



BOTSWANA

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1.0 Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Overview in Botswana

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in Botswana is offered by both public and private institutions. Public institutions offering ODL include the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL), the University of Botswana through the Centre for Continuing Education and the Francistown College of Technical and Vocational Education (FCTVE). There are Private institutions such as BA ISAGO University College and Botho University which also offer some of their courses through the distance education mode.

BOCODOL is by far the largest ODL institution in the country. Established in December 1998 through an Act of Parliament, BOCODOL offers school equivalency programmes (Open Schooling), short courses (week/month-long), certificate level courses, diploma level courses, degree level courses and now master's degree courses. The tertiary programmes are offered in partnership with reputable international universities such as the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU); Amity University-India; through the Tele-education centre based at BOCODOL Headquarters in Gaborone, Botswana; UK Open University; Commonwealth of Learning, Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth; and, locally through the University of Botswana and the Zimbabwe Open University, amongst others.

Institutions engaged in the provision of ODL in the country are regulated by the government through the recently launched Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA) and the Human Resources Development Council (HRDC). The two took over, through a rationalization process, from the Botswana Training Authority (BOTA) and the Botswana Examinations Council (BEC) forming BQA and the Tertiary Education Council (TEC) respectively.

2.0 BOCODOL's Transformation into an Open University

BOCODOL is undergoing transformation to become a fully-fledged Open University by year 2016. This will enable the majority of citizens who before then could not access higher education opportunities to do so. Even potential learners in the "difficult to reach" areas of the country will have the opportunity to upgrade their education levels, thereby increasing the chances of uplifting their standard of living, through better job prospects.

The transformation journey started in 2009 through extensive stakeholder and government consultations, which culminated in overwhelming support for the transformation. Cabinet finally approved the proposal in December 2011 and a Presidential Directive CAB 37 (A) 2011 (Revised) dated 12th January 2012 was issued to seal the approval. The College immediately developed a four-year strategy (2012-2016) that outlined the transformation path to a university.

(a) Progress to date

The ultimate university structure was developed through an Organisational Review Exercise in 2010 and in 2012-2013, the College put in place a Transitional Structure.

(b) Key Transformation Projects and Initiatives

- i) A series of consultancies have been undertaken in readiness for the launch of the University. These include:
 - Development of Open University Conditions of Service;
 - Development of a Change Management Strategy;
 - Human Resources Development Strategy;
 - Job Evaluation Exercise inclusive of job analysis, job profiling, grading and salary structure for the new University;
 - Development of Finance and Procurement Manuals;
 - Development of a Business Plan for the University;
 - Brand Development; and
 - Staff Assessments.
- ii) Current academic structures and programming preparations are also on-going as guided by the Tertiary Education Council's norms and standards.
- iii) One hundred and twenty four staff members have upgraded their qualifications including three at PhD level, mainly through ODL. Six academic staff members are about to complete their doctoral studies through ODL.

3.0 Top Priorities for BOCODOL's Transformation

- (a) The expeditious completion of an enabling legislative framework. This is in the form of an omnibus Universities' Act that has been developed and is awaiting approval. Once enacted, it will facilitate the launch of the University; hopefully in 2014-2015.
- (b) Technical support to address priority strategic areas to anchor the operational tenets of a robust ODL provider that combines both Open Schooling and tertiary levels. These include:
 - The development of Interactive Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy.
 - Review the current learner support system and remodel it to meet the needs of the Open University.
 - Advise on the operationalization of the principle of ring-fencing of the Open Schooling sector within the operations of a university.
 - Research and scholarship in ODL.

4.0 What COL can do for support to enhance BOCODOL's transformation agenda and subsequently ODL provision in Botswana

In addition, to assisting on areas submitted in the last report, such as continued support of the SADC-CDE office, COL is requested to continue with the technical support it has started to give the College in the areas identified as priorities in whatever way is possible.

5.0 Other ODL Areas

(a) National ODL Policy

BOCODOL, through the SADC Centre for Distance Education, is leading the development of an ODL Policy for Botswana. The policy draft is benchmarked to the SADC ODL policy that was adopted by Ministers in June 2012. The draft policy has been submitted to the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD) for finalization.

(b) Gender mainstreaming in the ODL curriculum and service provision.

6.0 Other COL Developments

The SADC-CDE office would like to up its engagement with other stakeholders in the country in areas of skills development, entrepreneurship for the improvement of livelihoods through agricultural education initiatives and health education promotion as supported by COL.

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