Monitoring and reflecting on the impact of quality assurance interventions through Action Research: A case of CODeL at the University of Namibia

Mr. Erkkie Haipinge[1], Dr. Maggy Beukes-Amiss[2], Mr. Gabriel Uunona[3]

1 University of Namibia, Namibia, ehaipinge@unam.na

2 University of Namibia, Namibia, cmbeukes@unam.na

3 University of Namibia, Namibia, guunona@unam.na

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is an important method of delivering Higher Education in Namibia due to its massive geographical dispersion. ODL is seen in Namibia as "an approach to learning that focuses on freeing learners from constraints of time, space and place, while offering flexible learning opportunities" (NOLNet, 2016, p. vi). The University of Namibia established the Centre for Open, Distance and eLearning (CODeL) in 2016, formerly called the Centre for External Studies (CES), "in August 1992 as an academic Centre to ensure greater access to Higher Education and equity for students with various educational backgrounds" (UNAM, 2011, p. 1). CODeL has 12 Centres, 7 uniquely established standalone Centres and 5 Centres linked to an already existing university campus situated in all major towns and cities in Namibia through which it provides its ODL services to students across the country.

ODL does not come without challenges, some of which are lack of comprehensive ODL policies, underfunding, limited use of ICTs, inadequate learner support services, lack of or ineffective quality assurance systems and negative perceptions about ODL (SADC, 2009). In regards to ineffective quality assurance systems, ODL institutions in Southern Africa are found to have minimal consideration for the quality of provision of ODL because they "tend to use the same kind of academic verification processes that traditional contact-based institutions use in ODL quality assurance processes and therefore do not respond to the needs of ODL programmes" (SADC, 2009, p. 18). In an effort to address this challenge, SADC developed a Regional ODL Policy Framework to "promote the development and deployment of effective, harmonised Open and Distance Learning, increase access to quality education and training and support regional integration across SADC" (SADC, 2012, p. 22). This ODL Policy Framework informed the development of the National ODL Policy for Namibia, effective since 2016.

ODL has proven effective in enabling students across Namibia to access University education. As a dual-mode institution, however, the University of Namibia faces similar challenges as those found in the SADC Region. One example was that the University of Namibia's Quality Assurance Policy had minimal provisions on ODL aspects of the University.

2. STRUCTURE OF CODEL

CODeL is made up of three (3) Sections, namely ODL, Administration and eLearning through which it carries out its assigned mandate.

2.1 ODL Section

The ODL Section is made up of three divisions, namely Materials Development, Stores and Dispatch and Student Support services. Materials Development as a division is responsible for the planning and coordination of all study materials for CODeL. Materials are written by Subject Matter Experts (SME) under the expert guidance of ODL Instructional Designers from within CODeL. The Student Support division is an interface between distance-mode students and their respective Faculties, thereby also housed within their respective Faculties. To enhance student learning and supplement study materials, vacation schools are arranged in collaboration with Faculties twice a year. When study materials have been developed and printed, they dispatched to all regional Centres for students to collect them.

2.2 Administration

The Administrative Section of CODeL is headed by an Assistant Registrar and staffed by Distance Education Officers and Administrative Coordinators (also known as Faculty Officers), as well as regional Centre support staff who perform the daily administrative activities of the Centre in the service of students. All administrative officers are responsible for activities starting from Application, Admission, Registration up to Graduation of distance-mode students as well as uploading of assignment marks on the University student management system. Distance Education Officers also remain primarily responsible for all student queries regarding the aforementioned processes.

2.3 eLearning

eLearning Section deals with development of eLearning content and solutions to provide flexible and accessible learning, anywhere, anytime. The Section provides eLearning leadership within UNAM, whereby it focuses on implementing technology-enhanced learning across the University; guiding staff in planning, designing and delivering technology-enhanced courses; supporting staff in developing their eLearning skills; training lecturers in the use of blended learning approaches such as the Flipped Classroom using digital tools.

3.   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

CODeL considers its role "to contribute towards the University of Namibia's Vision and Mission, values and strategy by providing high quality ODL programmes through the use of state of the art Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and blended learning approaches" (CODeL, 2017, p. 7). This role has been constrained by challenges experienced the world over related to issues such as reduction of state funding and increasing demands for ODL services, from which CODeL was not spared.

As part of its management plan hooked onto the UNAM's Strategic Plan (2016-2020), CODeL's score card for the 2017 academic year revealed areas that required improvement, including poor student satisfaction, low progression and completion rates and low levels of satisfaction in areas of student support services. In an effort to address these challenges in a systematic manner, CODeL staff carried out a SWOT analysis to identify opportunities and challenges open to and faced by the Centre respectively. This exercise identified quality as one of the major constraints facing the Centre and the University's ODL services. As a result, quality enhancement was identified as a priority at CODeL.

Overall, the UNAM Quality Assurance Policy was also found to lack provisions that guide ODL activities and processes at the UNAM, subsequently resulting in the absence of appropriate quality standards for various ODL and eLearning functions at CODeL. The availability of the National ODL Policy was however a great opportunity as it offers a theoretical and policy framework to guide the process of addressing the weakness identified in the University's Quality Assurance Policy in relation to ODL matters.

3.1 CODeL's Partnership with the Commonwealth of Learning

Late 2017, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and UNAM through CODeL, formalised a Collaborative Agreement (CA) through which COL committed to support the University in implementing pilot phases I, II and III of the Higher Education integrated model. One of the pillars of the model focused specifically on quality assurance through which quality assurance and continuous quality enhancement at CODeL were to be strengthened. This was to be achieved through various capacity building initiatives such as training of all CODeL staff and stakeholders in the understanding and conceptialisation of quality assurance and enhancement, creation of a quality assurance task force, collection of baseline data on distance-mode students' experiences of CODeL services, the development of quality assurance guidelines and associated measuring tools with the inputs from all its Regional Centre staff, as well as the adjustment of the existing UNAM Quality Assurance policy to incorporate ODL aspects. This paper primarily focuses on the quality assurance guidelines and the measuring tools used to gauge the Centre's performance in various quality assurance areas.

3.2 CODeL Quality Drive Initiatives and Outputs

The Quality Assurance (QA) guidelines that were developed by CODeL with the support of COL and in collaboration with the UNAM Quality Assurance Centre, the Centre for Quality Assurance and Management (CEQUAM) focused on various functions and processes of the Centre that are delivered through its various Sections.

Quality guidelines were developed on/for: Centre Leadership and Governance (Director's Office), Student Administration, Regional Administrative Student Support, Student Support, Print-based Materials Development, Stores and Dispatch, Online Facilitation, Online and Blended Course Design, eLearning Systems Administration (Systems Administration, Digital Media and Video Conferencing). As part of the quality drive of CODeL, each of the aforementioned Quality Guidelines was coupled with a Measuring Tool, which was administered among all staff on main campus as well as Regional Centre staff.

4.   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study sought to establish the following:

1. Document the impact of the quality guidelines and standards on ODL practitioners' attitudes towards quality in ODL
2. To report on the level of quality of online and blended courses as measured against the set standards/guidelines
3. To explore participants' perceptions on the impact of the quality drive at CODeL on their practice

5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant in that it offers the institution, ODL managers, practitioners and funding agencies feedback on the impact regarding the implementation of quality assurance initiatives within an ODL setting, guided by a Higher Education integrated model. The action research model that underpinned the theoretical framework, feeds forward by identifying areas that need further improvement.

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

Quality Assurance (QA) in Higher Education in general and ODL in particular, has become an area of great interest for stakeholders and for Governments that are increasingly looking for accountability from publicly funded institutions (Belawati & Zuhairi, 2007). QA can be defined as a "process of defining and fulfilling a set of quality standards consistently and continuously with the goal of satisfying all consumers, producers, and the other stakeholders" (Ibid). QA is also defined as a "set of activities that an organisation undertakes to ensure that standards are specified and reached consistently for a product or service" (Ogunleye, 2013, p. 50). Both of these conceptions apply to the CODeL context reviewed and studied for this paper.

6.1 Quality Assurance in ODL

According to Belawati and Zuhairi (2007), interest in QA issues in ODL increased over the years with both stakeholders and students demanding better quality services and products. Citing COL, Belawati and Zuhairi also posit that "ODL providers must pay close attention to quality in terms of products, processes, production, delivery, and philosophy", a holistic view considered as the 'total quality approach' (2007, p. 3). This indeed formed the guiding principles and approach for the entire quality drive in CODeL.

Astleitner et al, (2003) identified six "Principles of Good Instruction as Quality Standards", which they used to evaluate quality of instructional materials:

- Instruction as-systematically designed opportunity for reflexive learning;
- Multiple support for cognitive, motivational, and emotional characteristics of the leaner;
- Considering the strengths of the learner;
- Supporting self-regulated learning;
- Dosed novelty and automatisation for efficient learning;
- Arousing and maintaining interest.

There is a need for measurement tools, which can be checked/verified against the above standards when ODL institutions are reflecting on the quality level of their practices.

6.2 Quality Assurance Challenges of ODL in Dual-Mode Institutions

One of the most profound challenges regarding QA in dual-mode institutions that are primarily set up to service on-campus students is that "arrangements made for on-campus and off-campus provision are [not] accorded equal weighting within an institution's culture", which results in the status quo where "the prevailing ethos and institutional arrangements that endure over time are those that relate to the on-campus experience" (King, 2012, p. 12). The same challenge has been experienced at CODeL where the high dependence on on-campus staff to provide services to ODL students has been coined the 'dependency syndrome', a highly undesirable scenario that puts the needs of students learning through different modes against each other, usually with the consequence of poorer quality of service to the off-campus/ distance-mode or blended and online mode students.

Shariffudin 2007, emphasised the importance of considering the aspects of pedagogy, learning theories, instructional design theories and models as well as the media in the design and development of instructional materials, he however expressed worries that most educators do not practice these, which often compromise the quality of instructional materials in ODL, the aspect of learning theories in particular seems to be largely overlooked at CODeL

Gladieux & Swail (as cited in Sherry, 2003) also expressed concern that quality issues are not always prioritised in decision making for distance education. Sometimes, quality matters of face-face scenarios are employed for distance education, a concern that Dirr (2010) expressed and questioned whether there shouldn't be unique quality attributes for distance education. Once again the observations of these authors guided the reason for undertaking this study.

Furthermore, Dirr's concern is relevant to CODeL as ODL have unique challenges that could not always be addressed by face-face initiatives.

6.3 Quality Enhancement in Blended Learning

The nine standard domains of eLearning quality defined by Frydenberg, (2002) coincide and overlap with the main quality areas identified by COL for ODL. These standards entail: Institutional Commitment, Technology, Student Services, Instructional Design and Course Design, Instructions and Instructors, Delivery, Finances, Regulatory and Legal compliance as well as Program Evaluation. In further explanations for these standards, Frydenberg expressed a concern how students' perspective of quality in distance education is often overlooked. The quality aspects are always seen from the Faculty's perspective and not necessarily informed by student views.

7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper uses Action Research as a theoretical framework which according to Ernest Stringer, is "a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems in their everyday lives" (2014, p. 1). Action research uses "continuous cycles of investigation designed to reveal effective solutions to issues and problems experienced in specific situations and localized settings" (Stringer, 2014, p. 1). Stringer argues that professionals and administrators need to transition a role of technicians to that of facilitators and creative investigators who, instead of applying standardised practices and policies, opt to "contextually relevant procedures formulated" through inquiry and resulting in "sustainable solutions to the deep-rooted problems that diminish the quality of professional life" (Stringer, 2014, p. 3). Fundamentally, action research posits that universal solutions do not suit all contexts, hence "the purpose of inquiry is to find an appropriate solution for the particular dynamics at work in a local situation" (Stringer, 2014, p. 6).

The process of self-improvement followed by CODeL with the support of the Commonwealth of Learning ties in with the principles of Action Research as laid out above. The process was systematic, involved various types of investigation and reflection, and was geared towards finding solutions to challenges faced in the Centre. Solutions derived to address the challenges identified were done in a collaborative manner involving practitioners who administered and implemented the quality guidelines.

7.1 Action Research Routine

According to Stringer (2014), Action Research has various models and approaches. Choices over which model to use is informed by the nature of the practice on the ground and by the goal of research. This study adopted the Action Research routine outlined by Stringer as the "Look, Think and Act" (p. 9) that operates in a cyclical spiral through three steps of Planning, Implementing and Evaluating (see Figure 1 below).

According to Stringer, the *Look* stage in the cycle involves the gathering of appropriate information, as well as defining or describing the situation. The *Think* stage in the cycle involves exploring what is happening, in order to interpret and explain why things are the way they are. Whereas the *Act* stage comprises of planning the course of action to be followed, implementing the plan and evaluating the effectiveness of the action taken (Stringer, 2014, pp. 8 – 9).
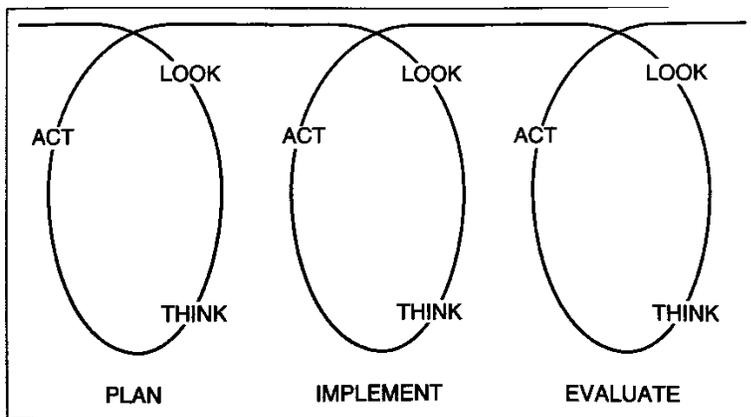

Figure 1: Action Research Interacting Spiral (adopted from Stringer, 2014)

7.2 Application of Action Research Model to Quality Enhancement Process at CODeL

The *Look* stage at the Planning cycle or phase involved the gathering of data through observation, collection of student satisfaction feedback and the use of the CODeL's annual score card. The *Think* stage at the Planning cycle included the staff meetings looking at analysing the situation using the SWOT analysis tool to explore, identify and explain reasons behind the challenges that CODeL was experiencing. This involved reaching conclusions on what the source of challenges was, which in this case was the issue of quality assurance or the absence thereof. The *Act* stage at the Planning cycle therefore was used to spell out the course of action that was to be followed in the process of addressing the issue of QA at the Centre through the development of quality standards for various functions at the Centre.
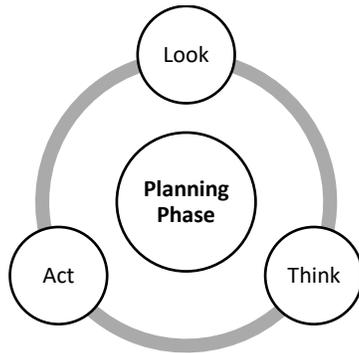

Figure 2: Planning Cycle of Quality Enhancement

The second cycle/phase was the Implementing phase, where the *Look* stage in this cycle refers to the preparations that were carried out in anticipation of the engagements that CODeL staff and management were involved with consultants and experts in the area of QA, improvement and enhancement. These involved reflections on own specific contexts, critical reflections on existing activities and practices and research on new ideas. The *Think* stage of the Implementing cycle/phase refers to the actual QA training workshops and brainstorming meetings that CODeL staff members were involved in, guided by both local and international experts in the field of QA, improvement and enhancement. The Think stage also involved the evaluation examples of QA models and tools from elsewhere. The *Act* stage in the Implementing cycle/phase involved the drafting, adaptation, and ratification of QA guidelines based on all CODeL activities and processes. It also involved the actual implementation of the guidelines in practice such as the collection of baseline data, the application of QA measuring instruments and the use of quality guidelines to guide or reshape practice (see Figure 3).
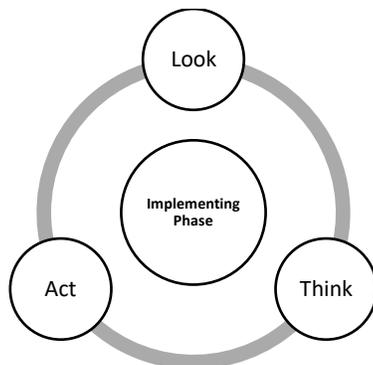

Figure 3: Implementing Cycle of Quality Enhancement at CODeL

The final cycle/phase, the Evaluating phase is what this study envisaged with the focus on assessing the effectiveness of the quality enhancement process and reflecting on its impact on the actual practice. At the Look stage of the Evaluating cycle/phase, we planned the research design and at the Think stage we identified the appropriate research methods and data collection techniques. Given that the whole quality enhancement process sought to not only improve and empower the Centre and its staff, but also to develop a new culture of continual drive to enhance quality. At the

Act stage, Action Research was found to be the best suited approach. This is because it is a research approach that is participatory and collaborative, thereby focusing on collaborative reflection and collaborative action and looking at research participants as partners in the research process instead of seeing them as subjects of the study.
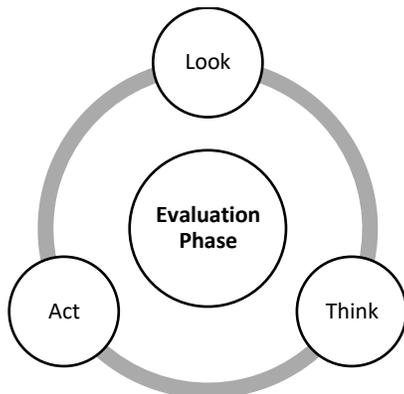

Figure 4: Evaluating Cycle of Quality Enhancement Process at CODeL

The process followed in the Evaluating cycle/phase would be discussed in more detail further in the research design Section.

8. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study followed a single case study design using a qualitative approach (Yin, 2013). The authors opted for the single case study design as it allows for in-depth analysis of a group, event, programme or process as was the case with the quality drive in the context of a single ODL entity (Creswell, 2009).

8.1 Research Methods

Interviews were conducted among ODL practitioners, while a structured survey/questionnaire was administered to reveal results from administration of the measuring tool used. Secondary data sources also aided in the gathering of contextual documents i.e. minutes, guidelines, measuring tools etc. that were created during the quality drive.

8.2 Data Collection Instruments

The study used various data collection instruments, such as a semi-structured interview guide, structured survey/questionnaire and secondary data sources. The use of multiple sources of evidence resulted in achieving triangulation that assisted with the overall reliability of the study (Yin, 2013).

8.3 Research Participants

The participants were ODL practitioners who are staff members at CODeL. This group constituted the best target population for the study as they were actively involved throughout the process of quality enhancement, while being the implementers of the resultant quality guidelines/standards.

8.4 Ethical Considerations

All participants were assured that confidentiality of all information will be adhered to and that they could withdraw at any time should they so wish as their participation was voluntarily. In addition, no names of participants were used in order to protect their respective identities.

9. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings presented below emanate from semi-structured interviews, structured questionnaires and secondary data sources involving ODL practitioners in CODeL.

Participation in Quality Enhancement Processes

Research participants shared positive accounts regarding their participation in the quality enhancement process, indicating that it made them to become conscious of the issue of quality aspects of their job functions, while their awareness about quality and how to go about delivering it was also enhanced.

Additionally, active participation in the quality enhancement activities cultivated a collaborative approach, which enabled staff to learn about each other's job functions and expectations thereof. At the same time, the process also helped staff to discover the mutual inter-dependence of all sections of the Centre whereby quality in one area affects the overall perception and reputation of the Centre.

Impact of Quality Enhancement Initiatives on Practitioners' Attitudes towards Quality in ODL

The findings clearly reveal that some staff members had preconceptions about QA that they revisited and changed after their participation in the quality drive process. For example, staff member X revealed:

> *"I came to realise that QA is just not about the system but the students, and our staff members. QA is about ensuring that the system is functional, people know how to interact with the systems and this can be achieved through giving training and giving guide".*

Other positive results of quality enhancement initiatives on staff members were that they saw the process as an introspection into their practices that enabled them to diagnose deficiencies in products and services prior to the initiatives. As one participant indicated:

> *"The area I noticed it the most was in ID section and the guides. Before, the guides looked really bad, and the standard was really low. Now, you can definitely see there is an improvement in the standard of the guides".*

A further impact on staff attitude towards quality enhancement was changes in consciousness of quality regarding own performance and delivery of services, while others admitted that the process highlighted that mere presence of procedures, which were already present in some cases, did not necessarily translate into quality. However, the absence of appropriate quality guidelines was deemed detrimental to the quality of output of services and products because their awareness of standards makes it easy to identify loopholes or areas that need improvement.

Impact of Implementation of Quality Standards on Practice

The unanimous sentiment was that the development of quality guidelines/standards helped staff to define expected levels of performance, thereby helping them to improve the service delivery within their job functions. Complementary to this, one participant argued that the quality guidelines/standards helped outline and define what entails quality in their work and how to achieve it. In other words, it helped them to be more goal oriented and to differentiate the needs of various stakeholders that they serve. Finally, participants also claimed that quality guidelines/standards enhanced consciousness about quality in daily activities, whereby they sensed a difference in service delivery afterwards and noticed positive feedback from stakeholders such as academic staff from Faculties.

Implementation of Quality Standards: Successes and Challenges

Key successes resulting from the implementation of the quality guidelines/standards was noticeable improvements in service delivery, which they attributed to their self-monitoring processes aided by the explicit set of quality measures administered. Others found innovative implementation approaches such as assigning specific quality standards to specific staff members, who are then monitored on a monthly basis through their monthly reports.

On the other hand, the challenges included matters such as limitations in infrastructures, the need for further technological solutions to improve services and the need to revise the quality guidelines/standards on a more regular basis to ensure their relevance. To illustrate, one staff member indicated that it became apparent at reporting stage that

not all job functions were reflected in the quality guidelines and therefore there was a need to revise the guidelines/standards on a regular basis to ensure alignment. Regular reporting on implementation and impact of the quality guidelines/standards was also cited as an area that needs improvement. While another staff member claimed that mere existence of the guidelines was not sufficient, that buy-in from staff is equally important. Hence there exists a need for the Management of the Centre to involve staff members in the process from the very beginning in terms of the rationale for change in order to minimise resistance to change and ensure a better attitude towards implementation.

Quality of Online and Blended Courses: Baseline Data

The development of quality guidelines/standards was accompanied by quality measuring instruments/tools that were used to measure the compliance and inform self-improvement planning. The measuring instruments/tools for online and blended learning courses were applied to the existing courses to provide baseline data to inform initial self-improvement plans and inform CODeL Management about the existing quality levels of the courses. Table 2 below shows the performance area with the number of standards measured. Each standard is measured between 0 and 3 (see key in Table 1)

Table 1: Measuring criteria for Online and Blended Course Design

Rating	Level of Performance	Description
3	Excellent (Exceeds/Always)	Criterion evidence is clear, appropriate for the Centre/ Section/ Office/ service/ activity and demonstrates "best practices"
2	Good (Fully meets criterion/ Often)	Criterion evidence is clear and appropriate for the Centre/ Section/ Office/ service/ activity but there is some room for improvement
1	Partially meets criterion/ Sometimes	Criterion evidence exists but needs to be presented more clearly and/or further developed
0	Unsatisfactory/ Fails to meet criterion	No criterion evidence exists, or is present but not appropriate for the service/activity
N/A	Criteria does not apply	The criteria is not relevant to the Centre/ Section/ Office/ service/ activity

Table 2: Baseline results of the 2018 online courses

Performance Area	Number of Standards	Maximum score obtainable	Actual Score	Compliance Rate
Course Content	14	42	12	28%
Instructional Design	7	21	12	57%
Student Assessment	10	30	12	40%
Technology Enhancement	9	27	15	55%
Learning Support	11	33	19	57%
Course Evaluation	6	18	13	72%

10. CONCLUSIONS

The use of the Action Research approach proved helpful in cultivating the spirit of collaborative reflection on the process and adopting this framework enriched the study. The Look, Think and Act routine is a valuable approach to adopt as a culture of operating in daily activities and not just for research purposes. Evidence from the findings clearly show that the quality assurance initiatives that CODeL implemented with the support from COL bore fruit. The findings show that participants developed a heightened level of awareness as well as an appreciation of the value of quality assurance at the CODeL in particular, and in ODL in general. The quality standards developed clearly had an impact on the practices of staff members, while the actual implementation of the quality standards had its own successes and challenges. Successes include innovative ways to monitor implementation in the form of distributing specific quality standards among staff and requiring them to report on progress made, while challenges include the need to regularly revise the standards to ensure their alignment to the actual job functions of the staff. Finally, the collection of baseline data at the initial implementation of quality enhancement initiatives is crucial as it informs immediate self-improvement plans and makes it easier to measure subsequent improvement measures.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that quality assurance initiatives should involve staff members at all levels right from the goal setting stage in order to ensure greater levels of staff buy-in. Although the approach applied at CODeL was considered participatory enough, evidence shows that more needs to be done. Another recommendation is that Action Research needs to be an integral part of the process of quality assurance enhancement initiatives from the beginning in order to reap better rewards from it. This is especially true in regards to the routines embedded in the process that compel practitioners to stop, think and reflect on their practices in order to improve them. Additionally, quality assurance and enhancement initiatives need to be considered in accordance to the available resources so as to ensure effective implementation, and this can be done by targeting achievable goals. Finally, it helps to combine self-evaluation processes with peer evaluation from peers in the field of ODL so as to strengthen and validate the quality enhancement processes.

References

Astleitner, H., Brunken, R., & Leutner, D. (2003). The quality of instructional materials for argumentative knowledge construction. *Journal of instructional psychology*, 30(1), 3-11

Belawati, T., & Zuhairi, A. (2007). The practice of a quality assurance system in open and distance learning: A case study at Universitas Terbuka Indonesia (The Indonesia Open University). *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, *8*(1).

CODeL (2017). *Management plan 2017*. Windhoek: University of Namibia

Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods, Approaches* (3rded.). California: Sage Publications.

Dirr, P.J., (2003). Distance education policy issues: Towards 2010. *Handbook of distance education*, 461-479.

Frydenberg, J. (2002). Quality standards in eLearning: A matrix of analysis. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 3(2).

King, B. (2012). Distance education and dual-mode universities: an Australian perspective. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, *27*(1), 9-22.

NOLNeT. (2016). National Open and Distance Learning Policy. Retrieved from http://www.nolnet.edu.na/files/downloads/194_NOLNet%20ODL%20Policy%202016%20SIGNED.pdf

Ogunleye, A. (2013). Quality assurance and quality indicators in open and distance education: Context, concerns and challenges. *International Journal of Educational Research and Technology*, *4*(2), 49-62.

SADC. (2009). Capacity development on Open and Distance Learning Project: An Information, Education, and Communication Strategy for Open and Distance Learning. Retrieved from https://www.sadc.int/files/7213/7820/8535/IECStrategyFinalDraftForTranslation06.05.09.pdf

SADC. (2012). Regional Open and Distance Learning Policy Framework. Retrieved from https://www.sadc.int/files/3113/7820/8525/Approved_Regional_ODL_Policy_Framework_June_2012_1.pdf

Shariffudin, R. S. (2007). Design of instructional materials for teaching and learning purposes: *Theory into practice. IT in Education,* 1, 97.

Sherry, A. C. (2003). Quality and its measurement in distance education. *Handbook of distance education*, 435-459.

UNAM. (2011). Centre for External Studies Prospectus 2011. Retrieved from http://archives.unam.edu.na/uploads/r/unam-archives/7/7/77839c9b9f22cbefefa49ab1f25ea768bb5ad2d76c833ee3be5a6434f29e5192/CES-2011.pdf

Stringer, E. T. (2014). *Action research*. London: Sage publications.

Yin, R. K. (2013). *Case study research: design and methods* (3rd ed.). London: Sage Publications.