinned and guaranteed by Article 20 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, which clearly asserts the right of all people to have access to free and compulsory basic education. However, widening access to education for all people is one thing, having the resources to maintain this is quite another. How was Namibia to achieve this feat?

28.   At this point it is instructive to note that Namibia did not re-invent the wheel. Thompson (2001) cites case study examples from East, Southern and West Africa where innovative interventions were being implemented with the purpose of providing education to certain groups of people, such as those who had left school because the financial burden was too high for the families, people displaced because of armed conflicts and/ or disasters, working children, those affected by HIV/AIDS, etc. In a similar vein, Katahoire (2006) refers to these interventions. A big theme of these interventions is the aspect of *non-formal education* and *alternative approaches to basic education* as alternative pathways to extend access to some of the groups of people referred to above (Katahoire, 2006; Siacwena *n.d;* Thompson, 2001*;* Woldegerima, Mulugeta & Leka, 2002).

29.   It was on this landscape of educational pragmatics that NAMCOL was created, so that it could become the vector through which young persons in Namibia (and others) whose educational careers had reached a cul-de-sac, like that of their peers elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, could complete their post primary education. In this manner, therefore, the MoE was fulfilling one of the primary goals articulated in *Toward Education for All: A Development Brief for Education, Culture and Training* (1993), namely, **access**. Already at its publication in 1993, the government had recognized, in *Toward Education for All,* that formal education alone would not be adequate to address the chronic access issues embedded in the system; there was already a realization of the need to supplement and complement educational provisioning via 'residential programs' (Toward Education for All, 1993: 105) with an ***alternative, parallel system <u>housed within the same Ministry</u>***, offering learners the same curriculum as that available in the formal stream, as well as certifying the qualification obtained through the non-formal stream.

30.   At the publication of 'Toward Education For All', it was already recognized that there was a huge demand for education across all levels, from primary education right through to tertiary education[ii]. This surge in demand for access to education is summarized as follows in *Toward Education for All* (1993: 104):

        '. . . Much of this demand is from adults and young adults who have already had some

education, formal or nonformal. Scattered throughout the country, they seek to upgrade their skills and to secure technical or professional certification. Distance education is the most practical and cost effective strategy for addressing this demand and providing quality education. Accordingly, to supplement and support its residential programs, the Ministry of Education and Culture is expanding and reorienting its distance education program. Distance education has several major strengths:

- *It is able to achieve significant economies of scale.*
- *It can share and therefore use more efficiently scare existing resources and personnel.*
- *It facilitates the democratization of the provision of education.*
- *It reaches isolated people and areas.*
- *It can spread new ideas quickly and widely.*
- *It enables people to learn while they continue to earn.*

3.2. Current post-primary education situation in Namibia

31.   Enrolment data in Grade 10 (see Table 1 below) shows clearly that on average, only about 46% of the learners who sit the Junior Secondary Education examination meet the requirements to proceed to the next level, namely, grade 11. The majority of these learners are 16 years or just over 16 years old.

Table 1: Time-series Examination Enrolment Data of Full time Grade 10 learners sitting the national examinations

Year	# Grade 10 sitting Exams	# Proceeding to Gr 11	%	#/% Learners not qualifying	
2002	25 658	12 539	48.86	13 119	51.13
2003	29 056	12 844	44.20	16 212	55.79
2004	28 870	13 177	45.64	15 693	54.35
2005	30 059	13 916	46.29	16 143	53.70
2006	31 493	14 335	45.51	17 160	54.48
Average	**29 027**	**13 362**	**46.1**	**15 665**	**53.89**

Source: Columns 1-3: DNEA Press Release; Columns 4-5: computed by author

32.   It is important to pause here and be instructed by two key policies in operation in Namibian education. The first is that the state will provide basic education to a child until that child reaches grade 10 or attains the age of 16, whichever comes first. The second consideration is efficiency, whose aim is to see learners flow through the system without repeaters clogging up the system by taking up classroom space, which as a necessity, must be taken up by those coming from behind.

33.   Taking an average of these five years, it becomes immediately clear that on average, only 46% of full-time grade 10 learners qualify to progress to grade 11. That leaves an average of 54% of very young people who cannot go back into the classroom because of the reasons cited above.

34.   In the same vein, of the roughly 14 000 full-time learners sitting the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), only an average of less than 2 600 candidates, or less than 20% of full-time grade 12 learners qualify to proceed to tertiary education, as can be seen in Table 2[iii]:

Table 2: Time-series Examination Enrolment Data of Full time grade 12 learners sitting the national examinations

Year	# Grade 12 sitting Exams	# Qualifying for admission to HE	%	#/% Learners not qualifying	
2002	12 745	1 449	11.36	11 296	88.63
2003	12 717	2 609	20.51	10 108	79.48
2004	14 166	2 675	18.88	11 491	81.11
2005	13 850	2 840	20.50	11 010	79.49
2006	14 318	3 393	23.69	10 925	76.31
Average	13 559	2 593	18.98	10 966	81

Source: Columns 1-3: DNEA Press Release; Columns 4-5: computed by author

3.3. Rationale for the case study

35.   The figures above tell a tale that is common in many parts of the developing world. Like many other countries in the developing world, and in particular sub-Saharan Africa, Namibia has a relatively high number of school-going children but does not have adequate resources to educationally accommodate all of them using conventional means of delivery. Out of a population of 1.8 million people, over half a million school-going children are enrolled in formal education (EMIS Educational Statistics, 2005). If we add to this the number of learners who simply dropped out of school and those who can no longer be accommodated in the schools because of internal pressures within the education system, then the numbers increase exponentially. The figures cited above also point to low completion rates as well as being indicative of low survival rates.

26.   Expansion of physical structures has remained moderate, perhaps even slow, after 17 years of independence. In 1992, there were 1325 state and private schools in the country. In 2005, the number stood at 1626 state and private schools combined. Annualized, this means that something like 17 schools have been built across the country annually, which roughly translates as 1.3 schools per region[iv].

37.   Given the fact that:

   a) many of the learners who do not 'make it' could not, indeed, CANNOT be accommodated in the formal stream, either because of space or age problems,
   b) it was not desirable to have large numbers of young people educationally dis/unengaged,[v]

it became necessary to have a credible and viable educational outlet that would absorb the numbers of learners who could not progress to senior secondary education or to tertiary education, because they had not met the minimum qualifying requirements.

38.   It can be postulated that the sheer numbers of non-qualifying learners, as indicated above, demanded a rethink of a number of issues, for example:

   • how educational resources could be deployed optimally across the education system;
   • how the goal of education for all could be attained without necessarily relying on one mode of delivery (i.e. diversification of delivery);
   • democratization of education;
   • a shift from supply-driven to demand-driven education;

39.   With these imperatives, NAMCOL was therefore created to address these issues, to exactly fill the gap that could not, and cannot be filled and satisfied by formal education alone. Over the years, the college has become the enabling vehicle through which alternative secondary education learners complete their post-primary education, while allowing formal education to take care of fresh intakes. *But even more importantly, because of the systemic formal linkages that exist within the MoE, those who take this route are assured that*

they will not be disadvantaged with regard to employment or further study opportunities. This is the central concept that gives the Namibian dual system of education provision its distinct character.

3.4. Objectives of the case study

40.   The study is premised on the acknowledgement that in sub-Saharan Africa, demand for education far outstrips the supply side of the educational provision equation. Developing out of this acknowledgement are the following objectives, with specific reference to Namibia:

- to investigate and analyze how the supply for the demand for education via alternative means can be achieved without disadvantaging the learners,
- to present the case of the articulation existing between NAMCOL and formal education as a possible model of best practice.

41.   This is seen as a unique achievement and innovation that provides learners with alternatives to complete their post-primary studies at their own pace. But even more importantly, a step in the right direction with regard to the attainment of education for all and the MDGs.

3.4.1.   Guiding questions

42.   To support the objectives, the following questions were thought to be instructive:

a) How is articulation defined and implemented in Namibia? Is there an interface between formal and non-formal education? What are the characteristics of this interface?
b) To what extent are the linkages visible at all levels within the education sector?
c) What are the objectives of this interface and linkages?
d) Is the integration satisfactory, and is it managed effectively?
e) What factors contribute to its successful implementation?
f) What are the advantages of duality and system integration?
g) What are some of the issues and challenges associated with the delivery to non-formal h) learners of syllabi intended for 'regular', mainstream learners?
i) What, if any, are the quality issues associated with this dual mode delivery?
j) Do NAMCOL learners have the same opportunities regarding re-entering the formal education stream and admission to tertiary education institutions?
k) Is the full spectrum of the curriculum, subject choices and levels of complexity available to non-formal learners?
l) What is the nature and type of subjects offered in non-formal education, and what is their relevance to non-formal learners?

4.   METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

43.   The case study approach was used. The aim was to carry out a detailed investigation of the articulation between NAMCOL and formal education. This approach enabled the Country Team to zoom in on what makes Namibia unique in its application of this articulation. By studying MoE and NAMCOL documents, as well obtaining supplemental information from key participants, the team was able to drill down to the factors that make this system tick, as it were.

4.1. The participants

44.   The study used certain selected people to supplement the desk review. The key participants of the study comprised the following people or groups of people:

- Senior Officials at NAMCOL
- Regional Directors in the MoE
- Senior Officials in the Directorate Examinations & Assessment
- Senior Officials in the MoE
- Admission Officials at the Polytechnic and University of Namibia
- Senior Officials at the Caprivi and Windhoek Colleges of Education
- Senior staff at two schools
- Inspectors

45.   As indicated in the Executive Summary, initially, it was intended that a sample of learners registered at selected tertiary education institutions would be included in the study. However, it was found that in late 2006, NAMCOL commissioned a tracer study whose main aim was to determine the contribution NAMCOL had made to the lives of its former learners as well as to find out how many of them had proceeded to tertiary education. Additionally, another study *(as yet unpublished at the time of writing this report)* was carried out by Koul and Rumble (2007), in which elements of the same issues are to be found. Rather than replicating the efforts of these two studies, the focus of this study was amended so that its thrust is about documenting articulation: *what is done and how it is done in the education system in Namibia.*

4.2. Selection of participants

46.   Purposive sampling was thought to be the best means of selecting participants for the case study. Thus, the following people or categories of people were selected because they are either key drivers in policy formulation and / or implementation.

4.2.1.   Ministry officials

47.   Officials forming a core part of policy formulation within the MoE and its various divisions were automatically selected to provide information and add value to the study.

4.2.2.   Admission officials at the Polytechnic and University of Namibia

47. As the only two institutions of higher learning of significance in the country, the admissions offices of these two institutions were contacted and a response sought from them to determine their admission policies regarding students offering qualifications obtained through the non-formal stream.

4.2.3.   Officials from Colleges of Education

48.   Similar to the Polytechnic and University of Namibia, officials in these colleges were the people best placed to inform this study about policies and practices relating to admission of students in the colleges. The officials selected included the Rector of Windhoek College of Education (WCE) and members of the Recruitment and Selection Committee. A prominent and long-serving member of the Recruitment and Selection Committee at Caprivi College of Education (CCE) was also selected. These two colleges, situated in diverse parts of the country, represent 50% of the colleges of education in the country, and they were

selected to determine whether they employed similar practices in the admission of students to the teacher education program.

4.2.4. Principals

49.   All the Principals of state schools have to deal with admitting grade 11 learners coming in from NAMCOL, on top of 'their' mainstream learners who were in grade 10 the previous year. They are key players in the 're-integration' of learners who exited the formal stream and wish to come back. It was important to establish how they do this and the challenges they experience.

4.3. Sources of information

50.   To inform and complete this study, information was obtained from a number of sources, including but not limited to the following:

- MoE policy documents
- NAMCOL annual reports
- NAMCOL statistical digests
- DNEA press releases of grades 10 and 12 examination results
- EMIS Educational Statistics

4.4. Data collection procedures

51.   Data were collected using qualitative approaches. The following methods were used:

- review of NAMCOL's annual reports and statistical digests
- review of official Ministry documents, in particular DNEA press releases and EMIS reports
- interviews with senior NAMCOL officials and the Rector of Windhoek College of Education
- formal and informal conversations with MOE officials and a member of the recruitment and selection committee at Caprivi College of Education
- telephone interviews with senior staff at secondary schools and the Senior Admission Officer of the Polytechnic of Namibia
- email correspondence between the lead researcher and the Regional Directors of the MOE, senior official in the MoE, recruitment and selection official at the Caprivi and Windhoek Colleges of Education
- email correspondence between the lead researcher and the Registrar of the University of Namibia
- discussions with MoE officials

52.   The interviews and discussions with the participants were based on questions developed by the lead researcher, emanating from and informed by the terms of reference. The lead researcher worked closely with the national coordinator, who is also the Under-Secretary for Formal Education in Namibia.

5.   MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

5.1. How is articulation defined and implemented in Namibia? Is there an interface between formal and non-formal education? What are the characteristics of this interface?

53.   The information concerning these questions was obtained through discussions with key officials in the MoE. An un-attributed and unpublished report (written by an official in the MoE and titled *System Articulation of the Ministry of Education*) also outlines very clearly how articulation is defined and implemented in the MoE. Emerging out of these discussions and review is an understanding of the concept of articulation in Namibia, which boils down to *integration of various sub-systems within the education sector, providing for lateral and vertical movement of learners at all levels within the education sector*. Discussions with senior NAMCOL staff also confirmed this understanding; they see the current set-up as enabling non-formal learners to move fairly with ease through the different levels in the education sector.

54.   A practical application of this understanding can be translated into the diagram below, which maps out graphically how 'systemic articulation' functions in Namibia and the different pathways enabled by the different linkages.

Figure 1: System Articulation within the Ministry of Education
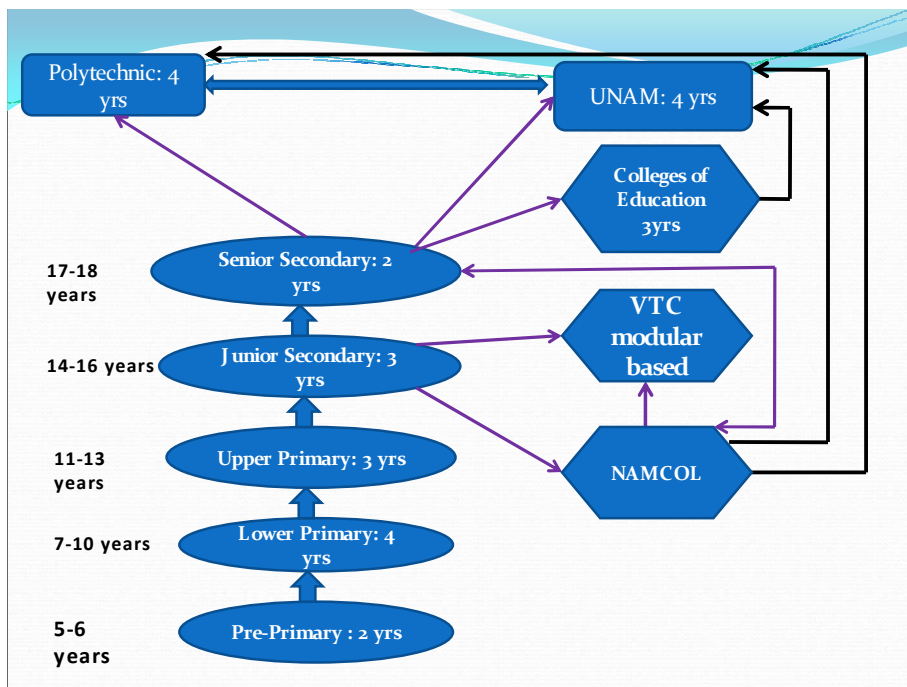
55.   This understanding and application of systemic articulation is consistent with the definition of the concept provided by Katahoire (2006). Citing Hoppers (1999), she provides a useful distinction between three types and levels of articulation / integration. The first is the systemic type. At this level, structural linkages exist between and within the different education sub-systems. Some of the considerations these linkages attempt to address have to do with setting credit equivalences of 'learning outcomes and certification and in making arrangements for ladders and bridges such as re-entry into formal school' (ibid). The second type of articulation / integration happens at the institutional level. Here, the focus is on the integration of 'conventional and non-conventional elements within the same learning organization'. One of the ways this can be achieved is through the 'introduction of open learning approaches into formal schools, distance education methods into non-formal schemes or arranging fast track options using multimedia provisions' (ibid). The third type of articulation / integration is programmatic integration, which happens at

the micro-level and is concerned with, for example, 'bringing elements together within a single course of program of learning such as work experience or community projects into formal education or sharing the use of laboratories between formal and an non-formal classes (ibid). Katahoire goes on to assert that there are a number of examples that exist in sub-Saharan Africa to demonstrate this form of integration.

56.   A quick analysis of what goes on in MoE easily determines that the character of articulation in Namibia is best defined as 'systemic', although elements of the other two are discernible. Using Figure 1 above as a guide, it can be seen that in Namibia, planned and **structured** horizontal and vertical linkages that are intended to facilitate learner movement within the entire education sector are operational. In this context, the 'infrastructure' has been deliberately crafted through macro-policies. It is therefore possible for a learner to exit, **for whatever reason**, the formal education stream, in Grade 10 for example, enroll with NAMCOL, obtain the number of qualifying points[vi], and be re-integrated into the formal stream at Grade 11 level.

57.   The table below gives an indication of the number of NAMCOL learners that were absorbed back into Grade 11 in the different educational regions:

Table 3: NAMCOL learners re-entering formal education at Grade 11 level

REGION	2005	2006	2007
Caprivi	88	108	124
Erongo	51	57	62
Hardap	4	7	10
Karas	7	18	23
Kavango	136	206	211
Khomas	145	120	165
Kunene	109	85	111
Ohangwena	118	208	201
Omaheke	32	18	23
Omusati	265	473	490
Oshana	112	252	233
Oshikoto	11	168	183
	1078	1720	1836

Source: Ministry of Education, 2007.

58.   At first glance, these figures may seem, perhaps indeed, may be dismissed insignificant. However, when juxtaposed against the national Grade 11 gross enrolment, which in 2005[vii] was 14 777, it becomes clear that up to 12% or more of NAMCOL learners are being re-absorbed back into the formal education stream[viii].

59.   Two points are worth noting here. The first is that it can be seen from these figures that movement of learners between the two streams does take place, though reintegration of non-formal learners into the formal stream does not happen on a seriously large scale.
60.   What procedures are in place to facilitate the reintegration of non-formal education into the formal stream? At regional level, each region has what are known as 'Placement Committees', which comprise Inspectors and Advisory Teachers. The function of these committees is to ensure, as best as possible, given the constraints within the system, that ALL learners qualifying proceeding to grade 11, regardless of which stream they are coming from, are given as good a chance as possible to continue their secondary school careers. This is especially significant because the framework recognizes the reality that a learner's education may have been interrupted through no choice of their own. For example, they may simply not have met the promotional requirements to proceed to the next level. Or they may have interrupted their schooling perhaps to take care of sick relatives affected by or infected with the HIV / AIDS. In this respect, the Namibian system does not discard those who, metaphorically, fall by the educational wayside, but has created effective bridges that allow learners to attempt to complete their post-primary education, inclusive of tertiary education. This has allowed a not insignificant number of learners in 'getting on' with their lives *(see page 22 below, 'Certification and accreditation', for figures)*.

61.   The second point raises a rather controversial question: since the avenue exists for learners to continue their post primary education through parallel, comparable non-formal education, is it desirable that those learners should be reintegrated back into the formal stream? Does not such a practice defeat the very purpose for which NAMCOL was created?

62.   It is not within the scope of this paper to probe these questions, nor to discuss the micro details of the learner movement indicated above and all its permutations and implications; our purpose here is to merely give *indicative* information relating to how systemic articulation is given expression in Namibia.

63.   In order for the systemic articulation to really function, certain macro-structures and policies that facilitate the movement of learners between the two complementary streams of education have to be in place. These are defined in the following fundamentals:

a) Curriculum

64.   At secondary school level, it is possible for NAMCOL learners, indeed, all learners, to move in and out of either stream without being disadvantaged. This is made possible by the fact *the two streams offer the same curriculum and syllabi, driven by the same outcomes determined by and housed within one Ministry.* All subjects comprise subject panels, which are under the jurisdiction of the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED). This organization is charged with the responsibility for 'evaluating, designing and developing curricula for the education system, introducing effective approaches to teaching and learning, coordinating the development of instructional materials, educational research, preparing and coordinating an effective system of pre-service and in-service teacher education, and providing training in educational management' (www.nied.edu.na). NAMCOL enjoys statutory representation on all the Curriculum Panel Committees, providing input into the structure and content of the syllabi, and making sure that these two twin functions cater for the needs of learners who are not in formal schooling.

65.   One of the beneficial spin-offs of this curriculum synergy between the NAMCOL and the formal education sector can be observed in the area of instructional material development. In an interview with senior officials at NAMCOL, it was found that the learning materials developed by NAMCOL are used in the schools. The materials have been evaluated by NIED and declared to be of a superior quality and have subsequently been placed on the MoE's catalogue. This collaborative partnership can only be beneficial to both streams, as will be shown below.

b) Certification and accreditation

66.   A fundamental bedrock of the success of the articulation as it is implemented in Namibia is the quality assurance provided through the certification of qualifications obtained through the NAMCOL route. This is the real acid test of the effectiveness of the system.

67.   Because NAMCOL falls within the scope of 'non-formal' education, it is easy for the public to write it off as a third rate institution offering dodgy qualifications. Policy-makers early on recognized this as a potential barrier to the educational welfare of on-formal learners wishing to make a difference to their lives as well as in the concrete pursuit of education for all. Therefore, a regulatory framework, in the form of the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA) was mandated to harness and *regulate* the activities of non-formal educational provision. One of the ways the Directorate does this is to keep close tabs on the opening of tuition and examination centers. In this context, a person /s wishing to open a tuition centre can only do so once they have satisfied the stringent criteria laid down by the Directorate, ratified by its Board, whose regulatory mandate derives from a legislative framework[ix] (Act 16 of 2001) .

68.   Through this mechanism, a number of key benefits are delivered to both the learners and other stakeholders, such as employers. We highlight four of them here.

69.   Firstly, through the legislative framework, Namibia has equipped the education line ministry to properly **quality assure all and any educational provision that happens outside the formal education system as on par with national standards**. This has gone a long way in ensuring that non-formal learners are protected from unscrupulous providers who may, to use a colloquialism, 'take them to the cleaners'. As a result of this regulatory framework, NAMCOL learners are assured that not only does their 'qualification' enjoy official accreditation; it is also accepted by external stakeholders, for example, employers. This is borne out by the results of the Fentiman (2007:6) Tracer Study commissioned by NAMCOL. In this study, it was found that:

- *39% of the respondents were enrolled in further education*
- *56% of former learners were employed*
- *39% of those participating in the study said that NAMCOL made a significant difference in helping them find employment.*

70.   Although the sample studied was small (as Fentiman acknowledges), for the purposes of this case study, the results are indicative of trends regarding the acceptance and acceptability of 'NAMCOL qualifications[x]' in the wider community. More importantly, these results confirm that NAMCOL, as a state-funded vehicle intended to broaden access to education, is making a significant contribution with respect to the delivery of the mandate it is charged with, namely, to 'take education to the people' through the delivery of ASE.

71.   The second key benefit is realized at programmatic level. As has been mentioned above, the synergy existing currently between NAMCOL and the mother Ministry allows for 'cross-fertilization' of ideas in so far as this relates to the **improvement of content and standards, as well as allowing for a fuller use of existing program facilities and equipmen**t (Miller & Imel, cited in Naylor, 1987). We can see the operationalization of this concept in the manner in which the curriculum is shaped and the cross-exchange of instructional materials.

72.   The third benefit is related to the learners—it can only be a huge benefit to them that alternative and diverse pathways exist in the system that allow them to continue with and complete their education.

73.   The fourth benefit in this articulation arrangement, that it *reduces duplication of learning* (ibid). This works in two ways. Firstly, when a learner in grade 10 does not obtain the qualifying points necessary to proceed to grade 11, that learner only needs to register with NAMCOL for the subjects s/he did not pass in grade 10. This spares the learner the effort of repeating the entire grade 10 curriculum.   Secondly, after a learner has completed the prescribed curriculum through non-formal education, or when they exit at any point, they are assured that when they choose to continue, they will begin on a level different from and (usually) higher than that at which they exited. The existence of these outlets and pathways work to '*support high school completion'* (ibid). So, once again, the notion not only of facilitation of learner movement, but also of widening access to educational services through alternative means, is underlined here.

5.2. To what extent are these linkages visible at all levels within the education sector?

74.   Within basic education, the articulation is very well-defined, and the linkages are clearly visible and facilitated by policy frameworks. At further and tertiary education levels, the linkages do exist, although they do not operate within the same policy frameworks that inform operations at basic education level. This is on account of the fact that further and tertiary education institutions[xi] operate as autonomous institutions; they design and implement their own policies, with little or minimal intervention from the line Ministry.

75.   At face value, this could be misconstrued to mean that these institutions operate as inaccessible / untouchable islands within the system. However, an analysis of the admission polices and practices, done via the Admissions Offices of both the Polytechnic and the University of Namibia, confirmed that ALL learners offering the H/IGSCE certificate or its equivalent are treated on an equal footing when it comes to admissions. No preference is given to any group / stream of learners. What the institutions are interested in are learners meeting the selection criteria[xii]. These criteria are set at two levels, namely, general admission requirements and program-specific admission requirements. A learner applying for admission must first satisfy the former, and if a program has additional requirements, the learners must satisfy those as well. There is no extra-ordinary differentiation accorded to NAMCOL applicants; as far as the tertiary education institutions are concerned, NAMCOL learners are *ordinary* Grade 12 learners. To illustrate this point, we provide, in Table 4 below, a very small sample of such NAMCOL learners who have gone on study at one tertiary education institution, namely, the Polytechnic of Namibia:

Table 4:   Sample of NAMCOL Students Registered at the Polytechnic of Namibia

	First Years	NAMCOL Year	Successfully completed 1 semester		3rd Years	NAMCOL Year	Successfully completed 5 semesters
1	200618334	2005-2005	√	1	200517031	2004	√
2	200628836	2005	√	2	200501313	2000-2003	√
3	200716441	2004-2005	√	3	200546120	2004	√
4	200733133	2005-2006	√	4	200534564	2002	√
5	200603973	2006	√	5	200442732	2003	√
6	200714911	2006	√	6	200509748	2002-2003	√
7	200736900	2004-2005	√	7	200502913	1998-2000-2003	√
8	200763067	2006	√	8	200527525	2003	√
9	200542214	2005-2006	√	9	200235257	2002-2003-2004	√
10	200542265	2005	√	10	200225081	2001-2002-2003	√
11	200745336	2005-2006	√	11	200304925	2003-2004	√
12	200761633	2004-2005-2006	√	12	2004240076	2003-2004	√
13	200750623	2006	√	13	200339982	2004	√
14	200735888	2004-2005	√	14	200428985	2004	√
15	200750399	2006	√	15	200317105	2003	√
16	200617389	2004-2005	√	16	200437011	2004	√
17	200754866	2002-2003	√	17	200406710	2004	√
18	200726048	2006	√	18	200413724	2003-2004	√
19	200744194	2001	√	19	200429558	2004	√
20	200766414	2006	√	20	200440063	2003	√
				21	200546937	2003-2004	√

Source: Academic records—Polytechnic of Namibia

76.   All of these students have successfully completed either the first semester of their first year, or are in their third year, having successfully completed five semesters of their tertiary education career. All of these students will be sitting their examinations in November. Passing these examinations will lead to a National Certificate for those in the first year, and a National Diploma for those in the third year. The latter will either exit after they have received their diploma, or they will continue with their Bachelors degrees.

78.   A similar route is followed by the Colleges of Education, with the slight difference that the colleges follow a national, uniform system of admissions[xiii]. Students entering the colleges come in with Grade 12 from either the formal or non-formal stream.

79.   Similarly, young persons exiting the formal education stream, for whatever reason, may enter the Vocational Training Centers (VTCs), the only proviso being that they must meet the standard admission criteria, the minimum of which is successful completion of grade 10.

80.   A fascinating trend emerging out of this is that sometimes the admission period actually favors NAMCOL or non-formal candidates. According to a member of the Recruitment and Selection Committee CCE, this rather startling finding is due to the fact that when the admissions process opens (usually in June), many non-formal candidates may already have **complete** Grade 12 results because of having had the opportunity to re-sit the national examinations in June. In contrast, full-time Grade 12 candidates can only be admitted conditionally – subject to them successfully completing Grade 12 and obtaining the minimum number of qualifying points required for them to enter tertiary education institutions.

81.   Of particular significance in the Namibian education system is the fact that students acquiring national qualifications from the Colleges of Education and the VTCs can proceed to acquire advanced qualifications, if they so wish, at either the Polytechnic or the University of Namibia. For example, students graduating with the Basic Education Teacher Diploma can proceed to do the Bachelor of Education Degree with the University of Namibia. Similarly, those graduating at a certain level from the VTCs can proceed to do Engineering degrees at the Polytechnic of Namibia. Due regard is given to the credit earned by the students, who may earn exemption from doing certain courses at certain levels.

82.   There is an added facet of integration in the system. Perhaps little known to many people in Namibia is the fact that NAMCOL does not only offer post-primary education through its alternative secondary education route; it also offers professional programs, namely, the Certificate in Education for Development (CED), Commonwealth Diploma in Youth in Development (CYP) the Certificate in Local Government Studies (CLGS). The CED and CYP are two-year study programs while the CLGS is a one-year program. Successful completion of the CED gains the graduands entry into the third year of the National Higher Diploma in Adult Basic Education and Training (NHDABET), a program offered by UNISA (NAMCOL Annual Report, 2004: 12). Thus, one year of additional study can lead to the acquisition of an advanced qualification. This is quite a significant achievement, considering the fact that UNISA is a foreign institution. An interview with senior NAMCOL staff also revealed that candidates who successfully complete the CLGS can gain access to the University of Namibia's program in local government.

83.   Another important feature of the systemic interface happens between the two top tertiary education institutions. As depicted in Figure 1, students can, provided they satisfy certain requirements that may be set by the Senate of each institution, begin their studies at one of the institutions and switch to the other institution without too many complications[xiv].

84.   Once again, the point about the synergy existing between the different levels and sub-systems of education is underlined, suggesting that careful thought and planning have gone into providing life-changing and alternative and diverse pathways to learners.

5.3. What are the objectives of this interface and linkages?

85.   The Executive Summary of this paper began with the following apt quotation from Katohoire (2006)

' - - - many of the current education systems in sub-Saharan are unable to cater for all the learners. The education systems are stretched with less financial resources and reduced numbers of teachers (many whom are either under- or unqualified), insufficient and poor quality learning resources. It is against this background that there is now a growing acknowledgement of the fact that access to meaningful basic education for all can only be assured through diversity in educational provision. The 'multiple and diverse learning needs' of children, youth and adults can only be met through multiple arrangements, the diversification of delivery systems and alternative modes of participation.

86.   Fundamentally, the interface and linkages embedded in the education system in Namibia attempt to address Katohoire's very accurate observation. The model used in Namibia suggests a *comprehensive and holistic approach* to education that focuses on the learners, providing them with 'bridges and ladders', which, as mentioned elsewhere in this paper, allow them access to education. Without belaboring the point too much, quite simply, the overriding purpose of all these efforts and interventions is rooted in the simple acknowledgement of the limitations of formal education—it alone is not adequate to take care of everybody's educational needs; it cannot be the sole driver of educational provision.

87.   In a nutshell then, the overriding objective of the interface operating in Namibia is to provide opportunities for learners who drop out of the formal system to still complete their post-primary studies. The system offers the option of a parallel system to maximize access to post-secondary education. The interface also provides for a dual system comprising sub-systems that complement and supplement each other. It promotes open learning as a viable, credible and reliable system in its content, quality and delivery. The fact that learners /students can move within the formal and non-formal streams fosters equity, quality and interdependence of and within the education system.

5.4. Is the integration satisfactory, and is it managed effectively?

88.   It was found that in general, yes, and the very fact that NAMCOL students are readmitted back into the formal system is testimony to the satisfactory integration and effective management of the system. Of particular significance here is the management of the numbers of learners completing grade 10 through either stream. Although the numbers of NAMCOL learners coming back into the formal stream are hard to come by, they are nevertheless available in different places and formats.

89.   A significant facet of whether the integration is satisfactory and managed effectively is the representation of NAMCOL on important decision-making vehicles, such as curriculum panels and the National Examinations and Assessment Board (NEAB). This arrangement recognizes that NAMCOL is a critical stakeholder in the quest for education for all, and the input of the college is valued and integrated into the most important decisions that affect teaching and learning, as well educational policy.

90.   Discussions with Ministry officials also revealed that at policy level, the integration is satisfactory. Systems and procedures, such as placement committees, are in place to ensure that the integration is managed effectively, and it delivers the results, as best as possible, it is intended to deliver. However, *it should be noted that a significant number of NAMCOL students do not get places back into formal education, not because they are not allowed but rather because of limited spaces in formal education*, a situation that bedevils much of the developing world.

5.5. What factors contribute to its successful implementation?

91.   NAMCOL is an autonomous institution, with its own Board of Governors. However, its foot is firmly planted in the MoE, and vice-versa. This close association links NAMCOL closely to the MoE in its programs and other activities. For this reason, it is possible for NAMCOL to align its program activities to those of formal education. NAMCOL uses the same curriculum as that of formal education, its learners are examined by the DNEA, and the qualifications obtained are certified by the MoE. The students' examination scripts (other than tests for continuous assessment), are marked by markers in the formal education. In fact, the majority of, if not all, the tutors employed by NAMCOL are teachers teaching in the formal education sector. In this way, the whole system benefits from the critical reflections of practitioners whose input may help to improve teaching and learning in both streams.

92.   Formal education uses modules and study guides produced by NAMCOL for teaching and learning in its programs as these materials have been found to be more user- friendly and helpful to learners.

93.   NAMCOL sits on the curriculum panels of the Ministry and contributes to the revision of subject syllabuses.

94.   So, all these factors, in addition to NAMCOL being a state-funded operation, make implementation of articulation possible and ensure close cooperation across the two sub-systems.

5.6. What are the advantages of duality and system integration?

95.   From the outset, the housing of the two streams delivers a very big advantage in that it removes the polarity that has traditionally existed between formal and non-formal education. The removal of this dichotomy serves a significant function, namely, the acceptance of qualifications obtained through the non-formal by the general public.
103.   In summary, the major advantages of duality and system integration are that:

- • 	 it allows for free flow of students within the system;
- • 	 the programs are articulated across the system;

- it allows for common standards for examination and assessment,
- it provides for a wide share of educational resources and infrastructures;
- it minimizes and / or removes duplication of learning;
- it provides common accreditation and certification.

5.7. What are the issues and challenges of duality and system integration?

96. Managing a dual system of education whereby learners access educational services from more than one stream presents a number of challenges for the MoE. We highlight some of these issues below:

5.7.1. 'Die-hard' perceptions.

97. It is hard to sell to the public the notion that open and distance education is just as good as formal education and that qualifications so obtained are equal to those in formal education. For many Namibians, NAMCOL is still perceived as not offering the same quality of education as formal education. As in may other countries, the majority of people in Namibia have been conditioned to think that *'conventional, traditional'* education is the best that a child can have. Therefore, anything that attempts to shift this belief is seen as being sub-standard. Open and distance education has proved that if properly managed and resourced, it has the potential to reach thousands of learners far from the centre and be accessible to hundreds or thousands who would otherwise have been excluded, but many Namibians (including lawmakers!) are still not convinced of its role, importance and quality.

5.7.2. Syllabi

98. As has been stated elsewhere in this paper, NAMCOL is a tuition centre. As such, its learners follow the same syllabi as those in the formal education stream. Naturally, the conditions under which formal and non-formal learners conduct their studies are somewhat different. When matters of differentiation of this nature arise, it is important to design syllabi that cover the core outcomes for both streams, but without compromising the quality of those outcomes and the quality of the learning.

5.7.3. Opportunities for NAMCOL learners regarding re-entering the formal education stream

99. The current articulation set-up allows for the re-integration into formal education of NAMCOL learners into Grade 11. This is achieved through the mechanism of 'Placement Committees', which work as follows:

100. During the course of an academic year, Grade 10 learners are given an opportunity to select the schools they would prefer to enroll at in Grade 11 the following year. At the beginning of an academic year, all the Principals of schools in each educational region will meet, together with the Director of the region and / or their deputy, and Advisory Teachers. This group of people will place the learners into the schools they have selected according to order of preference, availability of space, and curriculum packages. The first priority is given to learners in the region in formal education, followed by learners whose parents / guardians have transferred to the region. The last priority is given to NAMCOL learners.

101. To illustrate: in an interview, the Deputy Principal of one of the schools in the Khomas region said that in 2007, the school has 295 Grade 10 learners, but only 180 spaces in Grade 11. In 2008, those 180 spaces will be taken first by qualifying learners in that school, before any other learners, including NAMCOL learners, are considered. Also in an interview, an Inspector in the Khomas region said that in

2007, less than 200 NAMCOL learners could be placed in schools in the Khomas region, out of a population of more than 1000 qualifying learners.

102. It can be deduced from the above that although the policy intention infrastructure are there for NAMCOL learners to be re-integrated into formal education, the conditions are not very favorable for them. As a result, they go back and begin the first leg of their Grade 12 syllabus – as NAMCOL learners.

5.7.4. Opportunities for NAMCOL learners regarding entering tertiary education

103. It was established that NAMCOL learners stand as good a chance as their formal education counterparts to enter into tertiary education institution. But what are the limitations they face?

104. At least one such barrier has been identified. In formal education, the curriculum is structured and packaged in a certain way. This structure helps learners to make career choices. This is not so for non-formal learners; they can simply select whatever combination of subjects they wish from a 'basket', as it were. Consequently, many of them tend to discover when they apply for admission to the Polytechnic or the University of Namibia that they do not have the right mix of subjects to pursue certain study programs. This can be quite a setback for the learners, who have to make the choice of either enrolling for a program they do not want, or going back to NAMCOL to study the relevant subjects. Although figures are not available at this point to make a generalized conclusion, it is reasonable to make a strong assumption that the majority opts for the former.

5.7.5. Variety of subject choices and levels available to non-formal learners

105. For a number of practical reasons, one of which is lack of subscription to certain subjects, the full 'menu' of subjects available for formal education students is not available to non-formal students. The table below provides the detail of what subjects were available in 2006 for NAMCOL learners visa-a-vis their full time counterparts.

Table 5: The IGCSE Curriculum—2006 Examinations

	Subject	Available for FT	Available for PT			Subject	Available for FT	Available for PT
1	Accounting	√	√		23	First Language Silozi	√	√
2	Afrikaans as a Second Language	√	√		24	Foreign Language French	√	√
3	Agriculture	√	√		25	Geography	√	√
4	Art & Design	√	√		26	History	√	√
5	Biology	√	√		27	Mathematics (w/coursework)	√	√
6	Business Studies	√	√		28	Physical Science	√	√
7	Chemistry	X	√		29	Technology & Practice: Motor	√	√
8	Design & Communication	√	√		30	Bricklaying & Plastering	√	X
9	Development Studies	√	√		32	Child Development	√	X
10	Economics	√	√		32	Computer Studies	√	X
11	English as a Second Language	√	√		33	D & R: Metalwork & Welding	√	X
12	Environmental Management	√	√		34	D& R: Woodwork	√	X
13	First Langage Thimbukushu	√	√		35	Fashion & Fabrics	√	X
14	First Language Afrikaans	√	√		36	First Language Khoekhoegowab	√	X
15	First Language English	√	√		37	Fitting & Turning	√	X
16	First Language German	√	√		38	Foreign Language German	√	X
17	First Language Oshikwanyama	√	√		39	Home Economics	√	X
18	First Language Oshindonga	√	√		40	Office Admin & Keyboarding	√	X
19	First Language Otjiherero	√	√		41	Religious Studies	√	X
20	First Language Rukwangali	√	√		42	Technology & Practice: Elect	√	X
21	First Language Rumanyo	√	√		43	Technology & Practice: Electro	√	X
22	First Language Setswana	√	√					

Source: DNEA

106. A time-series synopsis gives an indication of the number of subjects examined for full and part-time candidates over five years:

Table 6: Number of subjects examined for full and part time candidates

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
IGCSE: FT	42	41	43	42	43
IGCSE: PT	20	21	26	18	28
JSE: FT	40	40	40	40	40
JSE: PT	15	20	19	18	18

Source: DNEA

107. Taken on average, this means that only about half of the subjects on offer in the full-time curriculum are available for NAMCOL learners.

108. An interview with NAMCOL staff revealed that the main reason the full spectrum of the curriculum is not offered to NAMCOL students simply hinges on educational economics. In other words, it does not make economic sense to offer a subject attracting minimal subscription, just because learners have indicated an interest in it. Part of the effectiveness of NAMCOL, indeed, many distance education programs, is their ability to capitalize on economies of scale.

109. Similarly, whereas learners in the formal stream can choose to do certain subjects on a higher level, this option is not open to non-formal students. With due acknowledgement and consideration of the systemic constraints, it must also be pointed out that at a fundamental level, this curriculum disparity raises equity issues.

5.7.6. What is the nature and type of subjects offered in non-formal education, and what is their relevance to non-formal learners?

110. The subjects offered by NAMCOL replicate a portion of the formal education curriculum. This curriculum is fundamentally a curriculum with an 'academic' focus. A quick glance at Table 4 above shows that it is mainly the subjects with a 'practical' orientation that are not offered to NAMCOL students. Appropriate delivery of these subjects on the distance mode is probably one of the biggest constraints, coupled with lack of equipment and appropriate facilities, plus of course financial resourcing. Nevertheless, the question must be asked whether this curriculum adequately addresses the needs of many learners who have left formal education—not everyone aspires to 'progress' to tertiary education.

5.7.7. How is data on NAMCOL learners integrated into the educational management information system?

111. The most recent EMIS reports incorporate examination results for both formal and non-formal candidates, the majority of which are NAMCOL learners. However, whereas the reports provide very detailed and useful information on full-time learners, with respect to, for example, survival rates, and similar information, this seems not to be done for NAMCOL students. To illustrate, when trying to trace information on the number of NAMCOL learners re-entering formal education in grade 11, it was discovered that such information is not housed centrally, although officials *thought* it was. Some of the figures had to be requested from the regional educational directors, who in most cases had only the most recent information, but not that going back in time. It seems that this is an important aspect of the articulation that must still be addressed.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

112. This study set out to find out how a country, with specific reference to Namibia, can provide access to post-primary education through alternative, non-formal means which do not disadvantage learners accessing educational services via this route. Namibia has developed a dual system of educational provision, housed within the same Ministry, to address this challenge. It has done this through the establishment of NAMCOL, a state-funded vehicle for ASE charged with providing ASE to those whose educational careers were interrupted. The mere existence of NAMCOL does not guarantee equitable access to educational services. Therefore, the government of Namibia, through its implementing ministry, has put into place structures and systems that ensure that although there are two parallel systems, they are unified through identical outcomes, which are regulated through a unified certification system.

113. A number of observations have emerged in section 5 above. These point to challenges in the system, perhaps for which interventions could be explored:

6.1. Viability of providing the full menu of subjects to non-formal learners

114. The equity dilemma, with respect to the number of subjects and levels available to non-formal learners, has been raised in this study. While low subscription rates might be the reason why certain subjects are 'taken off the shelf' for non-formal learners, we believe that for equity purposes, NAMCOL and the Ministry should continue to explore and determine the viability of offering all the subjects available and at all levels in formal education to non-formal learners. You want to *widen* access, and not limit it through a 'restricted' curriculum.

115. The reasons for the low subscription could perhaps also be determined so that strategies can be put into place to attract learners to those subjects.

6.2. Relevance

116. What is 'alternative' secondary education? Is it a mere replication of the formal education curriculum? We believe that a more expanded definition of 'ASE', which includes not only general education, but also 'professional skills; vocational skills; managerial skills; and economic self-improvement' (Annual Report, 2000) for the greater majority of the learners is more useful. It is therefore recommended that NAMCOL and the MoE explore the relevance of the currently academically driven curriculum to non-formal learners, and if necessary introduce an alternative, vocationally and skills-oriented oriented curriculum, but whose outcomes, for equivalence purposes, are pitched at the junior or senior secondary levels. This would be in line with NAMCOL's broader mandate. In this regard, the addition of the International Computer Drivers License (ICDL) to the stable of courses on offer through NAMCOL is definitely a step in the right direction.
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6.3. Educational Management Information System

117. Currently, it seems the only information on NAMCOL learners that is available in the EMIS reports is that relating to examinations. While this undoubtedly important, it leaves out other essential information about this group of learners. For example, at regional and national levels, how many of them are re-integrated back into formal education? What is their survival rate in the non-formal stream? As a separate group, how many of them qualify to enter tertiary education institutions? Etc. We believe that it is important to integrate essential information on non-formal education into EMIS so that consolidated

information can be obtained. As the education sector gears itself towards re-engineering itself through the Education and Training Sector Improvement Program (ETSIP), it may be useful to also provide information on how many NAMCOL learners, for example, progress to tertiary education. After all, we have made a case for articulation, and it seems to us this is one area that could be instructive to the whole system.

7. ENDNOTES

[i]   At the time of writing this report, the Polytechnic of Namibia's enrolment stood at just over 8 000 students, slightly less than that of UNAM. The four colleges of education between them have an enrolment of about 2 300 students.

[ii]   EMIS reports indicate that whereas at independence in 1990 there were only 71 134 learners enrolled in Grade 10, and 12 685 in Grade 12, by 2005, these figures had swelled to 119 605 and 28 499, respectively, representing an increase of 68% and 125% in each grade.

[iii]   This number is not absolute. The DNEA arrives at this summation by calculating the number of full-time candidates in a cohort achieving a C grade at IGCSE level and a grade 3 at HIGCSE level However, admission requirements at both tertiary education institutions in the country do go below grade C or 3, depending on the field of study.

[iv]   Namibia has thirteen educational regions, but only since 2004. Before then there were 7, so that a recalculation of the average number of schools built in each region per year would increase.

[v]   Based on Tables 1 and 2, it can be seen that annually, over 25 000 young people find themselves unable to proceed with their formal education

[vi]   The threshold was 18 points in 1993/94 and has been steadily increased to 24 points. The ultimate goal is for Grade 10 learners to reach a threshold of 27 before they can proceed to Grade 11.

[vii]   At the time of writing this report, the EMIS educational statistics for 2006 had not yet been published.

[viii] This figure does not include learners who enrolled with other private providers. When that figure is taken into consideration, the percentage of part-time learners coming back into formal education could be significantly higher.

[ix]   Among others, a tuition centre must satisfactorily prove to the Directorate that it has qualified teachers to deliver the elements of the curriculum it has chosen. In addition, the centre must prove that it has it possesses the material resources necessary for the effective delivery of certain subjects. Furthermore, it is imperative that if a tuition centre is to be used as an examination centre, it must possess storage facilities for the safe-keeping of examination material. This is accomplished through a stringent vetting process carried out by the National Examination and Assessment Certification Board.

[x]   It must be emphasised that the term 'NAMCOL qualification' is a misnomer. NAMCOL offers tuition of the approved Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary curricula. It does not issue its own qualifications. This falls firmly within the purview of the Ministry of Education.

[xi]   This excludes Colleges of Education and Vocational Training Colleges, which fall within the administrative and curriculum ambits of the Ministry of Education and Culture. But with the introduction of ETSIP, it is expected that the articulation across all sections of the education sector will in all likelihood become better defined and more pronounced.

[xii]   Appendix 1 gives an indication of the admission criteria set by the University of Namibia and the Polytechnic of Namibia.

[xiii] It is important to note that although the system is a national one, admission is not centralised.

Each college runs its own student recruitment and selection process, guided by the national admission criteria. See Appendix 2 for more details.

xiv   It must be noted that horizontal movement at this level is always governed by the academic regulations of each institution.

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