



# COUNTRY REPORT ON NAMIBIAN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION – 2019

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#### **FOREWORD**

This country report on the *International Distance Education and African Students (IDEAS)* project provides an historical overview of the Namibian university education system. It also highlights the current state of the university education, which is offered by two public universities, (1) University of Namibia (UNAM) and (2) Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), and one private university, the International University of Management (IUM).

Approximately 93% of the total university students are enrolled at the two public universities, while 7% are enrolled at the IUM. The universities offer their programmes through three types of teaching and learning mode, Full-Time, Part-Time and Distance Education. Regardless of the study mode, the university applies a similar evaluation entry requirement for the traditional entry students. For the periods considered, statistics from UNAM, NUST and the IUM revealed that the total number of female students is consistently greater than the number of male students. The observed gender imbalance is a concern that male children are being left behind academically. Based on the region where students completed their Grade 12, Khomas Region had the highest percentage of students in universities, followed by Oshana Region, while Kavango west, Hardap, Karas, Kunene and Omaheke contributed the smallest number of students. This suggests that the accessibility of university education is skewed towards people living in urban areas, whereas the population groups in rural areas are seemingly marginalised.

Although universities in Namibia have functional centres for ODL, they do not adhere to the concept and model of ODL and maybe they do not need to, especially given the country's lower population. Clearly, what the Namibian universities deliver as ODL is actually blended learning. However, it is encouraging to note that NCHE and the three universities in Namibia are guided

by the concept of *university lifelong learning provision* in their planning and development of future university education, which give future flexibility to extend their territory from blended learning into ODL.

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#### ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS

DE Distance Education

FT Full-Time

HE Higher Education

IUM International University of Management NCHE National Council of Higher Education

NUST Namibia University of Science and Technology

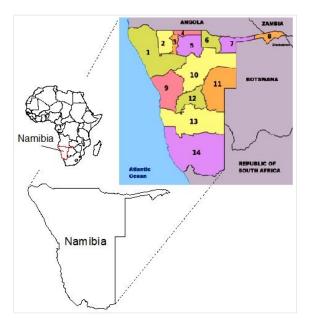
ODL Open Distance Learning/ Education

PT Pat-Time

UNISA University of Namibia
UNISA University of South Africa

#### 1. Introduction

The Republic of Namibia is located on the western part of southern Africa, and is boarded by the republic of Angola on the north, Zambia on the north-east, Botswana on the east, South Africa on the south-east and the Atlantic Ocean on the west (Figure 1). The country gained independence from South Africa in 1990 (SACMEQ 2012) and continue to enjoy political stability and national development which is characterised by peaceful democratic transfer of political power. The total land area of 823 290 km² is geographically divided into 14 administrative regions (Figure 1). Based on the 2011 national census, the country has a total population of 2 104 900 people, comprising of 51% females and 49% males, with a median age of 21 years (50% of the population were less than 21 years old, and vice versa). About 58% of the total populations live in rural areas while 42% live in urban areas (CIA 2012; NPC, 2012).



**Figure 1:** Geographical location of Namibia on the western part of southern Africa. The map indicates the 14 administrative regions of Namibia which are: (1) Kunene, (2) Omusati, (3) Oshana, (4) Ohangwena, (5) Oshikoto, (6) Kavango West, (7), Kavango East, (8) Zambezi, (9) Erongo, (10) Otjozondjupa, (11) Omaheke, (12) Khomas, (13) Hardap and (14) Karas.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for Namibia is estimated to be US\$12.5 billion, with per capita average annual income of US\$6 000 (Humavindu & Stage, 2013). Despite being a lower-middle-income nation, Namibia has the highest income inequality in Africa, with a Gini index of about 60.3 (Zere et al., 2010; Humavindu & Stage, 2013). Manufacturing, mining, tourism and commercial agriculture are the most important economic sectors with each contributing approximately 15.4%, 11.5%, 10.4 and 5.0% to the GDP, respectively. The economy is closely linked to South Africa with the Namibian dollar (N\$) having a currency exchange rate of 1:1 with the South African rand (African Development Bank 2009). At social level, Namibia is plagued by high HIV and AIDS prevalence (National Planning Commission 2007), which is believed to be taking a significant toll on the country's economic output and overall growth.

The National Policy on Health acknowledges that girls are more susceptible to sexual abuse, and are likely to drop out of school due to early pregnancy with increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections including HIV. Thus, the Ministry of Education Sector Policy on Inclusive Education places focus on girl-child education, and mentions the need to provide leaners with knowledge on sexual reproductive health (LACDEUN, 2017).

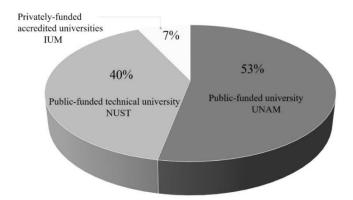
#### 1.1 Historical overview of university education

Before the establishment of university education system in the 1980's, most Namibians studied in South Africa (Mahlaha, 2012). After independence in 1990, a special commission for higher education (HE) was formed which led to the establishment of the first universities in Windhoek. This was followed by the establishment of the Namibian Qualification Authority (NQA) in 1996 whose role is to ensure that every qualification meets the national standards (NQA, 2012). Since then, university education has continued to be governed by the Namibian Higher Education Act

of 2003 (Republic of Namibia 2003) through the National Council of Higher Education (NCHE). On of roles of the NCHE is to ensure that university education is offered to candidates who obtain a Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate or equivalent, with a minimum admission criteria of 25 points from five subjects, which includes English.

#### 2. The landscape of university education

The landscape of university education is characterised by three universities namely; (1) University of Namibia (UNAM), (2) Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), which is formerly known as Polytechnic of Namibia (PoN), and (3) the International University of Management (IUM). Approximately 93% of the total university students are enrolled at the two public universities (UNAM and NUST), while 7% are enrolled at a private university (IUM). Even though the country has 14 institutions of higher education (universities inclusive), the main focus of this report is university education.



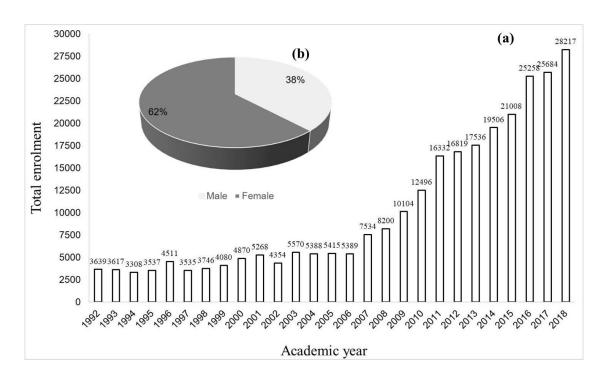
**Figure 2:** The proportion of students in the three universities. As a function of the total university students, the graph shows the percentage of students at UNAM, NUST and IUM.

# 2.1 University of Namibia (UNAM)

UNAM was established by an Act of Parliament in 1992 to serve as a centre of higher learning and research in Windhoek, Khomas Region. The Act also provides a statutory basis for the development and management of Distance Education (DE) for Namibians who, for a variety of reasons, cannot study through the conventional face-face mode. The university offers its programmes through full-time (FT), and only a handful through part-time (PT) and DE. The minimum admission requirement for FT, PT and DE programmes is 25 points from a maximum of five subjects. Prospective mature students (25 years and older) need to complete a Junior Secondary School Education, and need to have at least five years of work experience related to the proposed study programmes before they can qualify for the mature age entry test.

Although data on the number of candidates who applied for enrolment was not available, the increasing total number of students from 3 639 students in 1992 to 28 217 students in 2018 suggest the rising demand for university education (Figure 3a). During this period, the mean proportion of female students (62%) consistently surpassed that of male students (38%; Figure 3b). The observed gender imbalance is not typical to an African context, and remains explained. A senior academic at UNAM stated:

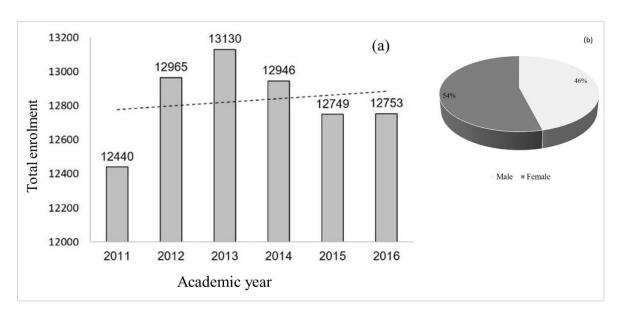
"UNAM has a strange situation in that we have substantially more female than male students. I think the Namibian mind-set for studies at least is that: female children are expected not to sit at home, and not study. It seems parents are also willing to also let female children go out for studies. The proportion of male to female students is a concern that male children are being left behind academically."



**Figure 3:** Temporal changes in the total enrolled students at UNAM. The graph also shows the mean proportion of male to female students (b). Data source: http://www.unam.edu.na.

### 2.2 Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST)

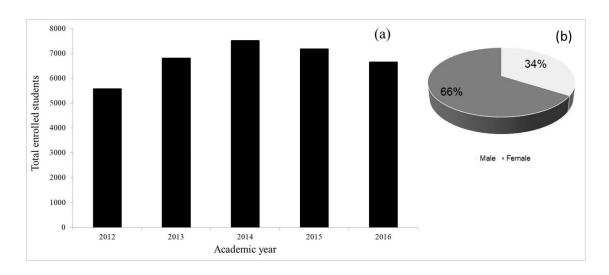
NUST was established in 1994, two years after UNAM. Likewise, the university is located in Windhoek, Khomas Region. Figure 4 show that there was a marked rise in the total number of enrolled students from 12 440 in 2011 to 13 130 in 2013. However, due to the change in the admission criteria from a minimum of 25 points from six subjects to five subjects, a decrease in the total number of students from the peak attained in 2013 to 12 753 in 2016 was evident. The student population comprised about 54% females and 46% males (Figure 4b). Candidates who failed to gain access had options of seeking admission in other institutions of HE locally or abroad.



**Figure 4:** Temporal changes in the total enrolled students at NUST. (b) The graph also shows the mean proportion of male to female students (Data source - NUST annual reports: https://www.nust.na).

#### 2.3 The International University of Management (IUM)

The IUM is the only accredited private university in Namibia. It was established in 1994 but only accorded the university status in 2002. Its main campus is located in Dorado Park in Windhoek, with satellite campuses in Swakopmund, Erongo Region; City Branch in Windhoek; Ongwediva, Oshana Region; Nkurenkuru, Kavango west Region; and Walvis Bay Campus, Erongo Region. From 2012 to 2016, the total number of students ranged from 5 563 to 7 511. The ratio of male to female students is similar to that of UNAM (Figure 5), where the mean proportion of female students (66%) was almost double the number of male students (34%).



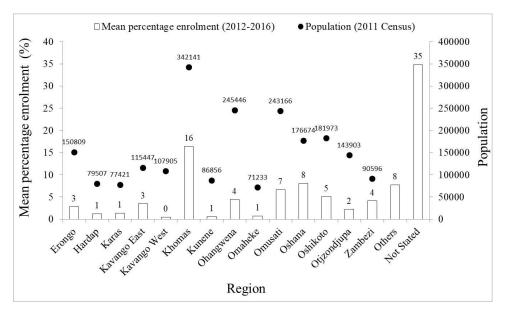
**Figure 5**: Temporal changes in the total number of enrolled students at the IUM. (b) The graph also shows the mean proportion ratio of males to females (Data source: NCHE Annual Report, 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016).

The IUM follows an entry evaluation scale similar to that of the two public universities for the traditional-entry students (students below 25 years). The minimum admission requirements for mature students include: a three-year relevant working experience and at least a successful completion of Grade 10, and a pass in the university entry aptitude test. The university offers its programmes through FT, PT, and more recently (2010), through Open and Distance Learning (ODL). The administrative aspects of ODL programmes are outsourced to the Institute of Open Learning (IOL), with the IUM only producing studies manuals, tutorial letters, and marking assignments and examinations. In 2016/ 2017, a total of 138 active students were studying via ODL.

# 3. University enrolments by region

Based on the region where students completed their Senior Secondary School Education (Grade 12), the total number of leaners in institutions of HE was used as a proxy for understanding the

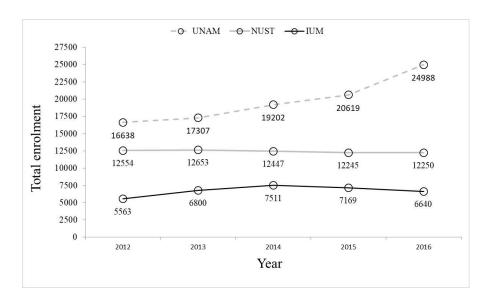
extent to which university education is accessible to population groups of different regions. This is assertion is sufficing given that students enrolled at the three universities constitute about 82% of the total learners across the 14 institutions of HE. Due to the relative higher population associated with the economic advantages of the capital city (Windhoek), Khomas Region had the highest percentage of students with 16 per cent, followed by Oshana Region with eight per cent (Figure 5). The students from Kavango west (less than 1%), Hardap (1%), Karas (1%), Kunene (1%) and Omaheke (1%) contributed the lowest proportion of students. This suggests that the accessibility of university education is skewed towards people living in urban areas, whereas the population groups in rural areas are seemingly marginalised.



**Figure 6:** Institutions of HE mean percentage enrolment (2012-2016) by students region of origin.

A comparison between the three universities clearly shows that UNAM is the largest university with about 50% of the total university students, followed by NUST (32%) and lastly the IUM (17%). From 2012 to 2016, the total number of students increased at average rate of 2 088 and

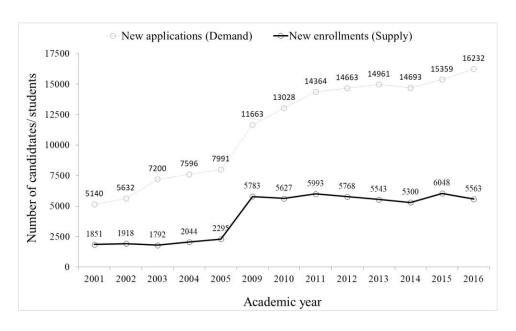
269 per year for UNAM and the IUM, respectively, while the number of leaners at NUST declined at a rate of -76 students per year (NCHE, 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016).



**Figure 7:** Comparison of total enrolment between the three universities (2012-2016), UNAM, NUST and the IUM.

#### 3.1 Demand and supply of university education: Case study of NUST

Based on the ratio of first year enrolments to the number of candidates that applied for admission, the enrolment rate for the period 2001-2016 ranged between 25% and 50% (Figure 8). Even though the demand for a university place has been increasing more consistently, the graph shows that the intake of new students has stalled in recent years (2009-2016), partly because of the changes in entry requirements (from 25 points in six subjects to 25 points in five subjects). During this period, the number of candidates that applied for admission increased at average rate of 6.0% per annum, while the university capacity to supply education decreased at an average rate of 0.5% per annum (Figure 8).



**Figure 8**: Demand and supply of university education at NUST for the period 2001-2016. Data source: Möwes, 2005; NUST, 2018.

#### 3.2 Challenges facing university education

Dwindling government subsidy: The Government of the Republic of Namibia remains the major revenue source for the operations of the two public Universities. As a proportion of the total revenue, the Government subvention for operational expenses has reduced from a maximum of 72% in 2015 to 62% in 2016 for UNAM and 71% in 2015 to 59% in 2016 for NUST (Appendix A, B). To compensate for some inconsistence (decrease) in government subsidy, tuition fees, hostel fees and meal fees increased quite noticeably as universities strived to meet quality demands and stay financially afloat (Sheppard *et al.*, 2009), which directly affect the financially disadvantaged students. According to the Dean of Education at the UNAM:

"The university lost more than 40 first-year students out of 450 because they could not get funding for 2013/2014 academic year."

- Lack of government subsidy to the IUM: During the 2015 and 2016 financial year, the total revenue for the IUM was N\$113 628 565 and N\$ 133 509 589, respectively, which

is more than 10 times less than that of UNAM. Attracting and retaining suitably qualified and skilled academics with Masters Degrees and/or PhD's is one obvious challenge facing the IUM.

#### 3.3 Quality of university education

Measuring the quality of education is both subjective and an abstract concept. Ayo-Sobowale & Akinyemi (2011) defines quality as the educational input and output in its entirety, and mentions the extent to which the teaching and learning facilities are accessible and effective in ensuring that the educational programmes meet the national objectives. This includes "adequate funding" and "human capital," and to the scale of input needed to derive acceptable, desirable, beneficial, efficient and effective university education. The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) is responsible for quality assurance processes and works in collaboration with the Namibian Qualification Authority. The NCHE's main task regarding quality assurance is to:

- accredit, with the concurrence of the National Quality Authority, programmes of higher education provided at higher education institutions
- monitor the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions.

Based on the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) for 2017, it is evident that the quality of universities in Namibia is not up to scratch (Tables 1, 2). The Shanghai ARWU is an annual authentic ranking that grades universities based on the quality of education, quality of faculties, research output and per capita performance (See Table 4). As seen from the latest ranking of universities (Table 2), none of the three Namibian universities is placed in the

top 2000 of the world's best universities. Table 2 also shows that Namibia's best ranked university, UNAM, is not classified among the best 10 universities in Africa.

**Table 1:** Assessement of quality university education based Shanghai Academic Rankings of World Universities (2017)

Quality of Education	Alumni of an institution winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals	Alumni	10%
Quality of Faculty	Staff of an institution winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals	Award	20%
	Highly cited researchers in 21 broad subject categories	HiCi	20%
	Papers published in Nature and Science		20%
Research Output	Papers indexed in Science Citation Index-expanded and Social Science Citation Index	PUB	20%
Per Capita Performance	Per capita academic performance of an institution	РСР	10%
		Total	100%

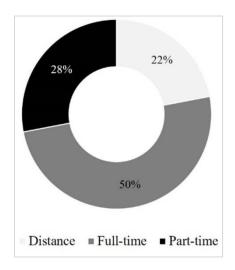
**Table 2**: Academic ranking of Nigerian best university relative to the top 10 best African universities-2017

World Ranking	University	Country	
201-300	University of the Witwatersrand	South Africa	
301-400	00 University of Cape Town South Africa		
401-500	Stellenbosch University	South Africa	
401-500	University of Johannesburg	South Africa	
401-500	University of KwaZulu Natal	South Africa	
501-600	University of Pretoria	South Africa	
601-700	North West University	South Africa	
701-800	University of South Africa	South Africa	
701-800	Ain Shams University	Egypt	
701-800	Alexandra University	Egypt	
N/A	University of Namibia	Namibia	

**Note:** Only the top 2000 universities are reported in the shanghai ARWU. Source: http://www.shanghairanking.com/ARWU2017.html

#### **4.** Open Distance Education/ Learning (ODL)

Given the country's geographical dispersion of localities, especially from Windhoek, Khomas Region the nerve centre of economic activities and university education, ODL is increasingly becoming an important component of education. The Centre for Open, Distance and eLearning (CODeL), Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning (COLL) and the IOL at UNAM, NUST and IUM were established to ensure greater access to HE and equity for students from various educational and social background. The three universities manage a combined total of 25 regional centres across the country, where each centre is equipped with computers and Wi-Fi, library, classrooms for weekend tutorials. Through blended learning, universities are able to provide university education access to population groups who live in remote areas of the country, who find the conventional face-face mode challenging. For the period 2008-2016, the two public universities enrolled an average proportion of 22%, 50% and 28% of the total students under DE, FT and PT studies, respectively (Figure 9). In 2016, only 2.0% of the total students were studying via ODL.



**Figure 9:** Mean proportion of enrolment based on the universities annual reports.

The proportion of female students was also substantially significant that that of male counterparts. According to the directorates of ODL at UNAM and NUST: "Some Namibian have a mindset that South African University is the best, and for prestige some opt to study in South Africa than Namibian universities. The other reason is that South African offers a diverse range of study programmes that are absent or not offered in Namibia." From the perspective of International Distance and Education students with UNISA, the reasons for preferring UNISA to the local ODL include the geographical dispersion of localities, and the wider spectrum of programmes that is not associated with the local universities. A Namibian International distance Education student with UNISA, 743 ST40:

"I stay in the southwest coast of Namibia, it's a small mining town so we don't have any facilities. Our universities are in the capital city and in a few surrounding towns in the country, but it's a bit far because I stay about nine hours' drive from the capital. So it's more convenient to study with UNISA because South Africa is about 20 kilometers away from where I stay now"

Another Namibian International distance Education student with UNISA, 693 ST42

"Because to my knowledge UNISA is the best distance learning institution. Currently in Namibia our universities, or maybe it's the lack of knowledge, but I'm not very familiar with what their distance learning facilities and also because UNISA is an online module. It's very convenient for me to study through online. In Namibia they didn't have the degree at the time and now they do have the degree but it's also just fulltime or part time."

#### 4.1 Lessons learnt

The concept and model of ODL involves two components, "Open Education" and "Distance Education" (Ehlers, 2011). "Open Education" refers to education which is available to anyone. This entails that the admission requirements a more relaxed, while fees are more affordable when compared to the traditional universities. For "Distance Education," the typical and prevalent forms of face-face teaching and learning are substituted by planned, designed, constructed, tested and evaluated *writing*, and *reading*, which are enhanced by information, communication and

technologies (ICTs). Although universities in Namibia have functional centres for ODL, they do not adhere to the concept and model of ODL and maybe they do not need to, especially given the country's lower population.

The report shows that Namibia is an economically stable young country with impressive university enrolment rates (25-50%), which is evidenced by the governments' continued funding commitment of public universities. The universities have adapted the ODL model to their local context. For instance, the same admission criterion is required regardless of the study mode, FT, PT or DE. Furthermore, DE students are charged the same fees as the FT and PT counterparts, while at the same time ODL students have mandatory weekend classes. This raises important questions regarding the openness of ODL and the autonomous of students to study at their convenient space and pace. Clearly, what the Namibian universities deliver as ODL is actually blended learning. However, it is encouraging to note that NCHE and the three universities in Namibia are guided by the concept of *university lifelong learning provision* in their planning and development of future university education, which give future flexibility to extend their territory from blended learning into ODL.

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# **Appendices**

**Appendix A**: The UNAM revenue statement for the period 2010-2016 (Currency: Namibian dollar, N\$)

Year	Subsidy	Tuition fees	Hostel fees	Meal fees	Capital Grant from deferred revenue	Other
2010	273926000	108489000	10873000	5538000	3327000	7389000
2011	573783000	161124000	16547000	14838000	17715000	69528000
2012	570489000	187336000	19398000	20898000	17688000	13257000
2013	570487000	220197000	23610000	23367000	2477600	15700000
2014	774535000	269116000	27071000	17540000	95000000	30683000
2015	1 108720000	319374000	30751000	18882000	48344000	24695000
2016	904113000	409968000	34622000	22586000	45806000	30473000

Currency exchange rate as at 14<sup>th</sup> October 2018: United States Dollar, US\$1 = N\$14.56

**Appendix B**: The NUST revenue statement for the period 2008-2016 (Currency: N\$)

Year	Subsidy	Tuition	Hostel	Other	Total
2008	106891000	75902409	7079177	30342605	220215191
2009	146891000	98021179	8502247	36 618641	290033067
2010	153523000	115605857	9015986	44272383	322417226
2011	222538000	134578090	9498775	61918898	428533763
2012	163000720	147762854	10462229	45829799	367055602
2013	253431280	161253623	11803394	40386037	466874334
2014	354485000	174573829	11758488	44259335	585076652
2015	619451000	192186825	11962197	42264599	865864621
2016	387762766	224537870	12711626	36560530	661572792

Currency exchange rate as at 14<sup>th</sup> October 2018: United States Dollar, US\$1 = N\$14.56