



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING
Learning for Development



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Perth, Australia

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The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is pleased to report to CHOGM by way of the attached brochure, which focuses on our contributions to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

As a Commonwealth intergovernmental organisation, COL has ensured that its work fits within the framework of the MDGs, the campaign for Education for All (EFA) and Commonwealth values, while also answering to the needs expressed to us by member Governments.

We invite you to review the cover note below and examine the contents of the brochure. Your support is vital to our work and your input is always welcome.

Hon. Burchell Whiteman, O.J., Chair

Sir John Daniel, President & C.E.O.

Overview

Through its own resources and its extensive networks, COL provides a wealth of services and collaborative opportunities for policy makers, institutions and distance education practitioners to encourage the development of, and help enhance, the use of open and distance learning (ODL) policies, systems and applications.

COL's Mission focuses on helping Commonwealth member states to use technology as a means of increasing the scope, scale, quality and impact of their education and training systems. The application of technology through ODL techniques has shown its power and value in many countries and for many purposes.

ODL is a cost-effective approach to expanding education. Its use has grown rapidly over the 20 some years since Commonwealth Heads of Government established COL. Today, thanks to

expanding connectivity and new developments in information and communications technologies such as social software and open educational resources (OER), ODL applications continue to accelerate. The interactive Web is a rich environment for learning and a powerful vehicle for expanding awareness about the possible futures of humankind.

As a small and specialised intergovernmental agency, COL emphasises partnerships in all its activities, collaborating with other Commonwealth bodies and multilateral organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as Commonwealth Governments, fostering communities of practice and nurturing regional bodies. Renewed partnership agreements were signed with the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO in 2009 and action plans and activities are reviewed regularly.

Programme

COL's Three-Year Plan for 2009-2012 is entitled *Learning for Development*. The broad term "learning" – which subsumes formal education and training – not only captures the variety of demands that development makes on people but also evokes the vision implicit in COL's name: Learning is our Common Wealth.

Learning for Development expresses a vision that reaches beyond formal education to embrace areas of learning that are vital for better livelihoods, greater prosperity and a safer environment. Understanding development as the process of increasing the freedoms that people can enjoy, COL pursues this vision operationally within the framework of the MDGs, the campaign for Education for All (EFA) and Commonwealth values.

The programme initiatives are:

Education

Open Schooling: Growing success in achieving universal primary education is creating a surge of demand for secondary schooling that many governments cannot afford to satisfy by building more schools. Open Schooling can deliver quality education cost-effectively at scale. www.col.org/OpenSchooling

Teacher Education: Achieving the MDGs and EFA will require millions of new teachers and on-the-job training for millions more unqualified teachers already in post. Teacher education institutions will not be able to meet these demands without adopting the methods of ODL and COL will help them do this. www.col.org/TeacherEducation

Higher Education: Many universities face burgeoning demand after a period of neglect and some countries are creating open universities. COL facilitates the expansion of quality higher education and the sharing of programmes among institutions, with

a special focus on helping institutions adopt cost-effective quality assurance processes.
www.col.org/HigherEducation

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth: Hundreds of teachers and officials have acquired advanced ICT skills through this 32-country network. It produces and shares eCourses in skills-related areas within a new Transnational Qualifications Framework and links them together in a common portal.
www.col.org/VUSSC

Livelihoods & Health

Skills Development: COL assists with the development of policy for the use of ODL in skills development, notably for the informal economy, and works with partners to design and deliver quality courses that are increasingly rich in ICT. Partnerships among institutions at different stages of development operate in a spirit of south-south cooperation.
www.col.org/SkillsDevelopment

Learning for Farming: Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) is a successful grassroots model for increasing rural prosperity that uses ICT to link banks and universities to village communities to exploit new economic opportunities. It is now being implemented at scale by extending the use of knowledge intermediaries. www.col.org/L3Farmers

Healthy Communities: COL's media empowerment model has proven its effectiveness for bringing health messages to communities. It is now being scaled up by training health groups and communities to create and share learning materials and make effective use of community media.
www.col.org/HealthyCommunities

Integrating eLearning: Countries are eager to raise levels of digital literacy and deploy eLearning in their education systems. To build capacity, COL is training educators to develop eLearning materials, to conduct eTutoring and to share materials as open educational resources through communities of practice.
www.col.org/eLearning

The three cross-cutting themes of gender equality, quality assurance and appropriate technology are pervasive throughout the programme.

Each sector pursues its aims through five core strategies: partnerships, models, policies, capacity

and materials. These strategies focus on co-creating value with COL's extensive network of partners and stimulating new developments.

In order to be more present at the regional level COL has its own unit in India, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA). In Africa, it works with RETRIDOL (Research and Training Institute for Distance and Open Learning) in West Africa and SADC-CDE (Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education).

Three-Year Plan, 2012-2015

As COL is nearing the end of its current Three-Year Plan, its monitoring and evaluation exercises, as well as wide consultation with stakeholders, will inform its Three-Year Plan for 2012-2015. Critical input is also being encouraged through COL's Government-appointed Focal Points at four regional meetings this year. The Plan will be presented for endorsement by Commonwealth Education Ministers when they meet next year.

Country Plans and Reports

To adapt its programme to fit the unique needs of each country COL develops individual Country Action Plans after extensive consultations with Ministers, Focal Points and partner institutions. These are monitored and updated regularly. *COL in the Commonwealth*, a compendium of individual Country Reports, is published at the end of each triennium and presented to Education Ministers when they meet every three years. Preliminary versions of next year's reports will be available at CHOGM 2011.

Chair and President

At its June 2011 meeting, COL's Board of Governors unanimously re-appointed the Honourable Burchell Whiteman, O.J. for a second three-year term as Board Chair.

Sir John Daniel has announced that he will not be seeking an extension when his current contract with COL ends in May 2012. The Board has initiated a process to seek and appoint a successor as President and CEO of COL.