Southern African Development Community [SADC]

Regional Open and Distance Learning Policy Framework

June, 2012

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

Foreword by the SADC Executive Secretary

In an effort to facilitate implementation of the provisions of various regional, continental and global instruments, and systematically addressing related challenges on education and training, the SADC Secretariat commenced the implementation of a Capacity Building in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Project in 2008, with financial support from the African Development Bank (ADB). The major development goal of the Project was to contribute to the development and deployment of effective, harmonised open and distance learning (ODL), to increase access to quality education and training and support regional integration across SADC.

The SADC Capacity Building in ODL Project generated four main outputs/outcomes: (i) Regional SADC ODL Policy and Strategy developed and agreed on; (ii) Regional and national capacity to deploy and implement ODL strengthened; (iii) Two Regional Centres of Specialisation established; and (iv) Project activities effectively coordinated and implemented.

It is my wish and deepest desire that the immediate impact resulting from the implementation of this Regional ODL Policy Framework will be increased and more strategic deployment of open and distance learning within and across the SADC Region. In the medium to long-term, I expect the regional ODL Policy Framework to be a key instrument in harmonising the provision of ODL in and across SADC Member States, thus, contributing to the advancement of the regional integration agenda.

This Regional ODL Policy Framework shall be operationalised by a Regional ODL Strategic Plan and Implementation Framework. Both the Regional Policy Framework and the Strategic Plan and Implementation Framework recognise the critical role of education in socio-economic development and that education should be provided equitably, that is, among various social groups bearing in mind the existing inequalities between men and women, boys and girls, those with special needs and other vulnerable population sub-groups. Above all, the two instruments recognise that deployment of harmonised Open and Distance Learning is a viable strategy for increased access to quality education and support for regional integration in the SADC region

Tomaz Salomao

June, 2012

ACRONYMS

ADB	-	African Development Bank
BOCODOL	-	Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning
CF2F	-	Conventional Face – to - Face
CEDAW	-	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	-	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DEASA	-	Distance Education Association of Southern Africa
DMU	-	Dual Mode Universities
DTU	-	Dedicated Distance Teaching Universities
DRC	-	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECCE	-	Early Childhood Care and Education
EFA	-	Education For All
FET	-	Further Education and Training
GAD	-	Gender and Development
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
IEC	-	Information, Education and Communication
NADEOSA	-	National Association of Distance Education Organisations of South Africa
NAMCOL	-	Namibia College of Open Learning
NGO	-	Non-Governmental organisation
Nolnet	-	Namibian Open Learning Network Trust
MCDE	-	Malawi College of Distance Education
MDG	-	Millennium Development Goals
MS	-	Member State
ODL	-	Open and Distance Learning
RISDP	-	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
SADC	-	Southern African Development Community
SEDE	-	Secondary Education by Distance Education
TPR	-	Teacher Pupil Ratio
TVET	-	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Centre of Specialisation: this is a unit whose establishment is guided by the provisions of the SADC Protocol on Education and Training (article 7E) to build capacity of regional training institutions to offer education and training programmes in critical and specialised areas in order to increase trained personnel in the SADC region (SADC Protocol on Education and Training, 1997).

Conventional institution: an institution mandated to offer traditional face-to-face learning programmes

Deep integration: refers to profound and far reaching regional co-operation and integration in terms of the breadth and depth of areas covered and in the mechanism for reaching and enforcing common decisions (RISDP, 2003)

Gender Mainstreaming: a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequalities are not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality in education (SADC Protocol on Gender and Development 2008).

Inclusive education: a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion from education and from within education. The goal is that the whole education system will facilitate learning environments where teachers and learners embrace and welcome the challenge and benefits of diversity. Within an inclusive education approach, learning environments are fostered where individual needs are met and every learner has an opportunity to succeed (UNESCO) The ultimate goal of inclusive quality education is to end all forms of discrimination and foster social cohesion.

ODL institution: an institution either public or private mandated to offer open and distance learning programmes.

Open and Distance Learning: an approach to learning that focuses on freeing learners from constraints of time, space and place while offering flexible learning opportunities. It allows learners to work and combine family responsibilities with educational opportunities. Distance education is any educational process in which all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone geographically removed from the learner, with all or most of the communication between teachers and learners being conducted through electronic or print media (UNESCO).

Policy Harmonisation: a process of facilitating adoption of similar policy directions across Member States taking into account differences inMember States.

1. Background

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has 15 Member States. These are Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. SADC was established through a Treaty that was signed at the Summit of Heads of State and Government in Windhoek, Namibia in July, 1992. The vision of SADC is to improve economic growth and development, alleviate poverty, and enhance the quality of life of the people of the Region. SADC also aims at supporting its socially disadvantaged through deeper regional economic integration.

SADC recognises education's pivotal role in improving economic growth and development, alleviating poverty and enhancing the quality of life of its people. Education is central in the achievement of the SADC's Vision of a common future, a future in a regional community that ensures economic well-being, improved standards of living and quality of life, freedom, social justice, peace and security. In order to fulfill its educational obligations, SADC is committed to implementing global, continental and regional protocols and frameworks. At global level, SADC is implementing the Education for all and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). At the continental level SADC is implementing the African Union Second Decade of Education Plan of Action and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. At regional level the instruments that guide provision of education include:

    I.   The SADC Treaty (1992);
    II. The Protocol on Education and Training (1999);
    III. The SADC Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP:2003);
    IV. The SADC Revised Regional Implementation Plan on Education and Training, 2007-2015 (2007); and
    V.   SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (GAD:2008);
    VI. SADC Gender Policy (2009)

2. Status of Education and Training in the SADC Region

2.1 Structure and organisation of education systems

In most SADC Member States, education falls under the Ministries of Education. However, training is offered through a number of government ministries although overall, the regulation of education is under the Ministries of Education. In recent years, there has been an increasing trend in Member States to include skills development/training portfolio under Ministries of Education.

In three, Member States, it takes thirteen years from starting primary level education to finishing secondary level. In eleven MS, the corresponding years

of schooling are twelve. With respect to higher education, duration for undergraduate level education varies from three to five years. All SADC MS except Angola and Seychelles offer Masters equivalent qualifications which take between one and two years. Doctoral programmes that require a Masters degree for entry vary from three to six years. Technical and Vocational Education and Training is complex and differs across MS in terms of the duration to graduate and courses offered.

2.2 Progress in selected education outcomes

All SADC Member States have made commitments to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) targets. Member States recognise that improving access to quality education is an important strategy to realise these goals and targets. This section analyses the achievements that have been recorded as well as documenting some of the bottlenecks that the region has to deal with in the education sector. Thus, progress made by SADC MS is based on selected variables/indicators. Implications of the progress recorded on importance of increasing the development and deployment of open and distance learning mode of delivery are discussed. The indicators below are the ones used to analyse progress made to date:

- Adult and youth literacy rates;
- Enrolment Rates;
- Availability of qualified teachers; and
- Gender parity

It is important to note that availability of data on most of the indicators is a challenge in the region. This limits carrying out in-depth analysis of progress made.

Adult and youth literacy

Adult literacy is an important factor in determining a nation's human development status. Notable progress has been made by SADC MS in improving literacy among both adults and youth. In 2009, the adult literacy rate among females ranged between 41.5% and 92.3% (SADC, 2010). Overall, the adult literacy rate for both sexes ranged between 55.1% and 91.9%. Member States are at different levels in terms of literacy among youth with literacy rates among female youth ranging between 61.7% and 99.5% and the range for all youth being 65.4% and 99.1% (SADC, 2010).

These data show that there is need to increase investment in education in order to make literacy universal in SADC MS. However, the existing convention institutions offering secondary education have limited capacities to absorb all children graduating from primary level. Thus, the role of open and

distance learning in creating opportunities to access secondary education for those that are not admitted to convention institutions is critical.

Enrolment Rates

Available data for the period 2006 to 2009 shows that generally, gross enrolment ratios (GERs) at primary level of education are relatively high in all SADC Member States. In 2006, the percentage of primary school age children out of school ranged between zero percent and 12.8%. By 2009, the range had widened to 0% and 19.1%. These data show that in some SADC MS, about 1 out of every 5 children of primary age is not in school.

Enrolment at secondary level shows that there is under-provision of education at this level. This shows that a large number of youths are out of school (see Figure 1). The low provision of education at secondary level reduces the numbers of youth who can access tertiary education. The huge difference in GERs at primary and secondary levels is a reflection of the inefficiencies and wastage of educational systems in SADC MS. As already alluded to, instead of allowing those children that graduate from primary and are not admitted to secondary to fall between the cracks, implementation of quality open and distance learning programmes can address this problem.

Fig. 1: Trends in Secondary Education GER
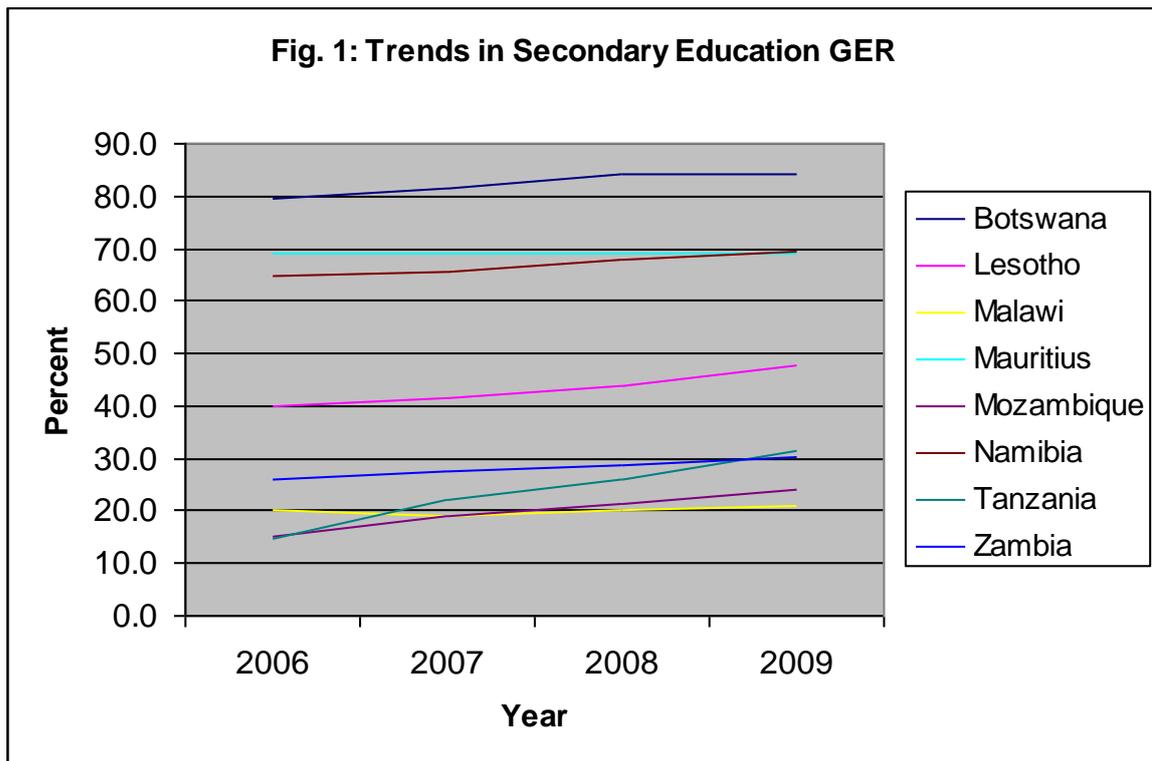
One of the goals of the SADC region is to increase the availability of educated personnel who will meaningfully contribute to scientific innovation and economic development. Given the prevailing situation in SADC MS, this can only be realised through the expansion of well developed and managed open and distance learning as an alternative mode of education delivery to absorb learners who cannot proceed with their education through the convention

systems. If expanded and resources are made available, ODL can effectively feel the gap created by conventional education systems in the region especially at secondary and higher levels.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been neglected in the region However, recently, it has gained popularity. Available data on youth enrolment in TVET shows that it ranges between 0.5% and 30% per population aged 15-24 years. Thus, conventional TVET programmes are only accommodating a very small proportion of youth who are out of school and unemployed. This situation is compounded by the fact that some Member States do not offer TVET programmes through open and distance learning. Deployment of effective open and distance learning of TVET programmes can potentially contribute to addressing the challenges of limited access to education at levels beyond primary as well as dealing with unemployment in SADC Member States.

Although recently there has been an increase in enrolments at higher education level, this level is characterised by low participation rates. Available data shows that gross tertiary enrolment ratio is at 6% compared to the global average of 27% (SADC 2010). Five Member States reported complete data on enrolment at higher education level for the period 2006 through 2009. Using data from these five Member States, it is clear that enrolments per 100,000 inhabitants increased during the period and there is equitable distribution of enrolments for females and males. These enrolments may be significantly increased if intake at this level through open and distance education is increased.

The analysis of progress above shows that the SADC region has made substantial progress in accessing primary education. However, access to education at all the other levels, that is, secondary, TVET and higher, access is very low. This may be due to the fact that SADC MS have put in place a policy for Education for All children attending primary education. However, no such policy exists for all the other levels of education.

Availability of qualified teachers;

Availability of teachers is a priority in the SADC region. The goal for this priority area is to: "Ensure that SADC countries have adequate qualified teachers at different education levels that are able to meet the challenges of the education systems" (SADC, 2010). Progress in this area is based on two indicators, that is, pupil-teacher ratio and percentage of qualified teachers.

Availability of teachers in general and qualified teachers in particular is crucial in the provision of quality education. The pupil-teacher ratio shows the class sizes which in turn is indicative of teachers per learner. Data available for the period 2006 through 2009 show that pupil-teacher ratios are low at both primary and secondary levels of education. Ten SADC Member States have achieved the international standard pupil-teacher ratio at primary level but the

other four countries are experiencing shortages of teachers at this level of education.

In terms of qualified teachers, at primary level most countries in the region have qualified teachers according to their national standards. Percentages of qualified teachers at primary level range between 70% and 100%.

At secondary level, data are incomplete but available data shows that the range of percentage of qualified teachers was 31% to 98.2% in 2006. The corresponding range for 2007 and 2008 were 33.0% and 98% and 37% and 90.1% respectively.

The data presented above shows that there has been significant improvements in having qualified teachers especially at primary level and to some extend at secondary level. This has been largely due to the fact that many countries in the region have prioritised teacher development as part of improving quality. This has been done largely by upgrading teachers through open and distance learning programmes. Thus, open and distance learning can continue to be used as a mode for increasing the stock of qualified teachers in the region.

Gender parity

One of the SADC priority areas in the education sector is to achieve gender equality and eliminate gender disparities in education systems. More specifically, Article 14 of the Protocol on Gender and Development mandates all SADC MS to adopt and implement gender sensitive education policies and programmes addressing gender stereotypes and gender-based violence Furthermore, it calls for the promotion of equal access and retention in primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and non-formal education. Despite the conducive policy environment, the region still grapples with attainment of gender equality across the education sectors. Although substantial progress has been made at primary level and to some extend at secondary level, gender disparities are clearly observable at tertiary level and in completion rates at both primary and secondary (see Table 1).

Table 1: Gender Parity Index for Gross-Enrolment Ratio

Country	Pre-Primary				Primary				Secondary			
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2006	2007	2008	2009	2006	2007	2008	2
Botswana	1.04	1.03	1.03	1.02	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.97	1.10	1.10	1.11	N/A
Lesotho	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.00	1.00	0.99	1.00	1.29	1.33	1.36	
Malawi	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.01	1.00	1.01	1.00	0.77	0.76	0.78	
Mauritius	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.10	1.10	1.10	
Mozambique	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.87	0.85	0.86	0.88	0.71	0.68	0.70	
Namibia	0.96	0.90	0.97	1.06	0.98	0.97	0.98	0.97	1.12	1.15	1.14	
South Africa	0.97	0.94	1.12	1.05	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n
Swaziland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.96	n/a	0.89	n/a	0.82	n/a	
Tanzania	1.03	1.06	1.01	1.01	0.97	0.98	0.98	0.99	0.86	0.85	0.77	
Zambia	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.96	0.90	0.88	0.97	0.80	0.83	0.86	

Source: 2011 Country Report
 Means data are not available
Countries not included in the table did not provide data

Analysis of available data above shows that the SADC region has made significant strides in improving access to quality education. Access is close to universal at primary level although survival to last grade of primary is still low. Regarding secondary education, transition from primary to secondary is poor demonstrating the inefficiencies and wastages of educational systems in the region. Participation at TVET and higher education is very low. In terms of teacher education, significant improvements have been made towards meeting the international standard for pupil-teacher ratios at primary level but inadequacies are still observable in a number of Member States. The region has already demonstrated the importance of open and distance learning in upgrading teachers.

It is clear that development and delivery of quality ODL programmes can go a long way in addressing the current challenges that the education systems in Member States are experiencing. This can potentially be enhanced if the development and delivery of ODL programmes is guided by a regional policy framework on open and distance learning.

3. ODL provision in the SADC Region

The SADC region's education sector faces a number of challenges especially those that relate to access, quality, relevance and equity. Due to the low transition rates from primary to secondary and even lower rates from secondary to tertiary level, most of the youth in SADC Member States are out of school, have limited skills and are unemployed. This situation has increasingly made open and distance learning a viable strategy for addressing prevailing challenges in the education sector. It is important to note that open and distance learning has been mostly used in tertiary and teacher education. However, the value of open and distance learning in supporting out-of-school youth through the provision of formal open schooling and TVET is now widely recognised in the region (SADC, 2006).

Open and distance learning programmes are currently offered by the public sector and to a lesser extent by the private sector and non-governmental organisations in MS. Secondary education and teacher education are largely provided by the public sector in most of the SADC MS. The private sector and non-governmental organisations are also involved in the provision of ODL programmes in TVET and higher education.

Of late, there are many institutions that have been established to delivery education through the open and distance learning mode. However, there are no national ODL policies in MS to regulate the provision of open and distance learning programmes. Furthermore, there are no mechanisms or systems to regulate and monitor the quality and implementation of ODL programmes in SADC MS. Thus, programmes being delivered through open and distance learning are diverse and of varying quality and relevance. This prevailing situation is one of the reasons why the general populace in SADC MS still has some negative perceptions about the quality of education delivered through open and distance learning.

In most SADC MS, ODL is still considered a complementary mode rather than a major component in its own right in the mainstream of education. This may be the reason why no adequate funding is allocated to ODL institutions and programmes.

Although open and distance learning is supposed to be open, there are entry requirements in most MS especially in teacher education, TVET and higher education. This is a major challenge to potential learners as they fail to be admitted to these programmes. Currently most ODL programmes do not take into consideration prior learning of potential learners.

3.1 Current status of ODL in the SADC Region

This section presents the status of ODL in the four sub-sectors of education that is, secondary education, teacher education, technical and vocational education and training and higher education in the SADC region. Due to the

fact that ODL has been neglected in the region, there is dearth of quantitative data to allow detailed analyses of key education outcomes in open and distance learning. Thus, the current status of ODL in the four sub-sectors presented in this section is largely qualitative and informed by findings from the four sector research studies conducted in twelve SADC MS.

3.1.1 Secondary education

Secondary education has been offered through open and distance learning in the region for more than 30 years. Currently, there are only three SADC MS that are not providing secondary education through open and distance learning. Provision of secondary education through ODL is critical in all SADC MS given that large proportions of youth who complete primary level of education are not being absorbed by existing formal secondary education institutions.

The ODL programmes at this level provide literacy programmes and opportunities for those who are preparing for examinations outside conventional schooling. Provision of secondary education through open and distance learning has contributed to the education outputs of a number of SADC MS.
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3.1.2 Teacher education

This is one of the education sub-sectors where open and distance learning has been extensively used. Open and distance learning has been used to train unqualified primary school teachers, upgrade under-qualified teachers as well as upgrading teachers with diploma qualifications to degree level qualifications. Respondents to the four sector studies in a number of SADC MS indicated that teacher training programmes offered through ODL are of high quality.

The upgrading of teachers has no doubt contributed to the quality of education delivery in the SADC region. Furthermore, the contribution of ODL to teacher training has contributed meaningfully to the reduction in the shortage of teachers in MS. Increased numbers of qualified teachers has been necessitated by the introduction of free primary education in some Member States.

3.1.3 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

There is increasing recognition of TVET in general in SADC Member States and a number of countries have embarked on offering open and distance learning programmes through ODL. However, there are some MS that are not offering any TVET programmes but are restricting their provision of TVET to the few face-to-face institutions in their countries.

Technical and vocational education and training programmes are offered in most countries by public institutions, private institutions and non-governmental

institutions are varied and of different quality and relevance. For example, there are TVET curricular that put more emphasis on low level crafts training making training offered not meeting current requirements of the economy and industry.

In a majority of SADC MS, there are no adequate facilities and infrastructure required to effectively deliver TVET programmes through ODL. However, the situation is different in some countries where sufficient capacity in terms of facilities and infrastructural requirements exist. The challenge that seems to cut across all Member States is the paucity of trained and experienced ODL trainers.

In terms of growth and recognition, TVET programmes have lagged behind other sectors in all SADC Member States. As indicated above, this is attributed to lack of requisite infrastructure and limited numbers of qualified and experienced staff. This situation makes TVET open and distance learning programmes poorly regarded in terms of their relevance and quality. Also related to the shortage of qualified and experienced teaching staff is poor learner support provided to the learners.

3.1.4 Higher education

Open and distance learning at this level is provided by both public and private institutions. Enrolments in higher education through open and distance learning programmes has increased substantially especially in South Africa, Tanzania, Namibia and Zimbabwe. For example, in South Africa, 38.8% of enrolments at this level were through ODL programmes (2010).

There is a shift from provision of ODL programmes by single mode institutions and increasing numbers of universities traditionally offering conventional programmes are turning to being dual mode institutions providing both open and distance learning and face-to-face programmes.

Like in other sub-sectors of education, there are no institutional and national policies to regulate ODL provision at this level. As a result, there is a proliferation of institutions of higher learning offering ODL programmes. This situation usually results in the provision of low quality degree programmes and ultimately leads to negative perceptions about ODL programmes.

Although the role of the private sector has increased significantly in providing ODL programmes at this level, the quality, content and standards of the programmes offered are not well documented in a number of SADC MS – under-estimating the contribution and benefits of ODL in this sector.

3.1.5 Summary of status of ODL provision in the region

An analysis of the provision of open and distance learning in SADC MS shows that MS are at different levels. In the majority of Member States, there are no institutional or national policy frameworks to regulate and monitor provision of ODL programmes. It is also apparent that there is limited funding of ODL institutions and programmes. To compound this situation, most ODL programmes are run by unqualified and inexperienced teaching staff.

It has also been noted that some of the programmes offered are not relevant to the demands of the economy and industry, a situation that leads to negative perceptions of ODL qualifications. The analysis revealed that there are few countries with quality assurance frameworks in place.

4. Challenges in the provision of ODL in the SADC region

4.1 Challenges facing the education sector

The SADC Member States have made educational commitments at the global, continental and regional levels. In order to meet targets in these commitments, SADC Member States are compelled to expand their education and training systems to provide education to all their citizens. The analysis in chapters 2 and 3 revealed that tremendous progress has been made in all sub-sectors of primary education, secondary education, teacher education, technical and vocational education and training and higher education. Primary education has been the most successful with near universal education in terms of gross enrolment rates. Transition rates from primary to secondary and then secondary to tertiary are relatively low, demonstrating the inefficiencies and wastage associated with educational systems in SADC Member States. This is due to a multiplicity of challenges being encountered by Member States. Some of the key challenges that have been identified from the four sector research studies, review of relevant literature and during the policy dialogue fora include:

- limited access to secondary, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education;

- limited provision of early childhood education;

- inequitable access;

- low quality of education;

- high inefficiency of education systems;

- inadequately trained teachers;

- Curricula inadequacies including mismatch;

- the negative impact of HIV and AIDS;

- inadequate teaching resources; and

- lack of current and relevant data for planning, monitoring and evaluation

4.2 Key ODL challenges

Specifically, open and distance learning in the region faces a lot of challenges. Some of the key challenges facing secondary, teacher, TVET and higher education are:

- Inadequate funding from the Governments and industry for effective development and deployment of ODL;

- The majority of Member States do not have national ODL policies to regulate ODL provision;

- As a mode of learning, ODL suffers from negative misconceptions, degrading it to be of lower quality than the traditional face-to-face conventional mode. Although the misconceptions have negatively affected the development and deployment of ODL in the region, the high demand of education has seen an increase in ODL enrolments;

- ODL institutions in the region have hitherto failed to meet the demand for ODL programmes and courses due to their insufficient capacity. In the areas of ICT, Monitoring and Evaluation, Curriculum Development, Learner Support, Quality Assurance and Qualification Frameworks Development as well as mainstreaming Inclusive Education, the region has experienced crippling capacity challenges which need urgent attention; and

- There is also limited collaboration/partnership and linkages among institutions within and across Member States, between public institutions and the private sector. This has had negative impact on the resource availability to improve the provision of ODL in the region. TVET has been the worst affected by limited collaboration and partnerships as industry does not take adequate trainees under apprentices for attachments leading to compromised skill acquisition by the learners.

The need to increase application of open and distance learning in Member States has necessitated the urgency in addressing the above challenges. Although ODL has played an important role in promoting socio – economic development in the SADC region in general and improving access to, and promoting the quality of education and training in particular, its development

has been constrained by lack of solid policy frameworks at both regional and national levels.

The SADC Secretariat has, therefore, facilitated the development of an evidence based Regional Open and Distance Learning Policy Framework to support integration, harmonization and maximization of resources as envisaged in the SADC Protocol on Education and Training. The policy framework provides for regional harmonisation of both quality and educational outputs.

4.3 Key ODL Policy Issues

An analysis of the findings from the four sector research studies helped to isolate the challenges that have been presented above. During the August 2010 ODL Policy Dialogue Forum, the challenges were subjected to further scrutiny to come up with issues that can be addressed through the development and implementation of a regional policy framework. The challenges and issues informed this Regional ODL Policy Framework. The most notable policy issues identified were:

Issue 1: Capacity

There is need to increase the capacity of the ODL institutions in all the four thematic areas in the SADC Member States. This would allow the institutions to take in more learners and solve the bottlenecks in the education and training systems by meeting the demand for education across the Region.

Issue 2: Mainstreaming ODL in the Education and Training System

ODL should be mainstreamed into the education and training system so that it becomes one of the recognised and utilised delivery modes in all the four selected sectors. It should further be mainstreamed in face-to-face institutions and should entrench certain values with regard to equity, access, flexibility and quality.

Issue 3: Developing National ODL Policies

SADC Member States should be urged and supported to develop national ODL policies that will guide and direct the development of ODL within the countries. It is necessary that these policies be further integrated with the national policies to give them status and national support.

Issue 4: Counteracting negative ODL perceptions

ODL advocacy initiatives through associations, agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should be created, promoted and supported in each Member State in order to counteract the negative perceptions on ODL. Regional ODL initiatives and Associations, such as Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA), have to be supported also.

Issue 5: Enhancing Collaboration and Partnership

Create and support a mechanism to encourage and promote collaboration, partnership and networking among institutions and sectors and between Member States to improve the provision of ODL in all the four sectors.

Issue 6: Development of a Regional Qualifications Framework

A regional qualifications framework has to be developed to allow for the recognition of academic awards from institutions within the Member States and for the comparability of qualifications and credentials that are given.

Issue 7: ODL Staff Development and Training

Capacity building, development and training for staff engaged in ODL administration and delivery is critical in the development of ODL. Capacity building has to be done in such areas as materials design and development, ODL teaching, learner support and ICT skills.

Issue 8: Streamlining funding and budgeting

ODL funding and budgeting have to be streamlined in the education system in order to have ODL programmes adequately funded.

Issue 9: Review of Remuneration package for ODL Staff

As ODL had inadequate numbers of staff who are trained, experienced and knowledgeable in ODL, it is necessary to review remuneration packages and career paths for the ODL staff.

Issue 10: Research Development and Centres of Excellence

Research development and dissemination of research results be supported in all the Member States and at the regional level. Also create several SADC Regional Centres of Excellence in ODL sectors and these must be promoted and fully supported. Other SADC centres of specialisation should also be encouraged to utilise the ODL delivery mode in providing instruction.

Issue 11: Pro-poor Development Strategies

There were disparities between the urban and the rural areas in the SADC countries in terms of access to education, it is therefore necessary that Member States have in place pro-poor development strategies that would enable the rural areas to have essential services such as electricity, telephones, efficient postal sevices, network for cell phones and internet.

Issue 12: Stakeholders' contributions

Private, NGO, international organizations, faith-based organizations/churches' participation and partnership in the provision of ODL should be encouraged, while at the same time emphasising that government has the major role in providing ODL to its people. All these stakeholders have to contribute to the development of requisite ICT and physical infrastructure and the provision of equipment and supplies.

Issue 13: Monitoring and ODL providers

A regulatory instrument and mechanism to assess and monitor all ODL providers in a country has to be set up to address the problems created by fly-by-night institutions, diploma mills institutions and other bogus providers. At the same time create a mechanism to deal with credit accumulation, transfer and recognition of prior learning. A regional Quality Assurance System incorporating minimum quality standards should be created to ensure that the standards presented are met.

Issue 14: Coordination of ODL in Member States

Member States should be assisted to create and/or revitalise bodies/organisations/structures that will have the mainstream function of promoting, coordinating and directing ODL in the Member States.

Issue 15: **Consideration of cross-cutting issues and user friendly curricula**

ODL policies should take into account the cross cutting issues of gender, HIV and AIDS, disabilities, among others. Also SADC should encourage national curricula that are user friendly and incorporate learner needs including those of children and adults with special needs.

Issue 16: **Establishing a Multi-media and ICT Centre**

A state of the art SADC multi-media centre and an ICT centre need to be created to provide support to the ODL institutions in the region and to provide training and attachments for staff of ODL institutions in the region.

5. The SADC ODL Policy Framework

This section presents the rationale for developing an ODL Regional Policy Framework and describes the policy development process. The vision, mission, goal and objectives of the policy framework are also presented. This is followed by guiding principles, the structure of the policy, the key policy focus areas and policy statements.

It is important to note that this Regional ODL Policy Framework does not include implementation plan/framework. The implementation framework is integrated with the Regional ODL Strategic Plan that operationalises this policy framework.

5.1 Rationale for the Regional ODL Policy Framework

Most of the challenges that Member States face in their efforts to scale-up education and training provision through ODL can be effectively addressed within a comprehensive regional policy framework. The SADC Heads of State and Government committed themselves, through the adoption of the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, by defining areas of cooperation to ensure that the region has standardised and harmonised education and training policies and programmes. Specifically, through Article 4, the Heads of State and Government agreed on specific areas of cooperation and further that cooperation can be facilitated more effectively by development and formulation of comparable, harmonised and standardised policies in order to widen provision and access to education and training as well as addressing gender equality among other things.

Further, Article 9 (A2) of the protocol mandates Member States to formulate national policies on distance education in order to provide a framework for cooperation at regional level. Thus the SADC Region requires a Regional Policy Framework to guide the development of national ODL policies in all Member States. Currently, there is no long-term policy and strategy to guide the development and harmonisation of ODL in the Region.

SADC Member States acknowledge that whilst each Member State has its own policies for education and training, co-operation in this important area can be facilitated by the development and formulation of a comprehensive and standardised Regional Policy Framework. This is particularly the case with regard to: -

(a) Widening provision and access to education and training; and

(b) Reducing gender disparity, and improving quality and relevance of education and training.

The Regional ODL Policy Framework will therefore support the operationalisation of the SADC Protocol on Education and Training. The Regional Policy Framework will also provide a comprehensive framework for harmonising and supporting the implementation of relevant aspects of related policies and strategies, such as the SADC Gender Policy, SADC Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for ODL, SADC ICT Policy, the Regional Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Strategy for ODL and the Regional ODL Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

The Regional ODL Policy Framework will therefore support integration, harmonisation and optimisation of resources as reflected in the SADC Protocol on Education and Training. It will provide a framework for regional standardisation of both quality and outputs. Ultimately, the Regional Policy Framework will help re-vitalise education structures in the Region and 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.

5.2   Policy Development Process

The SADC ODL Policy Framework is an evidence-based product that resulted from extensive consultative processes that are detailed below.

(a) Research Studies: The SADC Secretariat facilitated studies in four sub-sectors of education, that is, secondary education, higher education, teacher education and technical vocational education and training (TVET) in 12 SADC Member States. The research reports detailed the status and potential of education in general and ODL in particular and identified gaps and opportunities for ODL particularly in the four sub-sectors. In addition, the reports also identified the key issues and challenges to be addressed in the region. This Regional Policy Framework has also been informed by studies undertaken by the SADC Secretariat on the status of gender mainstreaming and monitoring and evaluation of ODL in the region.

(b) Policy Dialogue Forum: The Policy Dialogue Forum was convened to validate the research reports, synthesise the findings, build consensus and make recommendations on issues that can be addressed in the Regional Policy Framework. The recommendations from the Policy Dialogue Forum focused on key challenges identified by the four sector study and other relevant research. Thus, the identified challenges informed the consolidated key policy focus areas contained in the Draft Regional ODL Policy Framework.

(c) The Regional ODL Policy Conference: The Draft Regional ODL Policy Framework was presented to stakeholders from government, civil society organizations and the academia at the Regional ODL Policy Conference. The conference discussed the draft policy framework and built consensus on fourteen key policy areas that form the basis of the Regional Policy Framework.

(d) Ad Hoc Technical Committee Meeting: An ad hoc Technical Committee comprising experts drawn from participants at the Regional ODL Policy Conference further worked on the Draft Regional ODL Policy Framework to ensure, among other things, that key issues raised at all the consultative fora are fully integrated into the policy document.

(e) SADC Technical Committee on Open and Distance Learning (TCODL): The document produced by the Ad Hoc Technical Committee was presented to the SADC TCODL which is a SADC structure to further review and provide the final comments on the document before it is shared with the SADC ODL Project Steering Committee for review and endorsement.

5.3 Policy Vision and Mission

Vision
A region where all citizens have seamless, equitable access to lifelong learning through the provision of gender sensitive, quality and relevant open and distance learning programmes.

Mission
To support integration, harmonisation and maximisation of resources and regional standardisation of quality ODL provision in the SADC Region.

5.4   Goal and Overall Objectives

The goal of the regional policy framework is to increase access to quality education and training across the SADC region

There are two overall policy objectives. These are:

1. To promote sustainable ODL development for all citizens of the SADC region; and
2.To increase access and success through quality, gender sensitive and inclusive ODL programmes and services across the SADC region

5.5   Guiding Principles

The Regional ODL Policy Framework is premised on the following nine (9) principles:

Openness: Member States shall ensure that the implementation of ODL programmes facilitates reduction of barriers to entry/access.

Flexibility: Member States shall promote flexibility in the provision of ODL and ensure that ODL structures are dynamic and respond to the ever changing demands and needs of the learners.

Learner centeredness: Member States shall ensure that the learner is at the centre of all the activities ensuring that the environment is conducive to learning and that basic resources are at his/her disposal.

Quality and relevance: Member States shall promote quality and relevant ODL programme development and delivery.

Cost effectiveness: Member States shall promote cost effectiveness in the development and deployment of ODL.

Collaboration and partnership: Member States shall promote collaboration and partnership in the areas of materials development, learner support, quality assurance systems, credit transfer and portability of qualifications, research and exchange programmes.

Efficiency: Member States shall uphold the principle that the objectives are attained in the most efficient way in order to maximise returns from each unit of investment.

Equity: Member States shall be guided by the principle of equity in the provision of ODL programmes. The policy is also guided by the fundamental values of sustainable development and inclusivity, which seek to actively involve all social groups including people with disabilities.

Harmonisation and standardisation: Member States shall promote domestication of regional instruments to ensure harmonised and standardised approaches to the development and delivery of ODL programmes.

5.6 Structure of the SADC ODL Policy Framework

The Regional ODL Policy Framework has 14 key policy focus areas. Each key policy focus area has the following elements:

- Issue: An issue is the discrepancy between the prevailing situation and the most desirable situation.

- Issue Justification: This element describes why the issue is important to an extend that it deserves to be included in a Regional policy framework on Open and Distance Learning.

- Policy Statement: This is a statement that mandates the undertaking of specified action and clearly spells out the entity that is accountable for seeing to it that the specified action is undertaken.

- Specific Objectives: These are specific activities that have to be undertaken in order to ensure that the defined issue is adequately addressed.

5.7 Key Policy Focus Areas

The Regional ODL Policy comprises 14 key policy focus areas, which address the issues and challenges that Member States face in the development and deployment of ODL as outlined in Chapter 5. The focus areas are aimed at optimizing the exploitation of opportunities that the ODL environment provides at both national and regional levels. The key policy focus areas are listed below.

(i) National ODL Policy Frameworks;

(ii) Governance and Management;

(iii) ODL Staffing, Training and Development;

(iv) Public Perception of ODL;

(v) Institutional Capacity;

(vi) Learner Support;

(vii) Quality Assurance;

(viii) Monitoring and Evaluation;

(ix) Collaboration, Networking and Partnership;

(x) Funding, Budgeting and Resource Mobilization;

(xi) Inclusive education;

(xii) Curriculum Development;

(xiii) Application of ICT in ODL; and

(xiv) Research Development and Dissemination

5.8 Policy Statements

The Regional ODL Policy Framework comprises 14 key policy focus areas, which address the issues and challenges that Member States face in the development and deployment of ODL. It should be noted section 4.3 has sixteen (16) issues. Some of these issues have been combined to come up with fourteen key policy focus areas.

Key policy focus area 1: National ODL Policy Frameworks

Issue: Socio – economic policy frameworks in most of the SADC Member States do not provide solid policy to support the development and implementation of ODL.

Issue Justification: Due to lack of relevant policy frameworks, the use of ODL has not always been properly coordinated with other efforts such as the provision of adequate resources and the development of adequate supporting infrastructures. The existence of a policy framework underscores a government's commitment to ODL and allows for the mobilization and allocation of resources needed to support and accelerate the provision of ODL programmes. Solid policy frameworks are needed for guiding, supporting and regulating the development and delivery of ODL in both public and private institutions.

A clear ODL policy at national level therefore, is a necessary condition for creating an enabling environment to support the development and implementation of institutional ODL policies.

Policy Statement: Member States shall create enabling policy environments that promote the development and effective implementation of Open and Distance Learning programmes.

Specific Objectives:
   (i)   To integrate Open and Distance Learning (ODL) into the national education and training systems through national policies;

   (ii)   To develop ODL policies that are linked to other relevant national policies and are in line with regional, continental and global commitments to education and training in general and ODL in particular;
   (iii)   To develop ODL institutional policies;
   (iv)   To create ODL coordinating structures in the Member States; and
   (v)   To monitor the implementation of ODL institutional policies.

Key policy focus area 2: Governance and Management

Issue: The governance structures and management systems of most of the ODL institutions in the Region do not have capacity to adequately respond to the development and mainstreaming of ODL.

Issue justification: Most of the ODL institutions have the same governance and management structures as conventional institutions. Unfortunately, such structures and systems do not always provide for the flexibility and expeditious responses often required by contemporary ODL systems.

Policy Statement: Member States shall strengthen the capacities of ODL institutions to deliver their programmes and services through appropriate governance structures and effective management systems.

Specific Objectives:
  (i)   To develop responsive and efficient governance structures and management systems for ODL institutions; and
  (ii) To develop human resource capacity in governance, leadership and change management for ODL programmes and services;

Key policy focus area 3: Staffing, Training and Development

Issue: ODL institutions in most Member States have inadequate ODL-trained personnel.

Issue Justification: Although in most SADC Member States ODL has been deployed for long, a number of ODL institutions do not have adequately qualified and experienced personnel at various sectoral levels. The situation has been exacerbated by the increased enrolment in ODL institutions that have not been met by corresponding staff development and recruitment initiatives.

Policy Statement: Member States shall ensure that staff recruitment at ODL institutions is commensurate to enrolments and diversity of programmes and that staff are appropriately trained.

Specific Objectives:

  (i)   To institutionalise continuing professional staff development programmes in ODL institutions; and
  (ii) To recruit sufficiently trained numbers of staff in ODL institutions

Key policy focus area 4: Public Perception of ODL

Issue: The public perceives ODL to be of lower standard compared with face to face type of education.

Issue justification: Despite its long history and wider use across education and training sub-sectors, ODL is perceived as second best in most Member States.

Policy Statement: Member States shall promote ODL and ensure acceptance of qualifications attained provided they meet agreed set standards.

Specific Objectives:

(i)   To increase awareness of the benefits of ODL among stakeholders; and

(ii)   To develop strategies for promoting recognition of qualifications obtained through ODL by employers and educational institutions.

Key policy focus area 5:   Institutional Capacity

Issue: ODL institutions are not able to meet the growing demand for programmes and services due to their insufficient capacity.

Issue justification: ODL institutions in the region have limited capacity to accommodate the growing demand for education and training in terms of resources, that is, physical facilities, and instructional resources.

Policy Statement: Member States shall improve the capacity of ODL institutions to meet the increasing demand for education and training*. .*

Specific Objectives:

(i)   To provide appropriate physical facilities for ODL institutions;

(ii)   To develop sustainable public and private partnership for expanding ODL provision; and

(iii)   To increase utilisation of appropriate media and instructional resources in ODL institutions.

Key policy focus area 6: Learner Support

Issue: Learner support services in most ODL institutions in the region are limited.

Issue Justification: ODL learners have special needs and experience a variety of problems related to their studies. These needs and problems can be addressed through implementation of cost effective and responsive learner support systems to enhance quality and success in ODL delivery. However, most ODL institutions in the region have limited learner support services.

Policy statement: Member States shall ensure that there are efficient and effective learner support systems in ODL institutions.

Specific objectives:
    (i)   To establish appropriate structures for providing learner support services;
    (ii)   To establish and implement effective and efficient learner support systems;
    (iii)   To build human resource capacity to provide learner services; and
    (iv)   To adopt innovative approaches to learner support

Key policy focus area 7: Quality Assurance and Qualifications

Issue: Most ODL institutions in the region do not have effective quality assurance systems. There is no regional mechanism that facilitates recognition of qualifications.

Issue Justification: Programme development and delivery in most ODL institutions are not supported by quality assurance frameworks. Member States have different sets of policies, rules and regulations governing the establishment of standards for ODL development and delivery at various levels. Furthermore, there are no harmonised national and regional Quality Assurance Frameworks to support the development and delivery of ODL programmes and services. There is no Regional Framework to facilitate recognition and comparability of qualifications.

Policy Statement: Member States shall support the development of Institutional, National and Regional Quality Assurance Frameworks to promote delivery of quality ODL programmes.

Specific Objectives:

(i) To develop a Regional Quality Assurance Framework, to facilitate harmonization of ODL delivery across Member States;

(ii) To facilitate the development of national quality assurance frameworks to harmonize the development and delivery of quality ODL programmes within Member States;

(iii) To facilitate the development of institutional quality assurance frameworks to guide development and delivery of quality ODL programmes; and

(iv) To support the development and implementation of Regional Qualifications Framework.

Key policy focus area 8: Monitoring and Evaluation

Issue: Most ODL institutions in the region do not have comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems with clearly defined indicators.

Issue Justification: Member States are tracking and reporting on various aspects of ODL programmes without clearly defined indicators. The prevailing situation prevents systematic analysis of the progress in the implementation of ODL in the region. These can be addressed effectively through harmonization of ODL indicators in the region. To this effect, a Regional ODL Monitoring and Evaluation Framework has been developed.

Policy statement: SADC Member States shall domesticate, track and report on the core indicators in the Regional ODL Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

Specific objectives:
(i) To develop national M&E Frameworks aligned to the Regional ODL Framework;

(ii) To develop institutional M&E Frameworks aligned to the national ODL M&E Frameworks;

(iii) To track and report national and regional progress on the delivery of ODL programmes; and

(iv) To facilitate information sharing within and across Member States on the development and deployment of ODL.

Key policy focus area 9: Research Development and Dissemination:

Issue: There is limited research development, research, and dissemination of research findings on ODL in the region.

Issue Justification: ODL-related research is scanty and not adequately supported compared to research in conventional education. There is therefore, inadequate information to support decision making for ODL development and promotion of scholarship in the region. Furthermore, the

limited research output has not been adequately disseminated across the region.

Policy Statement: SADC Member States shall invest in ODL research development and dissemination.

Specific objectives:
  (i)   To support ODL related National and Regional research;
  (ii)   To develop a collaborated regional ODL research agenda;
  (iii) To develop national ODL research agendas;
  (iv)   To build ODL research capacity; and
  (v)   To document and disseminate research findings in ODL.

Key policy focus area 10: Collaboration, Networking and Partnership

Issue: There is limited collaboration, networking and partnership among ODL institutions in the region.

Issue Justification: There are varying levels of ODL institutional capacity across the region. There is therefore a need for collaboration, networking, and partnership within and across Member States. This would facilitate programme exchange, sharing of resources and expertise. It would also promote effective and efficient utilisation of available resources and reduce duplication of programme offerings.

Policy Statement: Member States shall promote and support, collaboration, networking and partnership in ODL provision.

Specific objectives:

  (i)   To facilitate collaboration and partnership in the development and delivery of ODL programmes within and across Member States;
  (ii)   To facilitate collaborative research, partnership, development and delivery of ODL within and across Member States;
  (iii)   To enhance sharing of information and best practices within and across SADC Member States; and
  (iv)   To facilitate private public partnership in the development and delivery of ODL within and across Member States.

Key policy focus area 11: Funding, Budgeting and Resource Mobilisation

Issue: There is inadeq uate funding for ODL provision.

Issue Justification: ODL has a relatively long history in the region, however, its development has been constrained by inadequate funding. There are no separate budget lines for ODL and in most cases ODL budgets are lumped together with other services such as non formal education. In Member States where there are budget lines for ODL the budgetary allocations are generally insufficient.

Policy Statement: Member States shall allocate adequate budgets for the development and delivery of ODL provision and facilitate resource mobilisation.

Specific objectives:

(i) To create separate budget lines for ODL provision;

(ii) To develop appropriate funding formulae for ODL provision; and

(iii)To develop and implement mechanisms for resource mobilisation.

Key policy focus area 12: Inclusive Education

Issue: Inclusive Education is not adequately integrated in ODL programmes,

Issue Justification: There are inequities in the provision of ODL in the region, the most notable ones being gender inequities, rural urban inequalities, poverty related inequities, HIV and AIDS related inequalities, inequities associated with disabilities, effects of wars and natural disasters. ODL institutions in SADC Member States have not adequately addressed these inequities due to lack of appropriate strategies and capacity. The best approach to address the above mentioned inequalities is adoption of inclusive education.

Policy statement: SADC Member States shall promote inclusive education in the development and delivery of ODL programmes and services.

Specific Objectives:

      (i)   To integrate inclusive education (cross cutting issues) in national ODL policies;

      (ii)   To develop innovative programmes and strategies for implementing inclusive education;

      (iii)   To implement the Regional ODL Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and other regional strategies;

      (iv)   To identify and adopt relevant aspects of existing national, regional, continental and global policy frameworks that address inclusive education; and

      (v)   To build technical capacity of Member States to mainstream inclusive education.

Key policy focus area 13:   **Curriculum Development**

Issue: Some ODL programmes do not respond to the diverse needs of potential and current ODL learners.

Issue Justification: The design of ODL programmes does not always take into account the diverse needs of learners from different socio – economic backgrounds. This lack of appropriate curriculum design cuts across Member States. The need to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education For All targets necessitates the diversification of the curriculum.

Policy Statement: Member States shall promote the expansion and diversification of ODL programmes and service delivery in order to meet the diverse needs of learners.

Specific objectives:

  i. To ensure that the programmes are informed by needs analysis;

  ii.To periodically review and revise ODL curricula at different levels in order to offer responsive programmes in the Region; and

  iii.To provide appropriate instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners

Key policy focus area 14:   **Application of ICT in ODL**

Issue: There is a limited availability, capacity and use of ICT in the development and delivery of ODL programmes in the SADC region.

Issue Justification: Most ODL institutions in the region have, to some extent, adopted ICT in the development and deployment of ODL. However,

there is limited utilisation of ICT to increase access and enhance quality of delivery of ODL programmes. The limited application of ICT is largely due to inadequate infrastructure, limited human resource capacity, and lack of relevant policies and strategies.

Policy Statement: Member States shall facilitate enhanced availability, capacity and utilisation of ICT in the development and delivery of ODL programmes.

Specific Objectives:

(i) To advocate for the establishment of appropriate ICT infrastructure to support the delivery of ODL programmes and services;

(ii) To equip staff and learners with requisite ICT skills;

(iii) To facilitate the development of ODL institutional ICT polices for promoting effective and efficient utilisation of ICTs; and

(iv) To advocate for use of appropriate mix of technologies to cater for diverse needs of learners

6. Implementation Mechanisms

The successful implementation of the Regional ODL Policy Framework necessarily requires high level political support, at both Member State and regional levels. It will require strengthening of the existing structures that deal with education and training.

This section therefore describes the implementation and coordination mechanisms for the Regional ODL Policy and clarifies specific roles and responsibilities of implementing structures at various levels, namely political (SADC Ministers), operational levels (SADC Secretariat, Steering Committees, and Member States level). It also highlights the role of other relevant organizations which will be directly involved in the implementation process.

The main policy players in terms of policy implementation will include:

(i) **SADC Council of Ministers:** Provide direction and leadership in the implementation of the Policy and monitor the implementation of the policy at regional level.

(ii) **The Committee of Ministers of Education and Training:**
- Oversee the implementation of the Regional ODL Policy and monitor its implementation.
- Provide leadership to ensure that provisions of the Regional ODL Policy are domesticated in the national ODL policies.
- Report progress to the SADC Council of Ministers on the implementation of the Regional ODL Policy

(iii) **SADC Parliamentary Forum:** This will facilitate the popularisation and implementation of the ODL Policy within SADC Parliaments, strengthen linkages with national assemblies and ensure that members of SADC parliaments take full responsibility to promote the implementation of the policy at national and local levels.

(iv) **SADC Secretariat:** The SADC Secretariat will play a facilitative role to ensure that Member States domesticate and implement the Regional ODL Policy provisions. The Secretariat will be responsible to the SADC Ministers of Education and Training through the senior officials by ensuring that implementation of the Regional ODL Policy achieves its objectives in line with Member States priorities. Specifically, the SADC Secretariat will:

- Provide overall leadership and technical oversight in the implementation of the policy framework;

- Facilitate implementation of the Regional ODL Policy at Member State level through capacity building of relevant office bearers;
- Coordinate, supervise, monitor and evaluate implementation of policy frameworks at Member States Level;
- Mobilise resources for effective implementation of the Policy framework; and
- Report on the progress on the implementation of policy framework to Committee of Ministers of Education and Training.

(v) Member States: The Member States will spearhead implementation of the Regional ODL Policy through broad based participation and report progress to the SADC Secretariat through period reports. Member States will coordinate implementation of the Policy framework through various structures.

(vi) SADC National Committees: These will oversee development and implementation of ODL programmes at national level and will ensure wide participation and representation of public and private sectors including the civil society organisations in the process of programme implementation.

(vii) SADC Technical Committee on ODL: This committee will provide strategic guidance, technical support and oversight to ensure that the objectives of the Regional Policy Framework are achieved.

(viii) Centres of Excellence and Specialisation: These will provide training in ODL and host other professional development activities in ODL related to the implementation of the Regional ODL Policy Framework.

(ix) Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation: This will provide a mechanism for developing guidelines for harmonisation and eventual standardisation of training in the region.

(x) Technical Committee on Higher Education and Training and Research and Development

(xi) Other stakeholders: Depending on their institutional mandate, other stakeholders will support government efforts in the implementation of the Regional ODL Policy Framework.