Collaborative Approach to OER Policy and Guidelines Development in the Commonwealth

The Case of Botswana, Cameroon and Sri Lanka

Ishan Abeywardena, PhD (@ishansa)

Adviser: Open Educational Resources

www.col.org

May 30, 2018
The Commonwealth is made up of 52 countries around the world.
LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Commonwealth of Learning empowers people through learning that leads to economic growth, social inclusion and environmental conservation.
The Commonwealth of Learning (COL)

Learning for Sustainable Development

Source: http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/2666
What is COL for?

To help Commonwealth governments and institutions use technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development.

Source: http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/2666
The Project

Dr. Michael N. Nkwenti
Cameroon

Dr. Lekopanye Tladi
Botswana

Prof Shironica Karunanayake
Sri Lanka
There are approximately four million primary and secondary learners spread across ten thousand schools.

The government handles 30 million copies of textbooks a year at a cost of Rs.3,000 million to provide free textbooks to learners up to G.C.E. Ordinary Level under the “free education policy”.

Botswana

• Botswana is faced with a continued decline in student performance due to poor quality education.

• One contributing factor is the quality of teaching and learning resources available.

• The average cost for a set of textbooks from grade 9 to 11 is USD 99.60.

• The government needs a budget equivalent to 1.8% of the Gross National Product (GNP) to maintain a 1 book per student level of access.
Cameroon

- The average course book-to-learner ratio is 1:12.
- Disparities are greater in the three Northern Regions due to terrorist attacks in the last three years.
- Only 11% of learners in these areas have access to at least one textbook.
- 17% of classrooms operate without a single textbook in French or English.
- In most classrooms, 19 learners use one reading book for French/English and one mathematics book for 17 learners.
- The price of course books is very high and undoubtedly hinder a vast majority of parents from purchasing textbooks for their children.
Objectives

• Prepare a draft OER policy/guideline template which caters to the requirements of the provinces/regions;
• Sensitize and seek collaboration for the project from the key stakeholders at the MoE;
• Build awareness among key stakeholders in the provinces/regions on the concept and potential impact of OER;
• Advocate the necessity and benefits of a provincial/regional OER policy/guideline for Education;
• Initiate the process of drafting OER policies/guidelines for each province/region;
• Identify champions in each province/region who will draft the OER policies/guidelines;
• Provide on-going online support/follow-up to champions leading up to a final draft policy/guideline;
• Produce a project report to be presented to the MoE which will facilitate the adoption and implementation of the policies.
The collaborative approach to OER policy development
### Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country and project duration</th>
<th>No. provinces or regions</th>
<th>No. policymakers sensitized</th>
<th>No. policies or guidelines developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka (5 months)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana (4 months)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon (3 months)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>608</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 29 Provincial Policies/Guidelines Drafted
- 608 Policy Makers Sensitized
Suggestions from policymakers

• The central Ministry of Education needs to coordinate and regulate a set of minimum connectivity standards for schools.

• Schools with good connectivity should assist others with access to OER content by downloading and sharing.

• Schools should consider allowing students to bring mobile devices to school.

• Encouraging teachers to create OER in their native languages is very important.

• Creating “Interest Groups” of school teachers and others at provincial/regional level.

• A proper monitoring and evaluation system.
Benefits of the collaborative approach to OER policy development

• A maximum number of policy makers at provincial/regional level included in the policy development process.

• Mass-sensitization of policy makers.

• The identification of champions helped establish a key contact person who would drive the OER agenda forward in the province/region.

• Self-motivated individuals would proceed to pilot OER within their capacities due to the new found knowledge and skills.

• The policy/guideline documents can be tailored to the specific needs of a particular province or region. These might be different and more sensitive than the needs addressed in an overarching national OER policy.
Success factors

• The cooperation and patronage received by the MoE. The directives issued by the MoE enabled the consultants to achieve the objectives of the project with a high success rate.

• Field visits. The physical presence of the consultant at the provinces/regions and the use of printed and digital OER to sensitize the participants allowed them to relate OER to the needs of their jurisdiction.

• Passion, persistence and perseverance of the consultants who truly believed in the potential of OER for increasing access and equity in their countries.
Challenges faced

- Busy work schedules of officials in the provincial Ministries of Education and Departments of Education.
- Natural disasters and political volatilities.
- Lack of communication due to the poor connectivity in rural regions.
- Large size of the countries made travel all regions extremely challenging physically and logistically.
- Nature of roads and unstable flight schedules.
National Workshop on Provincial Open Educational Resources (OER) Policy Implementation

Follow-up

National Workshop on Provincial OER Policy Implementation for the nine provinces in Sri Lanka
Thank you


**Abstract**

Access to relevant learning resources is an important aspect in ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all as outlined in the sustainable development goal 4 (SDG4). The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has identified the development of open educational resources (OER) as a potential answer to these challenges. A total of 29 provincial/regional OER policies and guidelines were developed in Sri Lanka, Botswana, and Cameroon closely involving 608 provincial/regional policymakers from the general education system. The innovation of this project lies in the collaborative approach adopted for OER policy/guideline development where a maximum number of policymakers at the provincial/regional level have been included in the policy development process. Key applications of the approach are mass-sensitization of policymakers, identification of champions in each province or region to drive the OER agenda forward, and the development of policies/guidelines tailored to the specific needs of a particular jurisdiction. The paper will also highlight the success factors, challenges, and the follow-up activities of the project.