

Connections



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COL initiative to upgrade teachers in Southern Africa produces results

Southern African collaboration produces materials for training upper primary and junior secondary teachers. All are designed for study by distance education.

For several decades, many African countries have faced a consistent and serious shortage of trained teachers and the supply vs. demand situation is now rapidly worsening due to the burgeoning population of young people combined with the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic that is cutting a wide swath through the teaching profession.

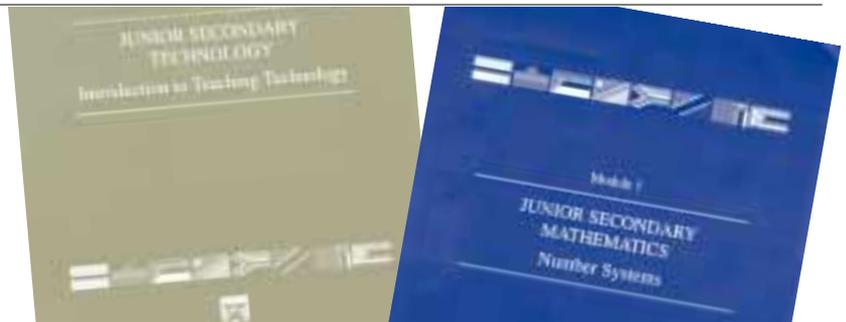
Just as the world enters the “knowledge era” and leaders worldwide grapple with the challenge of helping to close the digital divide, Africa finds its capacity to respond to these challenges undermined by its lack of the most basic resources – teachers. Whether and how Africa participates in this knowledge era and meets global *Education For All* targets will depend on its success in training new teachers, upgrading existing teachers and extending the reach of all qualified teachers.

Recognising the need for innovative models to address the problem in Southern Africa and elsewhere in the Commonwealth, COL took the initiative to invite Ministers of Education from Southern Africa to agree on a co-operative programme designed to bring the benefits of distance education to the training and upgrading of under and unqualified teachers who are trying to cope with limited resources and imposing demands on their time.

Training teachers

A good teacher has always been able to make learning effective and engaging, and a bad one can reduce a subject to boring at best, and incomprehensible at worst. “Born teachers” certainly exist, but for most training is required.

A good learner is self-motivated, but the role of the well-trained teacher in helping a school-age student to really understand something, and perhaps even like it, is integral to the learning process. Even in the increasingly high-tech environment of distance and open learning at the leading edge of educational



practice, telecommunications and computer software have been unable to completely replace a young learner’s need for human interaction and guidance.

Teacher training methods and approaches are also being upgraded and improved. The simplistic axiom, “spare the rod and spoil the child,” has been replaced by a greater understanding of child psychology and of the effect of sociological issues on human development – especially in Africa where students can include AIDS orphans and those affected by war-torn environments. Learning by rote has been supplemented or supplanted by more creative and effective teaching and learning methods. Teachers are more, not less, involved in the larger academic bureaucracy than ever; they need to be informed of new or better ways to manage resources and to cope with administrative issues. Rapid advances in all fields of knowledge, especially in the sciences, have made regular knowledge refreshing and upgrading essential.

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New publications from COL

Telecentres

Those following global discussions concerning the “digital divide”, and the creation of the Digital Opportunities Task Force – or DOT Force – by the “G-8” group of major industrial democracies to help bridge the digital divide, will appreciate the attention that has been accorded to relatively recent developments in the use of telelearning centres or telecentres. As a contribution to these developments, COL has recently published, as a part of its *Perspectives on Distance Education* series, *Telecentres: Case Studies and Key Issues*.

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STAMP 2000+
Module one
standardisation
and training
workshop for
writing countries.
Namibia, 1999



TEACHER TRAINING

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STAMP 2000+

In 1997, COL proposed a five-year distance education project to train and upgrade upper primary and junior secondary teachers and administrators in Southern Africa. Six Commonwealth countries, all also members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), responded to COL's proposal. A meeting in early 1998, convened by COL and involving representatives of international education development agencies and the education ministers and senior education officials of the six countries, produced a ministerial accord and a two-year work plan for the Science, Technology and Mathematics (STM) Programme – STAMP 2000+. The original signatories, Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and

Zimbabwe, were later joined by Mozambique and Zambia, also members of SADC. COL provided start-up funding for the programme and served as the co-ordinating agency. Although there has been some further contributions from third-party organisations, most hosting, staffing and other ongoing costs continue to be provided by participating countries.

Who it's for

STAMP 2000+ offers in-service skills training and upgrading for educators and education administrators in participating countries. In addition to the specialised STM subject areas, the programme also has a general education component on professional teaching and administrative skills such as language and communication concepts, child development, education management and curriculum practice. To ensure the STM topic modules are compatible with educational practise in SADC countries, they have been designed to follow the core regional curriculum. The course modules are also sufficiently generic in content and design, to allow for adaptation to the specific requirements, delivery media and methods of existing in-country teacher training programmes.

The general education modules will be in the hands of Ministries of Education and training authorities in the eight participating countries by July and, through COL, are available for use in other countries.

How it works

Designed for learning at a distance, STAMP 2000+ is cost-effective and provides opportunities for training that are not otherwise possible. Teachers can study while on the job, with minimal disruption to the education system's human resource base. Theoretical as well as practical course components ensure the "who, what, when, why and where," as well as the "how," are covered. User-friendly without watering-down, the modules are basic but thorough introductions to each topic with an appendix of further references. The language contains little jargon and explains any unfamiliar terms or concepts succinctly. Self-assessment, evaluative and interactive learning techniques are built in. The specifics of module delivery, however, will depend on each country's available infrastructure and training needs.

From outline to blueprint

STAMP 2000+ has been a collaborative Commonwealth and regional effort at every step of the development process. With a work plan in place by early 1998, a curriculum team of COL and participant country education ministry officials designed a general module writing guide based on existing regional and internationally-sourced STM syllabuses. Regional project co-ordination is shared by South Africa and Zimbabwe, with ongoing monitoring of the actual writing process by the education ministries of Botswana and Zimbabwe, the University of Fort Hare (South Africa) and the University of Zambia.

Modules are written by seven regional and in-country teams of subject specialists. Regional meetings and workshops, co-ordinated by COL and participating countries, help keep the project on track. Third-party consultants from Canadian organisations such as British Columbia's Open Learning Agency, Hands-on Management Services and Alberta's Grant MacEwan College (GMC), as well as Technology for All in South Africa, have assisted with instructional design and editing.

The urgency of the need in Southern Africa combined with recognition of the value of COL's role in guiding the coordinated development of this distance education-based teacher-education programme motivated several other international agencies to offer support with additional funding, or personnel for workshops and meetings. These include the British Council (Botswana and Zambia offices), the Open University (U.K.), Northern College (Scotland), CfBT Education Services (U.K.), the Commonwealth Secretariat, the South Africa College for Teacher Education, the Netherlands government (Zimbabwe office), the British Department for International Development (Zimbabwe) and GMC.

Capacity-building

Already close to 300 education professionals, including administrative and technical staff, have received hands-on training related to instructional design, course writing and management through project support meetings and workshops. The project has stayed close to its original schedule and has maintained both co-ordination and equilibrium, along with its high degree of international collaboration. All 18 general education modules are now being printed and some of the modules have already been provided for use outside the region – to the Cyril Potter College of Education in Guyana and to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of Sierra Leone. Publication of 27 specialised STM topic modules is anticipated by the end of 2001.

COL has also assisted with the development of similar teacher-training programmes specific to Malawi and KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, modelled after the STAMP 2000+ initiative.

African policy dialogue on teacher education

Permanent Secretaries of Education from African Commonwealth countries and senior officials responsible for teacher training will meet from 9 – 13 July in Windhoek, Namibia for a *Pan-African Policy Dialogue on In-Service Teacher Training, using Open and Distance Learning*. Participants will examine issues involving the accreditation of teachers, quality and standards, systems management and regional collaboration and co-operation. They will also develop co-operative methods to move forward in implementing new strategies.

The policy dialogue is being convened and sponsored by COL and generously hosted by the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, Republic of Namibia. Funding assistance is being provided by the British Department for International Development (DFID) Education Department's Skills for Development Programme, DFID's Central Africa office and the Centre for British Teachers (CfBT), U.K. Participation is by invitation only.
www.col.org/africapolicy

COL in Action

COL assists UNHCR in staff training

"I very much enjoyed participating in this course. Even more important, I really think the course has helped me to improve my writing. I am encouraging two local staff members who work under my supervision to apply."

– Blanche Tax

"I think the course is very helpful. With the wise tutoring like I had, my writing for UNHCR is improved significantly."

– Elena Mihailevskaia

The importance of clear and succinct writing to carry out its work prompted the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to seek the help of COL to develop a distance-learning course for this purpose. It will enable UNHCR staff to be more effective in their communications at Headquarters and in the field.

COL with the assistance of Ms. Maree Bentley, the course author, and Dr. David Murphy, the instructional designer developed the *Writing Effectively for UNHCR* course. The materials will be used to train 500 staff members by the end of 2001.

Fifteen Canadians, with expertise in communications and experience of tutoring adults at a distance, support the course through e-mail. A training workshop for brief tutors on the specifics of this course was conducted by Maree Bentley, in Australia, through a videoconference between the Australian National University in Canberra and COL Headquarters in Vancouver. This



Ms. Maree Bentley, the course author, and Dr. David Murphy, the instructional designer

training process was assisted by pre-and post-workshop Internet Listserv discussions.

Currently, 200 UNHCR staff are participating in the course. They include administrators, refugee workers and field staff based all over the world. Learners are given a self-study package containing a workbook and a style companion, and receive individual tutoring through e-mail. Tutors mark the electronically submitted assignments and offer detailed suggestions and comments. Taking advantage of this electronic mode of student support, COL is delivering a "paperless" course by organising and storing learner records on Client Information Systems software.

In response to UNHCR's request for a similar course for use by French-speaking



Elena Mihailevskaia, UNHCR student in Russia

NEW PUBLICATIONS FROM COL Telecentres – continued from page 1

It provides insights on management, operations, applications and evaluation of such centres and is the first book to be published providing such a global outlook on this important topic.

The book opens with an overview of the multipurpose community telecentre movement and discusses the key issues of ownership, management, operational models and sustainability. There follows a series of case studies of telecentres drawn from Europe, North and South America, Africa, Asia and Australia.

The final chapters draw on the experiences, insights and findings of some of the world's leading experts in telecentres in regard to evaluation, teleworking, training telecentre managers and staff, and selecting and using technology.

The book offers an unparalleled range of information and advice on the organisation and running of telecentres. It has been designed for policy-makers, centre managers and all of those in education, training, health and community development who are keen to serve urban, peri-urban, rural and other disadvantaged communities for which access to education and information means access to a better future.

Editors Professor Colin Latchem (formerly head of the Teaching Learning Group at Curtin University, Western Australia) and Mr. David Walker (Education Specialist, Educational Technology, COL) have worked with 23 chapter authors to provide this valuable resource. COL is



distributing copies to all Commonwealth Ministries of Education and to members of the Commonwealth Expert Group on Information Technology. 272 pages.
www.col.org/telecentres

Using audio in ODL

Audio for Distance Education and Open Learning: A Practical Guide for Planners and Producers:

Written by John Thomas, who has worked with and produced audio support for education systems over 30 years, this handbook sets out good professional practice in the design, development and delivery of audio materials – radio, audio cassettes and audio-vision – for open and distance learning.

The handbook is intended for all those who are involved in the design, development, production and use of audio materials in distance education and open learning, including policy makers, managers, tutors/facilitators and trainers.

The approach adopted is appropriate to both industrialised and developing countries. However, it has been designed to be particularly relevant to those working in institutions and projects with limited access to resources. The handbook has been jointly published by COL and the International Extension College, U.K. 235 pages www.col.org/audiobook

Non-formal education

Case Studies of Non-Formal Education by Distance and Open Learning: This consultancy research report will be useful to people involved or interested in the

planning, development and implementation of non-formal education programmes because of the useful lessons it offers. The case studies in this report demonstrate the potential and importance of distance learning approaches in enhancing the contribution of non-formal education to socio-economic development in Africa.

For example, the Zambia Radio Farm Forum programme enables the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries to reach larger numbers of peasant farmers than is possible through other extension services. The Radio Farm Forum programme helps over 21,000 small-scale farmers/peasants in rural areas, who listen and participate in the programme, to learn new knowledge and develop new skills. In the Ghanaian case study, the use of radio strengthened the coverage, by the literacy programme, of the functional and developmental themes.

The study was funded by the British Department for International Development and was edited by Professor Richard Siaciwena, Directorate of Distance Education, The University of Zambia. 148 pages
www.col.org/consultancies

Obtaining copies

All three of these publications can be downloaded from COL's web site, or can be ordered from The Open Learning Agency, Attn. COL Customer Service, 4355 Mathissi Place, Burnaby BC V5G 4S8 Canada; tel: 604.431.3210; fax: 604.431.3381; e-mail: catalogue@ola.bc.ca. Government agencies and institutions in developing Commonwealth countries may receive copies at no charge. Other orders must be accompanied by a pre-payment of CDN \$12.00, plus shipping, or charged to VISA or MasterCard accounts.

personnel, COL, with the help of Université du Québec's Tele-Université (Canada), translated and adapted this course into French. It will be available for delivery later this year.

Canada renews support for COL's youth internships

COL has been delighted to participate in the realisation of the Canadian Government's strategy to use international internships to equip young Canadians to be better prepared for the demands of globalisation. Under the Government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy (YES), Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has approved funds for COL to place 10 youth interns around the Commonwealth during 2001/2002.

The internships are designed for Canadians who have recently graduated from college or university and seek international experience in education and/or educational technology. Eight- to nine-month placements are arranged with host organisations in India, Jamaica, Malaysia, Uganda, the U.K., Zambia and Zimbabwe. Insofar as possible, work experiences will relate to COL's fields of interest.

COL first participated in the programme last year (2000/2001) when it received funding for eight Canadian youth interns. Their postings were at the Women In Development Southern Africa Awareness Programme and the Musokotwane Environment Resource Centre for Southern Africa, both located at the Southern Africa Research

The first graduates of COL's Canada-Caribbean Distance Education Scholarship Programme (CCDESP) at a ceremony held in Roseau, Dominica, on 16 March 2001. The new Bachelor of Education holders are all working teachers.

Left to right, back row: Ferne Laurent, Mavis Bernard, Josephine Corbette, Daria Sorbaindo, Cynthia Linton (with baby), Diana Angol. Front row: Michelle Charles (with daughter), Yolanda Jno-Baptiste, Carlton Julius, Phillip Joseph. Missing: Susanne Scotland.

CCDESP's Dominican component is offered by Memorial University of Newfoundland in conjunction with the Dominican Teachers' College. COL administers the distance education-based CCDESP on behalf of the International Academic Relations Division of the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.



and Documentation Centre, Harare, Zimbabwe; the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai (Madras), India; the Commonwealth Youth Programme's Africa Centre (Gender and Youth Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat), Lusaka, Zambia; the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, New Delhi, India; the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, London, England; and The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, Lower Hutt (Wellington), New Zealand. Other agencies and organisations interested in hosting youth interns are invited to contact COL. www.col.org/internship

From COL's partners

Britain announces basic education funding for Commonwealth children

In February, U.K. Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown, launched a multi-million pound fund to mark next year's celebrations of the Queen's 50th year on the throne. In a speech to the Global Children's Conference in London, he said that the fund would help the 75 million children in the Commonwealth who lack access to basic education by building fair and effective education systems and creating more opportunities for girls and other disadvantaged groups.

The initiative forms part of efforts to meet the United Nations' international development targets, including providing universal primary education and halving the number of people in extreme poverty by 2015, and eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005.

Commonwealth Secretary-General, H.E. the Rt. Hon. Don McKinnon, has welcomed the initiative noting that about half of the 140 million children worldwide who lack access to primary education live in the Commonwealth. He said the initiative reinforces the Commonwealth's commitment to quality education, as reaffirmed by Education Ministers at their meeting in Halifax, Canada, in November last year.

Declaration on the African University

Over 250 delegates attended the 10th General Conference of the Association of African Universities (AAU) that was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in February 2001, and hosted by Kenyatta University. On the final day of the conference, members agreed to a *Declaration on the African University in the Third*



COL President, Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan (left), presents video equipment to Commonwealth of Dominica Minister of Agriculture and Environment, the Honourable Lloyd Pascal, at a ceremony held at the Botanical Gardens, near the Ministry offices in Roseau. This project involves equipping and training extension officers, on field and desktop video production of training videos that address regional and local forestry and agricultural issues.



Mr. Oliver Grell (right), Head of Extension for the Ministry, with Professor Dhanarajan during a farm tour near the rural extension office in La Plaine.



Ms. Delia Cuff, Agricultural Extension Officer, edits a training video at the Ministry's La Plaine Extension office.

Millennium, which calls for “the revitalisation of the African University, and for a renewed sense of urgency in acknowledging the crucial role it should play in solving the many problems facing our continent.”

When AAU was established in 1967, its membership was only 34. Today, its membership has grown to more than 170 universities, drawn from 43 countries. info@aaau.org | www.aaau.org

Indian school students visit Canadian high schools

Three junior high school students from India visited Canadian high schools in British Columbia (BC) and Ontario in May to exchange knowledge on developing school websites. The students, ages 13 and 14, are the winning team in a website contest, chosen from among entries from 400 Indian schools.

With an accompanying teacher, they visited a new high-tech school in West Vancouver, BC – Rockridge Junior Secondary – and the Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific, an international high school in Victoria, BC. They also visited schools in Toronto and Ottawa, Ontario.

The SchoolNet India Websites Contest 2000 is a prestigious national-level competition organised to recognise the best talent in the country. It is open to 2500 schools in India. 400 schools from ten cities took part in this contest, which encourages schools across the country to create their websites through the inspiration, experience and knowledge of their students in Grades 6 to 10 (10 to 16 years old).

Part of the prize for the winning team is an educational trip to Canada being facilitated through COL’s affiliate, COL International.

The winning team is from Sanskriti Civil Services School, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi. The Students are Manisha Prakash, 13, Nimay Donde, 14, and Rupinder Sabharwal, 14. Their accompanying teacher is Kavitha Punjala. www.schoolnetindia.com/main/schoolcontest

COL President inaugurates BRAOU research academy

“There is a need to build research capability in distance education and there should also be a desire to sustain it,” Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, President and CEO of The Commonwealth of Learning, said [in Hyderabad on 19 January 2001]. He was inaugurating the G. Ram Reddy Research Academy of Distance Education (GRADE) at the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU) campus.

“The Commonwealth is concerned about the quality of services, the impact of learning through interactive sessions and is extending support to help the cause of distance learning” Professor Dhanarajan said. “The state with many firsts to its credit, will be the



JULIE IVERSON, NORTH SHORE NEWS

Canadian science teacher Tom Harding (left) hosts visiting Indian students who won a national school web site contest. Left to right: Manisha Prakash, Rupinder Sabharwal and Nimay Donde

first to establish an open university dedicated to research”, he said.

Professor Afzal Mohammad, Vice Chancellor of BRAOU, said that the university set up GRADE as part of the efforts to carry out system-based research in distance education using teleconferencing facilities and multimedia packages.

[The late Professor Ram Reddy was the first Vice-Chancellor of BRAOU and first Vice-President of COL. www.col.org/edep/edep_citations.htm#Reddy]

The Times of India

Quality guidelines for online education

Commonwealth Education Ministers, meeting late last year in Halifax, identified the need for better standards in offering online and off-shore education, noting the need to “protect our citizens against malpractices”.

At their own risk, students of all ages are now using the Internet for education and training. Every person who signs up online takes a chance that the time, registration fees, and effort may be wasted. Consumers need to know how to recognise and use quality online learning services. In Canada, COL has joined a new initiative to provide clear comparative guidelines for e-learning services.

COL is working with the Canadian Association for Community Education (CACE), FuturEd Consulting Education Futurists and other partners to create a set of quality standards for online learning products and services to assist in risk reduction for consumers of e-learning in Canada. All elements of an online course – design, content, credibility – will be incorporated.

“Across Canada, students are overwhelmed by the amount of choice they have in online learning. They’re wondering about quality and how to get the best return for their education investment,” says Barbara Case, Past-President of CACE.

The project will also create a consumer’s guide to give students, parents, and workers the questions they should ask before signing up for an online course. Producers of online learning – public universities, colleges and

school boards, not-for-profits, commercial firms – can then use the guide to meet consumer expectations.

Dr. Kathryn Barker, President of FuturEd, notes: “This project is a unique Canadian contribution to the on-going management of content on the Internet. It will provide consumers with a Bill of Rights, and it will create a Seal of Approval for Canadian producers of Internet-based education and training competing in the tough global market.”

While a Canadian initiative at this stage, COL’s involvement promises to bring any benefits to the wider Commonwealth, in part by informing COL’s work and consultations in this area.

The project is funded by the Office of Learning Technologies of Human Resources Development Canada (HDRC, Government of Canada). Other project partners include the Canadian Association for Distance Education, the Association for Media and Technology in Education in Canada, LICEF Télé-Université (Université du Québec), SchoolNet of Industry Canada (Government of Canada), the TeleLearning Network (the Centre of Excellence providing research in this area), CanLearn (the HRDC education web portal for higher education and training) and CanLearn Interactive. New partners are welcome.

National consultations are scheduled to take place during the next few months. www.FuturEd.com

Zambia offers management diplomas through DE

Zambia’s National College for Management and Development Studies launched its Distance Education Diploma Programmes in April 2001. College Principal Mr. J.M. Bwalya, reports that the programme has 300 students enrolled in its initial offering – 75 students in each of four diploma courses: marketing management, social work, public administration and human resources development and management

COL has provided some staff training to help the college to design and begin offering courses through distance education.

Moving a country “from poorhouse to powerhouse”



Gajaraj Dhanarajan

“If we accept the premise that education, more than any other factor, can make the difference between wealth and poverty, health and misery, conservation and destruction, national unity and division, then the levelling of educational opportunities must be a priority for all of us who care about our fellow citizens. Education can no longer be considered as just a function of the participation rate of the 18- to 24-year-olds in our populations ... There is increasing evidence that information and communications technologies are beginning to play a very effective role in the promotion of lifelong learning.”

– GAJARAJ DHANARAJAN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GUYANA

On 5 March, COL’s President and Chief Executive Officer, Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, spoke on “Combating Poverty through Adult Education.” He was inaugurating the Dennis Irvine Lecture Series on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the University of Guyana’s Institute of Distance and Continuing Education. Dr. Dennis Irvine is a former Vice-Chancellor of the University and former senior staff member of The Commonwealth of Learning.

Professor Dhanarajan referred to “children of the twentieth century” as those who have lived through colonialism and seen the “achievements of science and technology, a freer flow of information, a few uncertain steps towards the universal rule of law, a greater access to education and health for most and an acceptance of the principles of equality for all human beings”.

“Notwithstanding these achievements, we still live in a world of great inequality. A good part of humanity is denied access to an equal share of the planet’s wealth, to justice, to a decent living; the disparity between those who

have and those who do not in terms of food, health care and social security continues to be appalling,” he continued.

“Throughout the ages, education has been the most powerful agent of change. Many of the world’s leading thinkers, political leaders, development specialists and others have come to recognise that the empowerment of individuals through the provision of learning – a basic human right and social responsibility – must therefore be protected. It is this desire to empower individuals that led to those who met in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1989, to declare among other things that, ‘every person – child, youth and adult should be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs’.”

He noted that *The Economist* (in 1991) had described how these countries looked only 50 years ago; that one-half of Japan’s workforce was in paddy fields, Singapore was still a mosquito-ridden and politically volatile colony, Hong Kong a small port coping with refugees from neighbouring Guangdong and other coastal provinces of China. Taiwan was also hopelessly coping with its own stream of refugees from Shanghai, Korea on the brink of a civil war and poorer even than Sudan, Mainland China going through its trauma of the cultural revolution and the ASEAN nations overall struggling with pre- or post-independence political challenges.

“However, by early 1990,” Professor Dhanarajan pointed out, “these nations were in the middle of an economic boom sustaining annual growth rates of about seven per cent, perhaps two or three times faster than that of any other part of the world. You know of course that at the start of this millennium the average Taiwanese was richer than most New Zealanders; the people of Hong Kong were much better off in wealth than their former colonial masters; Singaporeans were better off than most Europeans and South Koreans had a GDP in excess of US\$6,000.

“Coupled to the economic growth are social developments that indicate that the average East Asian will be healthier, have a longer life expectancy, and will be better fed and sheltered. While there are many factors that may have contributed to changing the region from ‘poorhouse to powerhouse’ investment in education and more education is probably the most important of all.” www.col.org/speeches

People

Abdul Khan moves to UNESCO



Abdul Khan

Professor Abdul Khan, COL’s Director, Development and Training, has been appointed as UNESCO’s Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information.

A leader in the application of communication, distance education and education technologies in South Asia, he was Vice-Chancellor of India’s Indira Gandhi National Open University from 1998 to 2000, served at COL from 1992 to 1998 and returned to COL in October of last year. He joins UNESCO in July.

Sir John Daniel, formerly Vice-Chancellor of the U.K. Open University, became UNESCO’s Assistant Director-General for Education in April. Sir John is a pioneer of open and distance education and played a major role in the formation of COL and its governance in early years.



John Daniel

Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, on behalf of all those associated with COL, has congratulated both and offered COL’s continuing support, assistance and collaboration in common goals such as the use of distance, open and technology-mediated education to help achieve the global targets agreed to in the *Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All*. He said that, “I am also confident that both Sir John and Abdul will continue to be strong supporters of the work of COL in these fields. While both will be missed by their respective institutions and countries, they will continue to make major and valuable contributions to the field of education, specifically open and distance learning, and the advancement of opportunities for governments and citizens of developing countries. Distance education has never been represented at such high level at UNESCO before and it is another demonstration of how important the field, and the opportunities it offers, has become in the world today.”

Professor Khan and Sir John are part of the newly appointed management team consisting of a Deputy Director-General and five Assistant Directors-General, recruited from outside the organisation by UNESCO Director-General, Koïchiro Matsuura.

UNESCO’s new Deputy Director-General is **Márcio Nogueira Barbosa** of Brazil, a space research specialist and formerly Director-General of the Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais (INPE).

COL staff

Ms. Kgomotso Motlotle, COL's Education Specialist, Teacher Education, is returning to the Ministry of Education in Botswana at the end of June. She served with the Ministry for 18 years before joining COL on secondment three years ago. She has made many contributions to COL's work, including being the driving force behind the STAMP2000+ project in Southern Africa and the Pan-African Policy Dialogue on Teacher Training.



Kgomotso Motlotle

Ms. Helen Lentell will be joining COL on 1 July 2001 as Education Specialist, Training and Materials Development. She has been Head of Higher Education and Professional Studies at the National Extension



Helen Lentell

College in the U.K. since 1997 and previously held a variety of posts within the U.K. Open University system between 1978 and 1997. Ms. Lentell has several publications in the field of distance education to her credit and is a frequent contributor to *Open Praxis*, the bulletin of International Council for Open and Distance Education.

Board of Governors

Professor Stephen Matlin, Director of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Human Resource Development Division (responsible for the Departments of Education and Health), will join the British Department for International Development



Stephen Matlin

in July as Chief Education Adviser. He succeeds **Ms. Myra Harrison**, who retired from the position and stepped down from COL's Board of Governors late last year.

Among Professor Matlin's many initiatives was the creation of the Parallel Events at triennial Commonwealth ministers meetings, which have enhanced opportunities for dialogue between Ministers of Education and the wider professional, academic and development communities and the private sector.

The Secretariat's Education Department has also collaborated closely with COL on a number of projects and Professor Matlin has taken a close personal interest in COL's work. He will continue to do so in his new role as he takes over responsibility for representing the United Kingdom on COL's Board of Governors. **Mr. Steve Packer**, DFID's Acting Chief Education Adviser, has been serving on COL's Board in the interim.

Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, Chairman of COL's Board of Governors, and **His Excellency, the Rt. Hon. Donald C. McKinnon**, Commonwealth Secretary-General, have announced two new Board memberships. **Ms. Ali Gillies**, Assistant Director General, International Programmes Branch, Australian Agency for International Development, was appointed by the Government of Australia as its representative as a major donor. And **Professor Michael Omolewa**, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Nigeria to UNESCO, was named to the Board as a regional representative for Africa.

Professor Omolewa was formerly Head of the Department of Adult Education and Director of the External Studies Programme at the University of Ibadan and a former Coordinator for West Africa for the African Association for Distance Education. He and Ms. Gillies succeed **Dr. Ihron Rensburg**, Deputy Director-General of the South African Department of Education and **Professor C.D. Blake, AM**, retiring Vice-Chancellor of Charles Sturt University.



Michael Omolewa

COL's Board provides valuable policy direction for the agency. Service on the Board is non-remunerative. www.col.org/board

COL professional associate

The Jamaican Ministry of Education and Culture has designated its Chief Education Officer, **Mr. Wesley Barrett**, to undertake the first of a series of professional associations with COL. This new programme was created to promote knowledge sharing in the development and installation of distance education and open learning systems and to provide networking opportunities that will benefit a participating Commonwealth Government-affiliated agency or institution through one of its higher level professional staff members.

Mr. Barrett has been with the Ministry since 1973 and is currently the Chair of the Association of Caribbean Chief Education Officers, the Institute of Instructional Technology and the Jamaican Association of Open and Distance Learning. He arrived in Vancouver in early April and will be with COL until August.



Wesley Barrett

Events

Reddy Memorial Lecture

The Chairman of COL's Board of Governors, Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, will deliver the sixth Professor G. Ram Reddy Memorial Lecture on July 2, 2001 in New Delhi. The event is jointly sponsored by the Indira Gandhi National Open University and COL in memory of the late Professor Reddy, who was the first Vice-Chancellor of IGNOU and first Vice-President of COL (www.col.org/edep/edep_citations.htm#Reddy). It will be televised in India, and made available to television and educational broadcasters throughout the region via satellite.

Open Learning: Transforming Education for Development



The second *Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning* will be held at the International Convention Centre in Durban, South Africa, from Monday, 29 July to Friday, 2 August

2002. The conference theme is "Open Learning: Transforming Education for Development" and there are five sub-themes:

- Overcoming barriers to access and success
- Open learning, the world of work and economic development
- Open learning, the community and social development
- Overcoming the digital divide: innovative applications of technology in open and distance learning
- Education for All: open and distance learning and the global agenda on poverty alleviation issues

The deadline for submission of proposals for presentations and papers has been extended to 15 December 2001. The Forum is being hosted by COL, the National Association of Distance Education Organisations of South Africa (NADEOSA) and the South African Department of Education. colforum.mweb.co.za

The next presentation of COL's *Excellence in Distance Education Programme* awards will also take place at the second *Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning* in Durban. The awards recognise institutional achievement, excellence in distance education materials, learning experiences and lifetime contributions to open and distance learning. Nomination procedures will be posted on COL's web site and will be sent to all recipients of *Connections*. www.col.org/edep

Gender barriers to ICTs

Global “digital divide” discussions have identified the particular need to address the implications of the ICT revolution for women, recognising the importance of taking measures to ensure that they are not deprived of the opportunity to participate in the emerging economy that is likely to shape the 21st century.

The Commonwealth of Learning, in collaboration with The Open Polytechnic in New Zealand (TOPNZ), as local host, organised a regional symposium to identify and examine the barriers encountered by women to the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) for open and distance learning (ODL). Funding support from New Zealand Official Development Assistance (Development Cooperation Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade) enabled representatives from eight Commonwealth countries in the South Pacific and staff from the University of the South Pacific to attend. The meeting was held in Wellington in May 2001.

Recommendations drafted by the meeting participants for forwarding to Governments, development agencies and COL were in the areas of policy development, infrastructure development and improvement, training in the use of ICTs, and awareness-building in the area of gender as related to ODL and ICT use.

This was the final in a series of four regional “expert group meetings” convened by COL and attracting local sponsorship. A summary meeting is planned for early 2002, to be held in Canada in conjunction with a conference on the subject. The four regional meeting reports will be synthesised at this time and participants will propose strategies and activities to help overcome the identified barriers.

Vocational education

UNEVOC-Canada in partnership with the International Centre for the Enhancement of Learning Potential is hosting an international conference to be held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, 18 – 25 August 2001. The conference, entitled *Unlocking Human Potential to Learn* is designed to introduce participants to the best practices and innovative approaches, strategies and techniques for teaching “learning how to learn” skills to children, youth and adults. Presentations will focus on three themes: enhancing learning skills of special needs and gifted learners of diverse cultures, developing critical skills for lifelong learning and improving effectiveness and efficiency in vocational education and workplace training. umevoc@cc.umanitoba.ca
www.umanitoba.ca/umevoc/conference

AAOU conference

Access and Equity: Challenges for Open and Distance Learning is the theme of the XV annual conference of the Asian Association

Workshops held in India in January:

Professor Suresh Garg, Director, School of Sciences, Indira Gandhi National Open University, discusses flexible learning options in training material that could be used by NGOs in working with street children.

Dr. S.S. Sangal, Director (Academic), National Open School, describes a process for developing guidelines for best practice for ensuring quality in basic education that is delivered through non-conventional means.

The International Conference on Quality Issues in the Delivery of Education For All, particularly with reference to Open Basic Education was held in Hyderabad, and was organised by the National Open School and COL.



of Open Universities. It is being hosted this year in New Delhi by the Indira Gandhi National Open University, 24 – 26 October 2001. scgarg@ignou.ac.in

Malaysian distance education

The Malaysian Association of Distance Education, formed last year, held its first national conference in April. *Building Successful Organisational Models for Knowledge Management* was the theme. www.u-link.com.my/km2001_1.htm

U.S. universities align to deal with technology vendors

Hoping to present a united front against the onslaught of technology companies offering distance-education products and partnerships, four U.S. state universities have formed an alliance to share information and make joint technology purchases. The group’s leaders say, however, that the partnership is informal, and that it will not spawn for-profit spin-offs or ambitious joint course offerings.

The members of the alliance are the University of California at Berkeley’s extension programme, Pennsylvania State University’s World Campus, the University of Washington and the University of Wisconsin’s Learning Innovations programme.

“We’re all being besieged by vendors from the e-learning industry who are trying to pick us off one at a time and make deals with us singly,” says Gary W. Matkin, Dean of Continuing Education at University of California at Irvine, who is helping to co-ordinate the alliance. Irvine is not a member, however, in part because it does not yet offer many distance-education courses. “We could develop a much better approach to these vendors if we were to collaborate and share information.”

The four universities involved have much in common when it comes to distance education, says Michael J. Offerman, Dean

of Continuing Education at the University of Wisconsin. Each offers more than 100 online courses, and all were active in earlier forms of distance education, like correspondence courses.

“We’re trying to figure out, how do we use the web to improve what we’ve done in a correspondence format?” Mr. Offerman adds.

The Chronicle of Higher Education

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Digital video – best quality is becoming affordable

This issue of *EdTech News* focuses on video production models that COL has been implementing with different groups throughout the Commonwealth. COL's work has brought digital video production tools into the hands of experts in agriculture, forestry, environment, health, technical/vocational education, multimedia courseware development and teacher training in all Commonwealth regions.

Hand-held digital video camcorders and desktop editing systems are valuable new tools that can be used to effectively disseminate relevant local audio- and video-based learning that can complement existing print materials. The evolution from analogue to digital technology over the past decade has provided a new ease of use in cameras, camcorders (video cameras and video recording functions combined into one unit) and the editing/production process that was previously out-of-reach of the general public due to cost and complexity.

Camcorders

This is an exciting time in the world of video – a time when relatively inexpensive digital camcorders can reproduce pristine images that are virtually indistinguishable from those seen on broadcast television. The issue for many is what kind of camcorder should be considered for use in the field or a specific application. Camcorders currently on the market include Mini DV, Digital 8, Hi8, VHS, Super VHS and VHS-C. The choices available to the consumer today span the spectrum in both price and capability.

Digital systems (Digital 8 and Mini DV), which record pictures and sound on to the tape in a digital (series of ones and zeros) format, are gaining momentum globally. Analogue systems (Hi8, VHS, Super VHS and VHS-C), which record varying magnetic impulses on to the tape, are gradually disappearing as the prices of digital equipment comes below the US\$500 range.

Digital 8 format was introduced by Sony in 1999. The format offers 25%



Video editing and multimedia production in Maldives through a COL-supported project involving the Ministry of Education's Educational Media Services Unit

higher resolution (or quality of video pictures) over Hi8 analogue systems, yet uses the same compact tape and can still play back old tapes recorded in Hi8. The Commonwealth of Learning Media Empowerment (COLME) projects in agriculture use Digital 8 camcorders because they are more rugged cameras, smaller in size than Hi8 and use tapes that are readily available in the countries in which the projects have been undertaken.

The Mini DV (Digital Video) format uses an even smaller tape size than Hi8 and still provides digital-quality resolution in an extremely compact camcorder that can easily fit into the palm of the user's hand. COLME projects have used Mini DV camcorders with professionals who require the extremely lightweight equipment and high quality standards. For example, the Sony DCR-PC110 was the camcorder chosen for use in forestry projects due to the challenging conditions that extension officers encounter during extended field trips and the importance of minimising weight while on extended back-country treks.

Most digital camcorders provide digital still imaging (digital photo) capacity as well as video. This allows the user to transfer still images from the camcorder to a computer via a high-speed interface called a USB cable. The images can then be e-mailed or used to enhance report writing, documentation and educational materials.

www.sony.com

www.jvc.com

www.panasonic.com



Sony DCR-PC110 Mini DV camcorder



Shooting video sequences using Digital 8 camcorders at the Samoa Polytechnic

Editing systems

The next step in the process is transferring the video from tape into a computer system for editing. Many editing systems today are also based on digital technology (called non-linear editing as opposed to the less cost-effective, older linear, or analogue, systems).

Non-linear editing systems use desktop computers but require the installation of a "video capture card". You must select a card that is compatible with your video camcorder's output. Analogue VHS camcorders use "composite video", "RCA" jacks (which look like the red, white and yellow connectors on the back of a television or VCR). Analogue Super-VHS and Hi8 camcorders use a special connector called a S-Video (Super Video) or "Y/C" video jack, which can look similar to a computer mouse or keyboard connector, but with fewer pins. Digital video cameras use a high-speed connector commonly referred to as "IEEE 1394" or "FireWire". Combined with a high-quality FireWire-capable capture card in the user's computer, this is the highest quality means of transfer from digital camcorders to computer systems.

With digital editing, video sequences can move from computer to camera and back and lose very little, if any, image quality. In analogue systems, each dub (or copy)



Forestry and agricultural extension officers editing videos in La Plaine, Dominica

represents a loss of image quality – and after a few dubs, the loss of sharpness and colour integrity is very noticeable.

Companies that manufacture video capture cards (both analogue and FireWire interfaces) include Pinnacle Systems, Winnov, Dazzle Incorporated and Thales Computers (formerly Matrix).

COLME projects have used varied technology mixes depending on the requirements of the target groups being served. For example, the needs of the curriculum developer are different from those of a forestry extension officer. And those needs are different again from those working in agricultural extension. Recently, however, COLME has focussed on using digital equipment.

Some projects have used a desktop computer with a video capture card and digital editing software. A PC or Mac (Apple)-based solution is sometimes best for an educational media unit that is also undertaking web and desktop publishing on the same system. But in most cases projects have been supplied with a stand-alone, desktop editing system that is easy to maintain and transport. Such systems are also more user-friendly than are general purpose PCs. An extension office can be editing with only a few hours of training.

The Casablanca editing system, for example, can be used for both analogue and digital video production, with broadcast-quality output possible in either mode. Other software editing systems include Studio DV from Pinnacle Systems and Video Studio from Ulead Systems. And Apple Computers has recently introduced video editing and a FireWire interface as a standard element in its Macintosh G4 computing systems.

Digital video production systems are evolving quickly and prices are dropping while capacity is increasing.

www.casablanca.tv

www.dazzle.com

www.pinnacle.com

www.thalescomputers.com

www.ulead.com

www.winnov.com



Casablanca editing unit

Thoughts on e-learning

In the last decade many large organisations have made significant investments in computer-based training facilities. Many question whether the arrival of Internet-based training (or e-learning) at the desktop will make dedicated learning centres, filled with hardware and CD-ROM systems, redundant.

There is little doubt in industry circles that e-learning can offer considerable cost savings over traditional methods of instruction and some organisations have found that employees are willing to spend more time accessing online courses than on conventional distance education study. E-learning courses tend to be designed for short-duration training sessions (under one hour) that fit within the employee's workday or can be available at almost any time of day or night. E-learning instruction often includes simulations providing the learner with a more realistic and memorable learning experience.

CD-ROM delivery is now taking a back seat to e-learning due to the wide variety of course materials that can be easily updated and accessed on the web with accompanying tools such as e-mail, voice-over IP and real-time chat rooms. CD-ROMs will not disappear, however, so long as there are constraints with bandwidth. In fact, it seems that a blending of face-to-face instruction, CD-ROM resources for large file animations, and web-based e-learning with its many attributes, is the current trend for delivery of industrial and institutional training. The bottom line is that an organisation must plan its e-learning strategy taking into account its network and computing capacity, along with the critical bandwidth needed, to provide students with a reliable and prompt delivery system for learning.

As with any good distance education programme, well-designed e-learning requires higher up-front investment that needs to be weighed against other savings such as travel costs and restricted class sizes in face-to-face workshops. Quality e-learning requires significantly more preparation time than does conventional classroom instruction and also calls for levels of technical expertise that can be costly. Also, as with any distance learning programme, e-learning requires the learner to be self-motivated and somewhat self-directed. Many must learn to manage their learning, a skill that they may not have been previously taught.

Web addresses go multilingual

Arabic doesn't translate well in web addresses and neither does Japanese, Hebrew, Chinese, Swedish, nor any of dozens of languages with letters absent from a standard Roman-lettered keyboard. The Internet is global, but web addresses are not, a state of affairs domain registrar NSI (Network Solutions Inc.) says it intends to improve. NSI, in Herndon, VA, [says] it will start a test programme that allows registration of multilingual domain names in 55 languages and character sets through the 60 or more registrars accredited by ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers).

California-based i-DNS.net International, which developed a system for the DNS to recognise non-ASCII characters, will supply the technology for the test, NSI said in a statement. Among the languages that will be supported are Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Arabic and Hebrew. "When the vast majority doesn't use English and doesn't use ASCII-based characters, it's a significant problem," said Brian O'Shaughnessy, [of] NSI. "People who write in Urdu or Chinese should be able to use the functionality of the Internet." About 95 percent of the people in the world don't speak English as their primary language, and about 70 percent of those online don't speak English, O'Shaughnessy said, noting that the issue is particularly pressing in Asia, the fastest-growing area for Internet use.

While there are perhaps millions of web pages with non-English language content serving audiences in their native tongues, all require Roman characters in the web address. Some sites, such as 13579.com, registered to Dozo Development in Taiwan, use numbers rather than letters in the address to alleviate confusion. "Numbers make more sense to a Chinese speaker than a domain name with English letters," O'Shaughnessy said. Several organisations are working toward a solution, he said. ICANN held a five-day summit in July in Yokohama, Japan to help resolve the issue. The Multilingual Internet Names Consortium (MINC), formed by a group of Asia-Pacific Internet associations, discussed ways to implement non-English domain names on the Web. The test will start sometime in the fourth quarter, O'Shaughnessy said.

IDG News Service/George A. Chidi

EdTech News is written and compiled by Mr. David Walker (Educational Specialist, Educational Technology). Descriptions of products are provided for information only and do not constitute endorsement by COL.