I will share some of the Commonwealth of Learning’s work in ICT in the Caribbean, what has worked and the lessons learned and examine what implications these might have for the Pacific. I am grateful to Ian Thomson and the organisers of this session for the invitation. It speaks of the ongoing partnership that the Commonwealth of Learning has with USP.

Affordable technologies such as the low cost laptops and tablets as well as mobile devices are being increasingly deployed across schools in the developing world.

Yes, ICT can play a role as more options are available to farming communities—mobile telephones are the fastest growing sector in both South Asia and sub Saharan Africa. Community radio has had a second coming in India as the government is giving licenses proactively. TV and Internet are increasingly available.

It’s not just about access to ICT. There are the other issues of connectivity, relevant content in the local languages and culture, which determines who can/not have access such as women and marginalized communities. In addition we have the issues of economic viability, such as the questions of who will support the running costs of the systems?

As a UNDP Human Development report points out ‘the belief that there is a technological silver bullet that can ‘solve’ illiteracy, ill health or economic failure reflects scant understanding of real poverty.’

As Prof Tim Unwin observes: ‘ICT have the potential to increase equality or to reduce them, depending on the social, political and economic contexts within which they are introduced’.

ICTs enable change; they add value to development process; But by themselves they do not create the development process. ICT strategies are only effective, sustainable, and worth the effort if they are integrally linked to broader, more comprehensive development, education and poverty reduction strategies.

I will first take up three concrete examples of COL’s work in the Caribbean relating to capacity building, policy development and policy implementation. I will then look at the benefits of ICT use and conclude with the implications that this might have for the Pacific countries.
Let us take the capacity building first in Guyana. As you know Guyana is a developing country with only 28% of its population living in urban areas. Retaining qualified teachers in the system is a challenge and less than half the teachers are fully trained. In addition, only 27% of the population has access to the internet. In order to address the challenges related to teacher development and retention, the government of Guyana elaborated an ICT Professional Development Strategy for Teachers in 2011 to provide a comprehensive framework for the effective use of ICT in teaching and learning. This was done in collaboration with UNESCO, the Commonwealth Secretariat, COL and Microsoft. The UNESCO Competency Framework for Teachers (UNESCO-CFT) became the guiding document to develop core competencies among teachers. These relate to technology literacy, knowledge deepening and knowledge creation.

COL developed additional resources to facilitate the implementation of the UNESCO-CFT and the development of the core competencies. It has developed the Commonwealth Computer Navigators Certificate to support technology literacy.

Another COL resource, the ICT-CFT Toolkit is a comprehensive pack which brings together all the tools and materials used in the Guyana project. These include readiness surveys; a curriculum mapping tool; sample professional development strategies; links to course materials. There is a narrative which explains the relevance and significance of the resource and suggests the steps required to implement the CFT, based on the Guyana case. COL is in the process of transferring this model to five Caribbean countries and one Member State in Africa.

The Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration or CCTI is an advanced course for teachers and school leaders in integrating ICT into school management and teaching and learning. This was localized for Guyana and consists of in-service and pre-service courses. These were developed using OER and are available as OER. The real strength of the Guyana experience is that we now have a replicable model that can be used in other regions.

What are the elements of this model? It is important to have the ministry and the institutions on side. COL tries to implement the CCTI in conjunction with the overall ICT Teacher professional development strategy in the country. The curriculum of the CCTI is aligned to the competencies identified in the CFT. OER are identified and the capacity of master trainers built in the development, adaptation and use of OER. The key goal is to develop local capacity not create dependency on outside experts. The first step in implementation is to train mentors who complete the program themselves and then mentor others.

Continued engagement with the MoE in each country is critical to maintain and build the sense of responsibility for the successful implementation of the programme. Country stakeholders (especially the targeted teacher education institutions) should be included in the localisation and development of new modules of the CCTI. This will serve to increase the sense of ownership and levels of interest in the CCTI by these stakeholders.
The value of a face-to-face pre-module orientation and similar post module tutor training cannot be over-emphasised. The support and common understanding that an intense period of contact sessions provides is critical to the success of the model.

The Cyril Potter College found the use of OER a definite advantage which helped them save costs and improve quality. The adoption and use of OER has been a positive outcome of this project and one that has implications for system wide change.

Another major outcome was that two institutions, the Cyril Potter College and the University of Guyana were brought together under the national implementation plan. The CFT was used to guide a comprehensive curriculum review and the programmes at both institutions were brought into alignment. This allowed students to move seamlessly from one institution to the other.

The success of this strategy depends on catalysing appropriate partnerships. The focus is on involving local stakeholders and adapting materials that are suitable for the specific context. For example, the CCTI is not only offered online but is also available on CDROM. Advocacy is important to generate awareness about the benefits of the programme. Equally important is to track the outputs and outcomes achieved.

What did the CCTI/CFT implementation achieve? There are more trained teachers in ICT within the Guyanese system. The teachers are using OER, which is critical to the success of the OER movement. Participation in the project led two institutions to review and align their teacher education curricula. Finally, it encouraged collaboration externally and within the country.

Let me share the policy development process in the Caribbean. One example is Antigua and Barbuda where an OER policy has been integrated into their ICT in Education policy—this has been approved by cabinet and the ministry officials are moving to the next level of implementation. Such draft policies have been developed in four countries.

The policy can be followed by an implementation strategy. In the case of A&B, a Master Plan has been developed at the national level and an ICT integration plan at the each school level.

Once positive outcome of the policy development is that the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States have agreed to work with COL to develop open textbooks. This means using the maths curriculum of the Caribbean Exams Council or CXC, to develop open maths textbooks which are being piloted in A&B. Hand in hand with this initiative is the training of teachers and administrators organised by COL.

COL commissioned the development of a prototype for the open textbooks. This is a platform which combines a Canvas LMS with a Drupal CMS. The senior Secondary Maths curriculum with identified learning outcomes has been uploaded on the CMS and can be accessed through the LMS. Student self-assessment forms part of this open textbook package.

The benefits of these three initiatives have been: curricular reform; more trained teachers; better use of ICT for teaching and learning and innovative pedagogic practices.

So what implications do these initiatives have for the Pacific? One, we can adopt and adapt the existing models and resources eg CCTI; Open Textbooks. Two, Integrate OER into ICT in Education policies rather than develop separate policies. Three, take a holistic approach to technology adoption—align policy.
and capacity building before making IT decisions. Four, invest in technologies that are available, affordable and accessible.

Finally, in order to ensure that the technology integration is sustainable, we need to place the emphasis on the people, rather than on technologies. As we know, knowledge is a social product emerging as an interface of machine, individual, society. Learning is a process of knowledge creation rather than information consumption and the learner can be an active producer rather than passive consumer of content. How can we deliver education that excites curiosity, develops creativity and instils confidence? How can technology help?

Thank you.