International Lifelong Learning Conference

“Transforming Nations through Enculturation of Lifelong Learning”

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: 14-15 November 2011

Lifelong Learning in the Commonwealth: Issues and Challenges

Alison Mead Richardson
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The Commonwealth of Learning (COL)

What is it?
What does it do?
Skills Development

Aim:
Informal approaches to skills development

Alison Mead Richardson
(United Kingdom)
Learning for Farming

Aim: Lifelong Learning for Better Farming

Kodhandaraman Balasubramanian (India)
The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth

Emma Kruse Vaai
Samoa

John Lesperance
Seychelles

The Commonwealth of Learning
The Commonwealth of Learning (COL)

Learning for Development
The Commonwealth of Learning

WHAT IS IT FOR?

To help Commonwealth governments and institutions use various technologies to improve and expand education, training and learning in support of development
WHO ARE WE?

• 35 staff in Vancouver
• 7 staff in New Delhi
• Networks across Commonwealth
• Focal points in 52 countries
• Commonwealth-wide Board
WHERE IS IT?

Vancouver
(Headquarters)

New Delhi
(CEMCA)
WHO ARE WE?

The Hon Burchell Whiteman
Board Chair

Sir John Daniel
President & CEO

COL’s Vancouver Staff
Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA): New Delhi

Aim:
Development of technology for Asia, especially community radio

Ramamurthy Sreedher (India)
WHO ARE WE?

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WHO ARE WE?

The COL Board in Vancouver in 2011
WHO SUPPORTS COL?

The number of countries making voluntary contributions to COL rose from 22 in 2003 to 45 in 2011.
The Commonwealth of Learning (COL)

Learning for Development
Education for All
(The Dakar Goals)

Peace
Democracy
Equality
Good governance
EDUCATION

• Formal learning

LIVELIHOODS & HEALTH

• Informal learning
EDUCATION

• Open Schooling
• Teacher Education
• Higher Education
• Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth
LIVELIHOODS & HEALTH

• Skills Development
• Learning for Farming
• Healthy Communities
• Integrating eLearning
Skills Development

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Flexible Skills Development

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Flexible Skills Development

- two thirds of the population of sub-Saharan Africa is under 25 years old

- lifelong learning for people in the informal economy (90% of employment – massive need)

- **Challenge**: formal TVET system has low budget provision, inadequate infrastructure, out-dated materials and pedagogy
Goal of FSD

• Increase access to skills training for people working in the informal sector to improve livelihoods
• **Approach**: impact on provision of training for the *informal* sector through the *formal* TVET system
• Focus on 4 areas:
  o policy development
  o organisational development
  o ICT infrastructure management
  o Course design and delivery
Selection of key institutions

• Application of readiness criteria
• Baseline dataset
• Four dimensions:
  ▪ Strategic
  ▪ Organisational
  ▪ Technical
  ▪ Pedagogic
• Eleven institutions selected
Capacity Building

• Institutional managers, administrators, teachers and national policy makers
• Multi-country, online training on COL Moodle LMS
• Workshops and inputs from Technical Advisers
• Learning by doing
• Social networking platform – NING
• >300 members
• Discussion, collaboration and informal learning
• Institutional and special interest groups
Institutional development activities

• Targets for the introduction of new courses
• Staff development in the use of media and ICT
• Local market research and feasibility studies
• Enhancing technical infrastructure
• Engaging with national policy makers
• Developing new short courses
Commitment to change

- Institutions have demonstrated a clear commitment to change
- Acceptance of the principle of National Challenges – Local Solutions

- At institutional level, national perspectives and policy are being informed and challenged for improvement
- Good progress in linking institutional strategic objectives with FSD activities
Challenges

• Understanding institutional challenges and barriers
• Managing the technical infrastructure
• Strengthening of staff capacity to utilise ICT in teaching
• Sensitising the community and engaging with national policy makers
Technical barriers

- High cost of internet bandwidth
- Unreliable power supply
- Barriers being overcome through pilot activities
- Lack of technical expertise to produce strategies for the development of ICT infrastructure
- Government input to develop and publish guidelines on how to develop institutional ICT strategies within the framework of the national ICT strategy

Flexible approaches are not only about technology!
Progress & achievements

• Teachers have better curriculum development capacity
• Media-enhanced curriculum components are improving the quality of teaching
• Moodle platforms being installed
• Use of ICT represents an opportunity in terms of personal promotion
• New courses for the informal sector are being developed
What didn’t work?

• One institution has not made any real progress with FSD
• Likely due to a change in institutional head, and
• infrastructure challenges which cannot be overcome
• Strong leadership and commitment from the Head of the institution is proving to be an important factor in the successful integration of ICT in TVET
No quick fix

• The move towards more flexible and blended approaches to skills development is a lengthy and challenging process

• involves continuing learning and application to establish what works in each individual institutional context

• It is too early to demonstrate positive impact on access, efficiency or the quality of teaching and learning
Evidence base

- New, flexible approaches are being institutionalised
- Continuing staff development creating a cadre of managers and teaching staff who understand the issues
- Teachers’ capacity to use educational media and technology strengthened through instructional design training
- New, flexible courses which meet the needs of the local labour market are in development
- Attitudinal change in a critical mass of the staff carrying the institutions forward
Flexible Skills Development

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Learning for Farming

Aim:
Lifelong Learning for Better Farming

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Issues In Agricultural Extension...

- Less & less investment by governments. (in some countries Extension officer ratio is 1:25,000)
- More and more challenges due to globalization
- Inadequate information flow & knowledge management
- Lack of involvement of farmers & forward linkage stakeholders
- Absence of holistic perspective
- Financial viability, economic feasibility and social acceptability?
Globalization

New Stakeholders...
Who creates demand-who creates supply-who fixes the price-

Old Products-New markets
New Products-New Standards
Codex Alimentarius, GAP, Organic
How many farmers and villagers know?
Number of People to Reach...

Millions of farm & pastoral families

Millions of agricultural labourer families
Paradigm Shift in Agricultural Extension

• Strengthen and promote self-directed personal-strategic learning among rural communities. L3 focuses on enhancing the scope for self-directed learning with the help of ICT.

• From didactic education model of trainer-trainee to facilitating self-directed learning.
Qualities of an adult learner

• Independent self-concept; can direct own learning
• Accumulated reservoir of experiences
• Learning needs related to changing social roles
• Problem-centered, seeking immediate application
• Motivated by internal rather than external factors.

(Merriam, 2001:5)
Lifelong learning:

“a process of continuous informal learning where learners choose what they want to learn, either inside or outside a formal organisational setting, which may be once-off, voluntary and not credentialed. Informal learning enhances community capacity building through community ownership, learning for the love of learning, and happens through social and community organisations to meet the needs of individual learners with individual life circumstances” (Baker, 2006).
The Commonwealth

THE COMMONWEALTH COMPRISSES 54 DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING NATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

COL's Lifelong Learning for Farmers - implementation
Lessons from L3F

• Vertical learning helps to define and refine the strategies for self-directed learning

• Horizontal learning is an important aspect of self-directed learning

• Cognitive social capital is an essential condition for horizontal learning

• ICTs such as mobile phones and computers not only help in vertical learning but also strengthen the horizontal learning.
L3F and Social Learning Capital

L3F strengthens the lifelong learning process within the social capital which leads to social learning capital. Using ICTs such as mobile phones, L3F has developed a framework of quality learning conversations.
Trends of L3F (1)

• Around 20,000 women and men (Asia) and 4,000 women and men (Africa) in L3F through mobile phone and other multi-channel learning.

• The learning takes place in the context of self-help groups, women’s associations, and farmers association, strengthening the community-based knowledge system.

• There is evidence that mobilization and formal learning through ODL promote a self-sustained personal-strategic learning
Trends of L3F (2)

• ICTs such as mobile phones help in promoting structured learning among semi-literate and illiterate populations

• Such learning leads to better livelihoods and personal empowerment

• Secondary stakeholders (financial institutions, ICT companies) see that lifelong learning among farmers promotes their business interests. This helps to scale up the initiative through replication.
What does L3F require?

• A strong mobilization process
• Investment in cognitive social capital
COL’s L3F Initiative: Model & Future

• To show a model to the secondary stakeholders that investing in L3F is good business & development strategy

• Future: COL withdraws and secondary stakeholders along with primary stakeholders take up the initiative and replicate
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Why?
High Profile Development Agenda

Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers

• Millennium Development Goals – Education for All

• The Dotcom Frenzy
VUSSC as a network
University of Seychelles
2010
Expanding Tertiary Education in Small States: a special challenge
Institutions will......

• Assume responsibility for programme development and delivery
• Be responsible for supplementing or adapting course materials to local contexts to meet the specific needs of students
• Commit to the granting of the awards earned by graduates through NQAs
Benefits:

• Course/programme content

• Larger pool of trained faculty

• Greater choice for students
Open Educational Resources

The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth
The Transnational Qualifications Framework

Ten Level framework

Transfer of courses, qualifications & learners

Not replacing existing frameworks
www.vussc.info

VUSSC Portal
Conclusions
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Leadership from the Top

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Get Secondary Stakeholders Engaged

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Engagement of Tertiary Institutions
Common Thread

“in implementing technology-mediated approaches to improve and expand learning opportunities, human factors such as leadership, engagement, and readiness to change are at least as important as the technologies and the systems”
Thank you

For text and slides:

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THANK YOU

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