SIR JOHN DANIEL APPOINTED PRESIDENT OF COL

Dr. Lewis Perinbam, O.C., Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Commonwealth of Learning has announced the appointment of Sir John Daniel, a world-renowned authority in open and distance learning and currently Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO, as President and Chief Executive Officer of COL. He succeeds Dato’ Professor Gajaraj (Raj) Dhanarajan who retires in May.

A graduate of the universities of Oxford and Paris, Sir John began his academic career at École Polytechnique in Montreal. The “revelation” of a three-month internship at the new U.K. Open University in 1972 led him to refocus his career on expanding educational opportunity. After helping to establish the Télé-université (Quebec) and Athabasca University (Alberta) in the 1970s, he gained leadership experience in campus universities during the 1980s as Vice-Rector, Academic of Concordia University (Montreal) and as President of Laurentian University, a bilingual Ontario university that operates in both classroom and distance modes.

Sir John was Vice-Chancellor of the U.K. Open University (UKOU) from 1990-2001, a period when student numbers almost doubled, to 200,000, while the UKOU rose to fifth place in national rankings of teaching quality. Since 2001 he has been Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO where he is responsible, in particular, for co-ordinating the Commonwealth Declaration on Development and Democracy: Partnership for Peace and Prosperity.

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENTS ENDORSE COL’S PLANS

The 15th triennial Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (15CCEM) and parallel conference were held at the end of October in Edinburgh, Scotland, followed shortly afterwards by the 2003 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in early December in Abuja, Nigeria. Commonwealth of Learning representatives reported to both meetings.

At their meeting in Abuja, Commonwealth Heads of Government “received with appreciation the Report of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and accepted its recommendations, in particular, the proposal of the Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers for a Commonwealth Virtual University for Small States. They noted COL’s request for resources to finance its three-year Strategic Plan.” Also, through their Aso Rock Commonwealth Declaration on Development and Democracy: Partnership for Peace and Prosperity, Heads of Government stated that: “We affirm that education, whether formal or informal, is central to development in any society and is of the highest priority to the Commonwealth.”

In Edinburgh, Ministers of Education complimented COL on its work and accomplishments of the past three years, approved its Three-Year Plan, 2003-2006 and pledged financial support for its target of CDN$9 million in annual core funding. Ministers also endorsed the concept of a Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, as presented by COL in response to their request to study the feasibility of a virtual
SIR JOHN DANIEL APPOINTED PRESIDENT OF COL

global drive to achieve Education for All. He has also held various non-executive posts in education, notably the presidency of the International Council for Distance Education and the vice-presidency of the International Baccalaureate Organisation.

Knighted by Queen Elizabeth for services to higher education in 1994, the honour recognised the leading role Sir John has played internationally, over three decades, in the development of distance learning in universities.

Commenting on his appointment, Sir John said, “Having chaired COL’s original planning committee in 1988, I am delighted by the strong reputation it has so quickly established. Governments now realise that open and distance learning, using appropriate technology, can transform education by extending access, raising quality and cutting costs – all at the same time. COL is there to help the developing countries of the Commonwealth make this possibility a reality. I greatly look forward to seeing COL achieve even greater impact.”

Sir John has been active as a scholar and student throughout his career. The success of his book, Mega-Universities and Knowledge Media: Technology Strategies for Higher Education (Kogan Page, 1996), established his reputation in international university circles as a leading thinker about the role of technology in academic communities. He has been awarded 20 honorary degrees from universities in 12 countries and was named an Honorary Fellow of COL in 2002 for his contribution to the development of open and distance education world-wide. He is a citizen of Canada and the U.K.

Commenting on the appointment of a new President, Dhanarajan said, “Sir John commands world-wide respect for his contribution to contemporary thoughts on education. The Commonwealth of Learning is most fortunate to have attracted him to succeed me. I am thrilled. His impeccable credentials, experience and knowledge of open and distance learning and an abiding commitment to the mission of the Commonwealth will all help to make COL an even greater global asset to education than it currently is.”

COL is an intergovernmental organisation that was created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies. Sir John will take up his new post in Vancouver in June.

NEW COL EDUCATION SPECIALIST

Mr. Joshua Caleb Mallet will join COL’s staff on 15 March 2004 as Education Specialist, Literacy and Livelihoods, on secondment from the University of Education, Winneba, where he has been Administrator for Distance Learning for the past nine years.

Mr. Mallet has been involved in distance education since 1994 and was a pioneer in the development of Ghana’s distance education system. He is a writer, editor and trainer of trainers in distance education and has served as an educational consultant for French education and distance learning. Recently, he has been associated with projects involving the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Simon Fraser University, UNESCO, the World Federation of French Teachers and COL.

Joshua has been closely associated with livelihood training in Ghana and other countries and has assisted NGOs and national institutions working with low-income populations to help them create employment opportunities, especially for young women.

COMMONWEALTH MEETINGS

Stressing the continuing importance of the Commonwealth, the Minister of Education of the UK, Mr. William Hague, said at the opening of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Plan (CMAP) Meeting that this unique organisation was a time-proven guarantee of educational and social development. The Commonwealth is a core element of the 1999 Edinburgh Declaration and Action Plan on Education and Training for the 21st Century. Mr. Hague stressed that the Commonwealth had shown that education and training can be seen as a unifying element of the Commonwealth, binding nations together.

In making the announcement, Perinbam said, “Sir John Daniel will bring to the Commonwealth of Learning impressive credentials as a world leader in distance and open learning. He is a person of international stature who will take COL to new heights of achievement. COL is fortunate to be assured of his bold and imaginative leadership in the years ahead.”

Professor Dhanarajan has been COL’s President and Chief Executive Officer since September 1995. Although originally engaged on a three-year contract, COL’s Board of Governors asked him to stay for additional terms. At a Board meeting in Durban in July 2002, Professor Dhanarajan agreed to stay on for the transition period as the organisation’s Chair was changing. Dr. Perinbam, the new Chair of COL’s Board of Governors appointed in April 2003, struck a search committee and engaged an executive search consulting firm to identify a successor.
COL IN ACTION

COL FOCUSES ON THREE PROGRAMME AREAS; SEVEN SUB-PROGRAMMES

After wide consultation and subsequent endorsement from Commonwealth Ministers of Education, COL has now embarked on its new Three-Year Plan for 2003 – 2006. Using a Results Based Management (RBM) framework and further integrating the UN’s Millennium Development Goals and “Education for All” priorities, COL’s new strategy identifies three priority programme areas and three sub-programmes to support its overall purpose of Building Capacity in Open and Distance Learning (ODL):

ODL Policies – fostering the adoption and implementation of open and distance learning policies within the broader educational and human resource development strategies and policies of member nations. Sub-programmes:
• Policy development for basic and secondary education
• Policy development for post-secondary education

ODL Systems Development – assisting in the development of open and distance learning systems that build on existing capacity or assist in creating new capacity appropriate for the contexts of member states. Sub-programmes:
• Developing, strengthening and fostering regional centres of expertise
• Developing, strengthening and improving ODL capabilities at regional, national and institutional levels

ODL Applications – demonstrating how open and distance learning applications can benefit individual learners, institutions and member states by accelerating human resource development. Sub-programmes:
• ODL applications for poverty reduction
• ODL for teacher education and alternate schooling
• Other Commonwealth priorities and the Millennium Development Goals, notably health, good governance and the unique needs of small states

Knowledge resources and management; fostering networks and partnerships with local governments and institutions, and with international development agencies and regional agencies; and stakeholder engagement are key to the success of the Plan.

Results Based Management is a planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation process that is seeing widespread use in international development. RBM aims to improve management effectiveness and accountability by “defining realistic expected results, monitoring progress toward the achievement of expected results, integrating lessons learned into management decisions and reporting on performance.” (Canadian International Development Agency).

COL’s new Three-Year Plan provides a summary of COL’s RBM process, including a corporate-level “impact” statement – “Citizens within the developing nations of the Commonwealth will have greater access to education and thereby the means of securing decent livelihoods, notably increased social and economic development as targeted by the Millennium Development Goals” – and programme-level “outputs”, “outcomes”, “success indicators” and a clearly defined monitoring and evaluation process.

With a straight-forward vision of “Access to education – Access to a better future”, COL’s mission statement remains unchanged:

Recognising knowledge as key to cultural, social and economic development, the Commonwealth of Learning is committed to assisting Commonwealth member governments to take full advantage of open, distance and technology-mediated learning strategies to provide increased and equitable access to education and training for all their citizens.

There are several “initiatives” within each sub-programme and several “activities” within each initiative. For example, one “policy” initiative is, “Conducting research and working with Ministries of Education to identify the need for ODL and ICT in education policy and develop plans to construct such policies.” Another initiative, under “applications” is, “Addressing the massive need to improve knowledge and skills of small-scale farmers to enable them to participate in the increasingly complex global food production/market chains, and improve their livelihood.”

COL’s Three-Year Plan, 2003 – 2006 also includes analyses on historical and global dynamics, regional needs summaries, criteria for the selection of specific initiatives, critical success factors, risk management and financial resources. It is available online or by request on CD-ROM or in print.

www.col.org/programmes/reporting/3year_plan.htm info@col.org

NATIONAL FORUM ON ODL – CAMEROON

COL facilitated a national forum on open and distance learning (ODL) in Cameroon in December that was attended by all three education ministers – the Honourable Professor Maurice Tchuente, Minister of Higher Education; the Honourable Mr. Joseph Owona, Minister of National Education; and the Honourable Louis Bapes Bapes, Minister of Technical Education and Vocational Training – and over 200 other policy makers and practitioners.

The forum resulted in a recognition of the need for Cameroon to develop an ODL policy as well as implementation strategies for the overall development of human resources in the Republic.

Participants formulated a set of recommendations, a plan of action and acknowledged the role of COL as a key support agency in policy development and capacity building in ODL. Other development agencies such as the British Council and the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie, also participated and confirmed that they too are ready for further collaboration and support.

The three ministers signed a Declaration, which endorsed the recommendations of the participants and affirms their commitment to promoting ODL in Cameroon.
SINGAPORE HOSTS THIRD TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTE

The third of a series of five annual management development workshops for directors and principals of teacher training colleges and institutes in Commonwealth Sub-Saharan Africa was held at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore, from 20 – 31 October 2003. These workshops are specially designed to help participants address the challenges they face in training teachers toward achieving their “Education for All” goals, focussing on advantages of open and distance learning in teacher training.

Nineteen participants from Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Seychelles, Uganda and Zambia took part in this year’s session. The first two workshops were attended by 36 participants from Botswana, Cameroon, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The workshop series is jointly sponsored and organised by COL and NIE – and hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Singapore.

OPEN LEARNING HEALTH NET

COL is collaborating with the World Health Organization in the South Pacific to create the Open Learning Health Net. This service automates the collection and updating of information of importance to about 2,500 health care workers in the region who serve a population of about 1.6 million. The service is built on the technology of COL’s Knowledge Finder, which indexes about one million documents on education and development for researchers throughout the world. www.col.org/kf  www.colfinder.org/wlhn

TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Its work with the National Teachers’ Institute (NTI), Kaduna, is one of COL’s major initiatives in West Africa. The COL/NTI partnership is designed to increase access to, and the quality of, teacher training and professional development of teachers in Nigeria through the use of open and distance education. More and better-trained teachers in the schools and non-formal sectors are essential for achieving “Education for All” goals.

NTI is unique as it is a single-mode distance education institution dedicated to teacher training. Established in the seventies it has been instrumental in training large numbers of primary school teachers in Nigeria. COL is providing expertise in reviewing and improving their course development and learner support systems. Training workshops on instructional design, course development, video scriptwriting and the use of audio-visual media have been conducted for NTI staff and COL has also helped in updating the infrastructure of the graphic and media units there. COL is working with NTI towards the establishment of a training resource group in the Institute that would organise orientation and training programmes for tutors and other learner support staff. COL is also supporting the development of monitoring and evaluation systems and a quality assurance mechanism.

In addition to building capacity in NTI, COL is facilitating partnerships and linkages between NTI and other organisations in Nigeria such as the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), the Universal Basic Education Programme, the National Commission for Nomadic Children and the newly re-established National Open University of Nigeria.

In collaboration with COL, NCCE has developed a “benchmarking” system that includes performance indicators for teacher training in Nigeria. Capacity building, strong partnerships among agencies and institutions and the use of open and distance learning will improve the application of new and in-service teacher training and the ongoing professional development of teachers, teacher educators and other personnel in the Nigerian school system – an area where there is great and immediate need.

See also: “Jegede becomes VC of Open University, Nigeria”, page 10.
GENDER MANAGEMENT TRAINING

COL partnered with the Commonwealth Secretariat to develop a “Gender Management System (GMS) Toolkit” designed to assist Commonwealth governments in ensuring that an awareness of gender issues informs their decision-making in all areas, and at all levels. The Toolkit was launched in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 26 January 2004. About 300 representatives of the Government of Malaysia, the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN), the diplomatic corps, universities and non-governmental organisations attended the launch, where Malaysia’s Minister of Women and Family Development, Dato’ Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, and INTAN Director, Dato’ Dr. Zulkarnain Hj Awang, expressed the keen commitment of the Malaysian Government and INTAN for this initiative. The launch was immediately followed by a three-day workshop on how to use the GMS Toolkit that was attended by 80 participants representing all key sectors.

The GMS Toolkit uses principles of open and distance learning to enhance access to and usability of the Secretariat’s series of GMS manuals, which focus on gender mainstreaming in key areas such as finance, development planning and the public service, as well as cross-cutting development issues such as HIV/AIDS, poverty eradication and the Millennium Development Goals.

The Toolkit transforms the manuals into a user-friendly, learner-centred, trainer-oriented package. It includes an Action Guide to facilitate individual learning, a Trainer’s Manual for gender trainers, a Change Management Briefing for anyone committed to effecting gender equality through institutional change and a CD-ROM that contains all the original GMS manuals as well as the contents of the Toolkit.

GMS, the Commonwealth’s approach to gender mainstreaming, calls for a broad-based partnership in society in which government consults and acts co-operatively with other key stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector.

NCERT, OUSL TO TRAIN SOUTH ASIAN, AFRICAN TEACHERS

COL and India’s National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) have signed a memorandum of understanding to develop teacher-training programmes for South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

With funding from COL, NCERT will develop distance learning training programmes using various media to enable teachers of selected countries to upgrade their qualifications and skills through a post-graduate diploma in guidance and counselling. NCERT will also provide tutor training and assessment systems for the various local delivery institutions.

COL is also partnering with the Open University of Sri Lanka in the development of a Master of Arts in Teacher Education (MATE) to be offered in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. This programme will use a variety of media and models to enhance the skills of teacher educators.

E-LEARNING IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

COL and the University Grants Commission (UGC), India held a dialogue on “Enhancing higher education through e-learning”, held in New Delhi in November. Several international experts also participated. One of the key recommendations to emerge was that the UGC would create a system to support the use of e-learning by all higher education institutions in the country. An action plan with an ambitious timeframe was devised and the roles of both UGC and COL were identified. COL will facilitate the development of:

- international experience and expertise,
- international partnerships and collaborations,
- content platforms, tools and techniques for the delivery and management of e-learning, and
- quality assurance protocols for e-learning.

EDUSAT INDIA

COL’s President and CEO, Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, presented the keynote address to the Southern Regional Consultation for EDUSAT at Anna University in Chennai, India, in January. The consultation looked at regional educational needs that the soon-to-be-launched satellite service could address.

Through its Indian Space Research Organisation, the Government of India will be dedicating the entire satellite to educational delivery. EDUSAT will provide “education on demand” – in the classroom, regional learning centres, at home, through work or wherever most convenient – and will also support Internet connectivity and web browsing. The satellite will have several channels that will deliver educational programming, facilitate high-bandwidth interactivity and broadcast multi-media content. Every part of India will have access through five regional “footprints”, supplemented by national beams. www.isro.org
FOCUS ON SCHOOLNETS

SCHOOLNETS: ENHANCING EDUCATION THROUGH ICT

This is an edited version of a paper that originally appeared in OLTDE (Open Learning through Distance Education), published by the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE).

Educators everywhere are increasingly turning to information and communications technology (ICT) to get the job done. Educational radio, TV and the Internet are becoming mainstays in education delivery. Spurred by substantial, growing evidence that technology can effectively support learning and teaching, virtual education is a reality that shapes, and often drives, global education research and development.

Why the rush toward a plugged-in education? In the Education for All (EFA) imperative to make universal primary education a reality by 2015, there is urgency to find efficient, creative education solutions. The stakes in the developing world are high, raised by strained teaching and learning resources, the knowledge divide and the debilitating impact of HIV/AIDS on education communities.

But integrating ICT with a conventional education system, especially in the developing world, is a challenge. Given the considerable ground that needs to be covered, does a road map exist for successful integration of ICT in schools?

The schoolnet option

One possible, practical route to ICT integration is via a school network, or “schoolnet.” School networking means what it suggests – schools regularly communicating and collaborating with each other on inter-school projects and on content and curriculum development, via the Internet and other ICTs.

In the past few years, schoolnets have mushroomed across the virtual education landscape. Recognising the far-reaching potential of electronic networking, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL, www.col.org) responded to calls from Commonwealth leaders to create the Commonwealth Electronic Network for Schools and Education (CENSE, www.col.org/cense) in 1998, a collaborative project with the Commonwealth Secretariat (www.becommonwealth.org) and COMNET-IT (www.comnet-it.org). CENSE is a portal to the websites of individual schools, institutions, governments and non-government organisations (NGOs), throughout the Commonwealth and internationally. CENSE also links with other schoolnets and national education grids Commonwealth-wide, including SchoolNet Africa (www.schoolnetafrica.org), SchoolNet India (www.schoolnetindia.com) and Canada’s SchoolNet (www.schoolnet.ca).

In Commonwealth Africa and elsewhere, many early schoolnets were NGO-funded, small-scale start-ups that formed part of an initial “technology push” from institutions eager to establish a localised ICT infrastructure of computers, computer networks and laboratories. More recently, governments and education-related ministries have earmarked resources, policies and funding initiatives for establishing schoolnets, and the accompanying ICT infrastructure, on a national level.

The necessary next step is implementing a long-term game plan that will popularise and familiarise the schoolnet concept, and use of the Internet and electronic media, with education professionals and learners. One such plan is the schoolnet value chain, a strategy that borrows a few concepts from the corporate world.

Critical elements for success

Originally a model for business resource management, the value chain concept was first applied to schoolnet management in 1999 by the former Centre for Educational Technology and Distance Education (CETDE, a directorate of the South African Department of Education), in collaboration with SchoolNet South Africa. A similar model, based on CETDE’s schoolnet value chain and jointly developed by this article’s authors, includes the following elements for success:

1. Prepare all education sectors to understand the value of technology investment: Preparations should include appropriate national and school policies, an ICT-use plan and management system, ensuring school management’s awareness of the advantages of ICT for education, and research into potential ICT uses in management and administration. Also identify initial necessary investments and recurrent expenses.

SCHOOLNET SNAPSHOTS FORM COMMONWEALTH AFRICA

NGO-initiated schoolnet initiatives:

• SchoolNet South Africa (www.school.net): A national, donor-supported NGO formed from a group of NGO-based provincial schoolnets that promote ICT-based learning and teaching in schools. Many of its projects are short term and focus on curriculum, technology and teacher training. After four years, participation in the schoolnet includes 4,000 teachers and almost 5,000 of South Africa’s 28,000 schools.

• SchoolNet Namibia (www.schoolnet.na): An NGO formed in 1999 through strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, tertiary institutions and the private sector. It has introduced a youth-led ICT connectivity programme for Namibia’s 1,519 schools.

Government-driven schoolnet initiatives:

• SchoolNet Mozambique (www.mined.gov.mz/schoolnet): An in-house project of the Ministry of Education. Originally a three-year outreach programme at the University Eduardo Mondlane. The schoolnet plans to connect 200 of the country’s 7,000 schools by the end of 2004, as well as train teachers and develop online curriculum.

• Egypt schoolnet initiative: Part of a government-led, national ICT strategy promoted by the head of state.
2. Prepare schools for the technology: ICT implementation plans must provide for basic infrastructure such as electricity, security and insurance, although solutions exist even for schools situated off the electricity grid. An implementation plan should also ensure that any investment in technology, teacher training and additional staffing, is sustainable.

3. Obtain and install the technology: Any new or refurbished ICT purchases should have a warranty and customer support. Internet-related hardware, operating systems and software must provide efficient and affordable Internet access to schools.


5. Develop relevant educational content: Produce locally relevant material either in-house or outsourced, using multimedia applications such as radio, television and CD-ROM. Consider evaluating and adapting content from other countries for local use.

6. ICT evaluation and research: Ensure that any institutional ICT learning application and infrastructure improvements keep pace with developments in ICT.

7. Curriculum-ICT integration: Optimise ICT-enhanced learning and teaching by fully integrating ICT with the existing curriculum.

8. Ongoing technical support: Train educators in basic equipment troubleshooting, maintenance and repairs. Further local help, such as repair facilities and technicians, is also necessary.

9. Ongoing curriculum support: Encourage pro-active feedback and suggestions from teaching staff on using ICT for different subjects, to increase and improve overall ICT use.

10. Strategic partnerships: Develop a working partnership model, for example between schools, communities, key government players, the donor community and the private sector, to sustain schoolnets in the long term.

Recent studies on ICT use in African schools acknowledge the value chain’s ten factors, and reiterate the importance of local follow-up to national or regional policies.

Additionally, applying gender considerations to schoolnet planning and implementation will ensure all needs are addressed.

Value-added education

To incorporate ICT into the education system of a country, you need a sound policy and implementation plan, and above all, leadership from national government. If the value chain approach is to find success, it must be recognised that the above ten elements of the chain are crucial to that success. Another key factor is a holistic approach, that uses strategic partnerships (one of the value chain’s elements) to develop and enable all aspects of the framework concurrently once core development and infrastructure issues are identified.

Although the value chain may be a more gradual, less dramatic process of schoolnet development and ICT infrastructural growth than showcase projects and a piecemeal approach, establishing a value chain will lay the groundwork for all parts of the education system to work together with other relevant organisations and institutions (both locally and internationally), to establish and promote integrated ICT use.

The value chain encourages education officials throughout the system to re-think policy development, and learners to re-evaluate their relationship and approach to knowledge. Through implementing a schoolnet value chain, ICT can be used to add value to the education system – not merely project by project, but as a whole.

For more information, please contact the authors, Vis Naidoo, COL Education Specialist, Education Technology (vnaidoo@col.org) and Shafika Isaacs, Executive Director, SchoolNet Africa (s.isaacs@schoolnetafirca.org).

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**WHAT IS A SCHOOLNET?**

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<th>Structure</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Sustainability</th>
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<tr>
<td>Establishment and ongoing operation of a school networking institution/organisation. Minimum number of five schools in regular communication and interaction on learning initiatives using information and communication technologies (ICTs) and media.</td>
<td>Computer distribution and connectivity services offered by the schoolnet institution. Inter-school networking and collaborative projects using the broad array of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Content and curriculum development and sharing. Teacher training in ICT use to enhance teaching.</td>
<td>Year-on-year growth of the country schoolnet initiative. Financial sustainability increases from year to year with less reliance on external resources/funding. Steady year-on-year increase in human resource capacity with less reliance on external resources. Year-on-year consolidation of partnerships.</td>
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Source: www.schoolnetafirca.net
FROM COL’S PARTNERS

BANGLADESHI GARMENT INDUSTRY OFFERED MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Poor management and an unhealthy work environment too often characterise the workplace for women toiling in Bangladesh’s booming export garment industry. Now, through international co-operation, a new management-training programme will be available to garment industry managers throughout the country. The initiative was launched with an agreement signed in August by COL and the Bangladeshi non-governmental organisation, South Asia Enterprise Development Facility (SEDF).

“Stitching Values Together”, a “modular” self-instructional course, is designed for cost-effective and flexible delivery of training to improve the management skills of shop-floor supervisors in the export garment industry. It emphasises occupational health, welfare and safety as well as the particular role of women in the industry.

COL played a catalytic role in developing the course through a partnership with OXFAM and the Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (PWIBLF), UK, in conjunction with Bangladeshi NGOs. The learning package was first developed in English and subsequently translated into Bangla (Bengali) and adapted to local circumstances. It was then piloted successfully in five factories in Dhaka.

The agreement with SEDF involves taking the course materials, upgrading them as recommended by the pilot/evaluation process and promoting them throughout the country. It also provides for marketing of the materials in the other countries that SEDF works with and allows COL to use the material as models through its work in other Commonwealth countries.

The South Asia Enterprise Development Facility is a multi-donor funded, International Finance Corporation (World Bank Group) managed, initiative with a broad goal of developing viable small and medium sized, private sector enterprises in Bangladesh, Northeast India and Nepal.

www.col.org/newsreleases

MATERIALS DISTRIBUTION THE HUMANITARIAN WAY

As one of the largest international organisations specialising in emergency response, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is well skilled in the ability to mobilise resources quickly across borders. These well-honed skills came into play when IFRC and COL teamed up to offer the workplace-based (distance education) communications course, Writing Effectively. The Training Unit at IFRC quickly put into place the skills for which their organisation is so well known. Participants from regions as far-flung as Azerbaijan to Kenya, in total 21 locations, received their course materials in less than one week. When asked how they managed this, the response was, “We are a disaster response organisation. We know how to move quickly.”

In addition to standard distribution channels of courier and the post, IFRC took advantage of the large amount of travel their staff do and some found themselves on a plane with a small package of course manuals beside them ready to be placed in the hands of lucky course participants. IFRC’s innovative blend of orthodox and unorthodox distribution channels maximised organisational resources resulting in 100% of participants receiving the course materials well before the course start date.

The effective writing course for IFRC is the latest adaptation of the original course Writing Effectively for UNHCR that was developed in 2000. An online version of the course was customised in 2002 for the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). To date, over 1,000 UNHCR staff have taken the course. By the end of 2004, about 500 WHO staff, 100 UNAIDS staff and 200 IFRC staff will have taken the course.

UNESCO’S E-9 EDUCATION MINISTERS REAFFIRM COMMITMENT TO EFA

Education ministers from the world’s nine high population countries – Commonwealth member countries Bangladesh, India, Nigeria and Pakistan in addition to Brazil, China, Egypt, Indonesia, Mexico – have reaffirmed their commitment to meet the basic learning needs of all their peoples and to work more closely together to achieve the six goals set at UNESCO’s World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000.

The ministers were taking part in the 5th E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting, which was held in Cairo in December. The E-9 Initiative was created in 1993 in New Delhi as part of the follow-up to the Education For All (EFA) Conference in Jomtien, Thailand. It aims to strengthen collaboration between the world’s nine high population countries in their quest to provide quality education for all. The E-9 countries are home to over 50 percent of the world’s population and account for 70 percent of illiterate adults and more than 40 percent of the world’s out-of-school children.

In a declaration issued at the close of the Cairo meeting, ministers outlined the improvements in education in their countries, including increased enrolments, improving literacy rates (especially for women), and greater access to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), which was the theme of the meeting. However, they also acknowledged that they “still face a number of challenges,” including poverty, “inequitable access to quality services ... for disadvantaged children, particularly girls”.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9
STATE OF THE WORLD’S CHILDREN, 2004 — UNICEF

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) released its flagship report, *The State of the World’s Children*, in December catching headlines with findings that COL’s partners and readers of *Connections* are all too familiar with, having worked to help correct the problem – that International development efforts are still drastically short-changing girls, leaving hundreds of millions of girls and women uneducated and unable to contribute to positive change for themselves, their children or their communities.

The agency said that without accelerated action to get more girls into school over the next two years, global goals to reduce poverty and improve the human condition would simply not be reached. Conversely, it said that bringing down the barriers that keep girls out of school would benefit both girls and boys – and their countries.

The report shows that girls denied an education are more vulnerable to poverty, hunger, violence, abuse, exploitation and trafficking. They are more likely to die in childbirth and are at greater risk of disease, including HIV/AIDS. But according to *The State of the World’s Children*, the positive impact of educating girls is equally dramatic. As mothers, educated women are more likely to have healthy children, and more likely to ensure that their children, both boys and girls, complete school.

The report argues that the standard approach to achieving universal education has fallen short because it assumed that generic efforts to enrol more children would benefit all children equally, an assumption that has not examined or addressed the specific barriers faced by girls.

Although global enrolment rates show gradual improvement in gender balance, nine million more girls are still left out of the classroom completely, and girls who are enrolled drop out faster, on average, than boys. Illiteracy rates are also still far higher among women than men.

The greatest need is in sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of girls left out of school each year has risen from 20 million in 1990 to 24 million in 2002. Eighty-three percent of all girls out of school live in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and East Asia and the Pacific.

“Because of the persistent and often subtle gender discrimination that runs through most societies, it is girls who are sacrificed first – being the last enrolled and the first withdrawn from schools when times get tough,” the report states.

The report argues that education must be approached as a human right rather than a privilege or an expected outcome of economic progress. When education is considered a right, governments are obligated to mobilise the needed resources so that all children can complete a quality education. Parents, then, are more likely to hold their governments accountable for failing to do so.

UNICEF says that the adjustment in development strategies needed to get girls in school and keep them there would jump-start progress on the entire development agenda for 2015, known as the Millennium Development Goals.

The report presents an agenda for action, calling on development agencies, governments, families and communities to focus and intensify their efforts on addressing the challenges that keep girls out of school. Essentially, the report calls for adjustments in how development is approached from the start.

Among specific measures, the report calls for:

• the creation of a national ethos recognising the value of educating girls as well as boys,
• education to be included as an essential component in development plans,
• the elimination of school fees of every kind,
• the integration of education into national plans for poverty reduction, and
• increased international funding for education.

The first of the Millennium Development Goals to come due is the goal of gender parity in education by 2005. Despite the negative findings of the report, UNICEF contends that “major progress toward achieving that goal is still possible with the strategic acceleration of national efforts and international support.”

www.unicef.org/sowc04

UNESCO’S E-9 EDUCATION MINISTERS REAFFIRM COMMITMENT TO EFA

funding constraints, and a lack of planning and coordination, especially for ECCE.

To face these challenges, the education ministers committed themselves to “revitalise and realign the E-9 Initiative” in light of developments since the World Education Forum, and to broaden their partnership “to include key international actors, civil society, and corporate/private sector”.

They also agreed to “promote technical co-operation among the E-9 countries and other developing countries in areas such as rural education, open and distance learning, ICT, research and knowledge transfers, inter-institutional linkages, exchanges of students as well as teachers and establish a databank of successful innovations.”

The Declaration also noted “with concern” that the E-9 countries were yet to benefit from additional funds promised for the EFA movement through the Fast Track Initiative (FTI), a multilateral initiative organised by the World Bank after the Dakar Forum. It also urged the international community “to revisit the question of debt swaps for education to support country efforts for resource mobilisation for EFA.”

The six goals, from the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All, are to ensure by 2015 that:

• all children of primary school age would have access to and complete free schooling of acceptable quality,
• gender disparities in schooling would be eliminated,
• levels of adult illiteracy would be halved,
• early childhood care and education would be expanded,
• learning opportunities for youth and adults would be greatly increased, and
• all aspects of education quality would be improved.

www.unesco.org/education/efa

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8
LEWIS PERINBAM AWARD IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Board of Trustees of the Lewis Perinbam Award in International Development has named Mr. Burris Devanney, Executive Director, Nova Scotia–Gambia Association (NSGA), to receive the 2003 Award. Mr. Devanney was honoured at the annual conference of the Canadian Bureau for International Education held in Charlottetown in October.

The Perinbam Award honours Dr. Lewis Perinbam, O.C., who has dedicated his life to serving developing communities and has played a major role in shaping Canada’s international development priorities. He is currently Chair of the Board of Governors of COL. The Perinbam Award recognises grassroots achievements in improving life in developing countries. The monetary value of the Award is CDN$2,500, but its true value lies in the recognition it brings international development home to Canadians through highlighting the dedication and extraordinary accomplishments of ordinary citizens. Mr. Devanney is the 15th laureate.

COL has worked with the NSGA on community radio initiatives in West Africa.

NEW ACU CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Dr. John Rowett, an Oxford academic, will become Secretary General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) in July, upon the retirement of Professor Michael Gibbons, a Canadian who has been ACU’s chief executive since June 1996. Dr. Rowett is currently Chief Executive of the Rhodes Trust and Warden of Rhodes House at the University of Oxford. He is also joint chief executive of the Mandela Rhodes Foundation, which he founded with Mr. Jakes Gerwel, Chancellor of Rhodes University, South Africa.

www.acu.ac.uk
COL STAFF

Mr. John Bartram, COL’s Education Specialist, Technical/Vocational Education and Training (TVET), retired from COL at the end of September and has returned to Australia. He joined COL in June 1998 from the Adelaide TAFE Institute in South Australia, where he was responsible for many international programmes, fellowships and consultancies conducted in and for the Asia-Pacific region. Mr. Bartram steered several initiatives while at COL, including COL’s TVET Programme for the Pacific (facilitating collaboration designed to increase TVET access throughout the Pacific Islands by using open and distance learning) and technical teacher training systems in the Caribbean and Africa.

www.col.org/jbartram

Dr. Krishna Alluri joined COL in January 1997 on an attachment as a Visiting Fellow and continued as a staff consultant and then in a staff position from July 1999. In July 2003, he became COL Education Specialist with responsibility for food security and environment programmes. Dr. Alluri develops and manages initiatives where distance education and open learning applications can be encouraged and applied in the agricultural, forestry and fisheries sectors. He has fostered several partnerships with local NGOs and international organisations that bring education and training to grassroots levels in rural communities. First working in India, Dr. Alluri has been involved in agricultural research, training and development for almost 30 years. He has worked for several international organisations, including the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI, Philippines) and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (ITTA, Nigeria).

www.col.org/kalluri

CEMCA STAFF

COL’s regional agency, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), has announced three new staff members, appointed over the past few months.

In July 2003, Mr. Dalip Kumar Tetri became Head, Administration and Finance, bringing with him 26 years of experience with the Indian Audit and Accounts Department, the Ministry of Communications and the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) where he contributed extensively in organising and conducting staff training programmes.

Mr. Pankaj Khare joined CEMCA as Programme Officer in November 2003, coming from IGNOU where he was Deputy Director (Programme Evaluation and Feedback) in the Planning and Development Division.

At the end of 2003, Ms. D. Rukmini Vemraju also took up a position at CEMCA as Programme Officer. With a background in communication and educational technology, she is from the TALEEM Research Foundation, Ahmedabad, a literary society and trust engaged in social science, media and educational technology research.

Mr. Nimal T. Fernando and Dr. Sanjaya Mistra concluded their terms as CEMCA Programme Officers in June and July 2003.

Mr. Fernando returned to Sri Lanka and Dr. Mistra returned to IGNOU’s Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE). Mr. K. Narayanan retired as Head, Administration and Finance at CEMCA in July 2002. He had been with CEMCA since 1994.

Headed by Dr. Usha Reddi (Director), CEMCA promotes meaningful, relevant and appropriate use of information and communication technologies to serve the educational and training needs of Commonwealth member states of Asia: Bangladesh, Brunei, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka. www.cemca.org

www.col.org/staff#cemca

LORD PERRY OF WALTON, 1921 – 2003: IN MEMORIAM

We remember Lord Perry of Walton as a great visionary, pioneer and pragmatist in the field of distance education. As the founding Vice-Chancellor of the U.K. Open University (UKOU), his wisdom and leadership helped to establish and guide, not only this great pioneering university, but also the other open universities that followed in its footsteps. His efforts helped to awaken the consciousness of world educators and leaders to recognise the importance of providing education to countless numbers of people whom conventional education systems had either ignored, could not reach or were not available to.

Walter Perry was largely responsible for turning the British Labour Party’s long cherished dream of a massive expansion of second-chance educational opportunity for all those people previously denied access to university education, into reality. When it was launched in 1971, the UKOU was one of the most exciting educational innovations of the second half of the 20th century, mixing broadcasting, correspondence education and tutors with new material prepared by teams of academics recruited by Walter himself. What made it so remarkable was that he achieved it, by his own admission, with almost no precedents to guide him, and against the background of an academic establishment that was sceptical of the whole concept of distance education.

As the UKOU gained in recognisability and many more open universities sprang up around the world, Lord Perry was frequently called upon to help other institutions develop their distance education programmes.

In 2002, he was named an Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning, in recognition of his contribution to the establishment of higher education by distance learning in the United Kingdom and for his influence on the development and progress of distance education around the world (www.col.org/edea/edea2).

While Lord Perry’s example and accomplishments will be a continuous source of inspiration to many of us, he will be missed.

Gajaraj Dhanarajan

WALTER PERRY
### EVENTS

#### SONNY RAMPHAL TO DELIVER 2004 ASA BRIGGS LECTURE

The 2004 Asa Briggs Lecture will be delivered by Sir Shridath (“Sonny”) Ramphal, former Commonwealth Secretary-General and former foreign minister of Guyana, on a topic of relevance to education in the Commonwealth. The Lecture will take place on 6 July 2004, in Dunedin, New Zealand, at COL’s third (biennial) Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning. www.col.org/pcf3

Sir Shridath has been an unapologetic advocate of Third World solidarity and an ardent supporter of the United Nations and Commonwealth systems while arguing always for their improvement. He was at the helm of the Commonwealth during a time of great change and development, including the establishment of the Commonwealth of Learning, and was at the centre of global efforts to resolve the long intractable problems of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Rhodesia and of apartheid in South Africa.

![Sir Shridath Ramphal](image)

He was also Chairman of the West Indian Commission whose report charted the course for the Caribbean’s development in 1992. He was the region’s Chief Negotiator in international economic negotiations, heading the Regional Negotiating Machinery (RNM) between 1997 and 2001 and has been Chancellor of the University of West Indies for 14 years.

Still on the world stage, Sir Shridath was recently a facilitator for Belize in the Organization of American States (OAS) process for a definitive resolution of the century-old dispute with Guatemala.

Most recently, Sir Shridath was awarded the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development (the “Indian Nobel”) by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, President of India, presented the prize to him on 19 November 2003. For more on the Indira Gandhi Prize and on Sonny Ramphal, please see: www.col.org/04ramphal.htm

The Asa Briggs Lecture honours the founding Chairman of COL’s Board of Governors and renowned British historian, the Rt. Hon. Lord Briggs of Lewes, who was instrumental in COL’s establishment. It was established by COL when Lord Briggs stepped down from the Chair in 1993. Previous lecturers include Professor David Dilkis, Professor Wang Gungwu and Mr. Stephen Lewis.

### ALL-AFRICA MINISTERS’ CONFERENCE ON OPEN LEARNING AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

An All-Africa Ministers’ Conference on Open Learning and Distance Education was put forward in Durban in 2002, when, in his opening address at COL’s second Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, South Africa’s Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, offered to host such a conference. Subsequently, in Dar es Salaam in December 2002, the UNESCO Conference of Ministers of Education of African Member States (MINEDAF VIII) also highlighted the importance of open learning and distance education in addressing educational challenges facing African countries and accepted Professor Asmal’s offer.

Among the topics explored and actions agreed upon were how open learning approaches and distance education methods can be applied to support Ministers of Education in achieving developmental goals.

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### PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING

COL’s third (biennial) Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF) will take place from 4 – 8 July 2004 in Dunedin, New Zealand. The PCF is being hosted by the Distance Education Association of New Zealand (DEANZ) and the Government of New Zealand, in collaboration with the Federation of Commonwealth Open and Distance Learning Associations (FOCODLA). The theme for the Forum is “Building Learning Communities for our Millennium: Reaching Wider Audiences through Innovative Approaches.” Sub-themes include education, health and local government. www.col.org/pcf3 www.deanz.org.nz www.col/focodla

### ODL FOR UN AGENCIES

In partnership with the Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN in Geneva, COL is hosting a Roundtable on Open and Distance Learning (ODL) to bring together representatives of UN agencies and other international organisations to discuss the effectiveness of ODL when needing to reach globally dispersed audiences, clientele and staff with information, knowledge and training required to advance the Millennium Development Goals. COL representatives will also showcase a wide variety of models in the areas of staff development and training through ODL and strengthening local capacities in ODL for formal and non-formal education and training. The roundtable will take place in Geneva on 31 March and 1 April 2004.

### TECHNOLOGY FOR EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) is holding its second international workshop on Technology for Education in Developing Countries (TEDC) on 31 August 2004 in Joensuu, Finland, in conjunction with IEEE’s International Conference on Advanced Learning Technologies (ICALT 2004).

The workshop will bring together researchers and educators to discuss various issues involved in developing new techniques and on novel uses of technology for education in developing countries. A call for papers has been issued.

In developing countries, conditions, constraints and resources differ sharply with industrialised nations, creating special challenges for the technical and educational research communities.

www.ee.columbia.edu/dvmm/tedc
POLICY FOR OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

Policy for Open and Distance Learning considers the questions that planners and policy makers in open and distance learning need to address at any level of education. Jointly published in late 2003 by COL and RoutledgeFalmer Press, it is the fourth volume in the World review of distance education and open learning series. ISBN 0 415 26307 7; paperback, 267 pages; H. Perraton and H. Lentell (eds.)

Starting by analysing the range of purposes for which open and distance learning is used, the book places the issues in context and examines experience in both the public and private sector. As well as discussing in detail new agendas set by new information and communication technologies, the book also covers:

• Inputs – in terms of learners, staff and resources
• Processes – organisational structures, technologies, globalisation and governance
• Outcomes – benefits set in the context of costs

The fifteen contributors have examined the varied roles of new technologies as well as low-technology approaches to open and distance learning throughout the world and this book will be invaluable to policy makers in education and those planning or managing open and distance learning programmes. It will also be of interest to students and teachers of education and anyone concerned with comparative education.

Dr. Hilary Perraton has worked in international education and in open and distance learning for many years. He was the founding director of the International Research Foundation for Open Learning (IRFOL). Ms. Helen Lentell is COL's Educational Specialist, Training and Materials Development (www.col.org/lentell). The World review of distance education and open learning series includes:

• Higher Education through Open and Distance Learning – K. Harry (ed.), 1999
• Basic Education at a Distance – J. Bradley and C. Yates (eds.), 2000
• Teacher Education through Open and Distance Learning – B. Robinson and C. Latchem (eds.), 2002
• Policy for Open and Distance Learning – H. Perraton and H. Lentell (eds.), 2003
• Vocational Training through Distance Education: A policy perspective – L. Moran and G. Rumble (eds.), to be published later this year. www.col.org/worldreview

25% DISCOUNT

Policy for Open and Distance Learning can be ordered from booksellers worldwide or directly from RoutledgeFalmer Press. It is also available, while quantities last, through COL at a 25% discount – and, for orders from developing Commonwealth countries, shipping charges will be waived. Orders must be accompanied by a pre-payment of Canadian $30.00 (or equivalent US funds) plus shipping, if applicable, or charged to VISA or MasterCard accounts. Orders should be sent to COL's distribution agents: Government Publication Services, Queen's Printer, Attn. COL Customer Service, PO Box 9452 Stn Prov Gove, Victoria, BC V8W 9V7 Canada; tel: 250.387.6409 (toll-free in North America: 800.663.6105); fax: 250.387.1120; e-mail: QPPublications@gems5.gov.bc.ca. Order online at: www.publications.gov.bc.ca. www.col.org/worldreview

MODELS FOR OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

COL and its affiliate, the International Research Foundation for Open Learning (IRFOL), have launched a series of guides to good practice that analyse policy issues about the use of open and distance learning and of information and communication technologies in education. The guides are for decision makers within educational institutions, ministries of education and international agencies. Each guide is based on our understanding of the research evidence and aims to identify alternative models and options in a particular area of education.

Each begins by examining the policy agenda and the key questions on it and goes on to address a list of themes – socioeconomic context, governance, purpose and curriculum, outcomes and costs, organisation, technology, funding, accreditation, and assessment – but the weight given to each theme varies according to the area of education being examined. In every case our aim is to give prominence to the more difficult issues. The Models for open and distance learning series is jointly published and promoted by IRFOL and COL.

Two titles were published in 2003 and are available online:

• Teacher education and training (by H. Perraton): This first guide looks at the way open and distance learning has been used for the education and training of teachers. It draws heavily on research carried out by IRFOL for the Department for International Development in Britain and for UNESCO.

• Globalisation, education and distance education (by D. Hawkridge): This wide-ranging review on globalisation, education and distance education has been conceived in the context of the debate about the influence of the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS), which has important but controversial implications for education. This applies to both industrial countries and low-income countries and all lying between.

www.col.org/irfol
www.col.org/resources/publications
ICTS IN TEACHER EDUCATION


“The document proposes a framework for ICTs in teacher education, describes the essential conditions that must be met for successful technology integration and provides guidelines for the development of a strategic planning process. It also identifies important strategies for managing the change process in the teacher education programme as technology becomes a catalyst for transforming the teaching-learning process.” — UNESCO

Available online at: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001295/129533e.pdf (1.3 Mb Acrobat PDF download)

REVIEW BY DR. USHA REDDI

In education, the teacher is the change agent, the key individual who helps a learner to make the transition between information and understanding. And to serve as a guide or mentor to the learner, the teacher, in turn, needs to be empowered through an ongoing process of learning.

Today’s ICTs are increasingly seen as tools enabling teacher educators to narrow the gap between the demand and supply of trained teachers. In almost every country, there are teacher training programmes and a recognition that “there is no alternative” to the use of ICTs for teacher training and for use by teachers to enhance the quality of instruction. Between the recognition and the reality, however, are knowledge gaps among policy and decision makers and among teacher educators as to how one should proceed, mechanisms that should be followed, global standards and assessment techniques and lessons from best practices.

These are the gaps that the planning guide, commissioned by UNESCO and under review, seeks to answer. It is a step-by-step guide to the use of ICTs as an integral part of induction and in-service training among teachers as well as for the integration of ICTs as part of the school curriculum.

Divided into eight parts and supported by a glossary, the volume links global contexts and frameworks in teacher education to the specifics spelling out elements of curriculum planning, integration of ICTs in teacher education, developing and implementing strategic plans, managing change and innovation, quality assurance standards, images and scenarios.

Simply written and packed with useful information and analysis, the guide takes into account four themes (context and culture, leadership and vision, lifelong learning and the management of change) that must be understood as a strategic combination of approaches to help teacher educators develop four core competencies. These competencies, in turn, include pedagogy, collaboration and networking, social and health issues and technical issues.

The cases of best practice, of successes and struggles in different parts of the world are particularly useful as they demonstrate a process from planning to implementation to evaluation. The MATEN (Multimedia Applications for Telematic Educational Networks) project in Central and Eastern Europe; MirandaNet (a learning community to support teacher educators in the U.K.); School Networking in Africa; the Enlaces Project in Chile – all demonstrate what can be achieved through collaborative efforts, despite resource and infrastructure scarcities.

As I read through the volume, I was reminded of how useful UNESCO planning guides have been in the course of my own work in building, establishing and integrating ICTs in education. I measured my own efforts against the strategic technology plan prepared in the book and could quickly identify the missing links in my own and Asian efforts to deploy ICTs. Questions raised in the guide help to provide system and structure to planning, implementation and evaluation. The detailing of international standards, especially followed in the U.S., provide the benchmarks against which we can measure our own efforts.

This is a volume, like many others of UNESCO in the field of education, that is a must for any individual and institution to keep within arm’s reach on a desk or shelf.

Dr. Usha Reddi is Director of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), New Delhi. This review originally appeared in the December 2003 edition of EduCom Asia, CEMCA’s newsletter: www.cemca.org

COL REPORTING DOCUMENTS

COL presented three reports to Commonwealth Education Ministers in October and to Commonwealth Heads of Government in December.

Building Capacity in Open and Distance Learning: Three-Year Plan, 2003 – 2006


A Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth

All three are available through COL’s web site at: www.col.org/programmes/reporting. Requests for CD-ROM or print versions can be sent to info@col.org

OPEN SOURCE LMS STUDY

COL commissioned a survey and evaluation of Learning Management Systems (LMSs) that are available as open source software. The study was conducted on COL’s behalf by 3waynet Inc. of Vancouver and focused exclusively on software/technologies that are “freely distributed” and have no limitations on use, adaptation or distribution (although documentation, training systems and technical modifications may carry a price). Commercial products were expressly excluded from the study.

Thirty-five LMSs were identified and five were selected for in-depth study. Two were recommended, although the report points out that results and recommendations may or may not apply to the specific circumstances of third parties. Third party use, therefore, is at the discretion of the user. LMSs are defined as typically containing features for educational administration, assessment, course management and possibly content management and authoring.

The open source LMS study is available on COL’s website. www.col.org/consultancies
Thobile Ndawonde was only 23 years old when doctors diagnosed her with HIV/AIDS. Her family, uneducated as to how the disease is contracted and fearful for their own health, isolated her in a small hut away from the family house and village and left her to die – unattended, alone and stigmatised by an illness that few in the region understood.

Today, Thobile's sad story is being used to educate others on the pain and unnecessary suffering caused by fear and lack of awareness. The aim of the media empowerment and HIV/AIDS stigma initiative – a joint venture between COL, the South African-based NGO Valley Trust and the World Health Organization (WHO) – is to raise awareness concerning HIV/AIDS and stigma, the most serious symptom associated with a disease that has claimed the lives of more than 30 million people worldwide.

Although extremely weak and near death, Thobile wanted her story told. Thanks to the intervention of WHO, COL and Valley Trust, Thobile did not die alone. Workers with Valley Trust took her to a hospital in Durban where she spent her last days speaking to project organisers and trainees about the painful events that brought her there.

Following an orientation training session on low-cost video camcorder and production techniques, Valley Trust trainees travelled to Thobile’s rural village to interview her aunt, uncle and grandmother who confirmed that fear of contracting HIV/AIDS had goaded family and villagers to drive the young woman into isolation. Even after her admission to hospital, her clothes, mattress and blankets remained on the ground near the hut. The family refused to go near them.

Trainees then interviewed Thobile at McCord Hospital in Durban where, despite her rapidly deteriorating condition, she was able explain her plight and how villagers and her own father had disowned her, the latter telling her that he wanted her to die.

Trainees also located and interviewed the father on camera, who stated unequivocally that he did not want his daughter back nor would he attempt to see her owing to her condition. He appeared to possess no understanding of the disease or how it is transmitted. His daughter died soon after.

Unfortunately, Thobile’s story is not unique. The number of new HIV/AIDS cases continues to skyrocket in Africa, in part owing to the ignorance and fear that cause far too many to refuse the HIV testing that could protect their loved ones. For those thousands who know they have the illness, far too many hide their condition fearing that their families and communities will reject them the way Thobile’s nearest and dearest rejected her.

The initiative is designed to demonstrate the use of low-cost video production to:

• aid health workers isolated in rural areas with little access to information,
• share information and raise awareness regarding the issues surrounding HIV/AIDS in South Africa, and
• change existing legislation and regulations to ensure that people living with HIV/AIDS be treated equally and with dignity – the same as any other group facing health problems.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16
Using “Media Empowerment” to Fight HIV/AIDS

Organisers believe this activity (part of COL’s Media Empowerment programme) will enhance the valuable work undertaken by Valley Trust to fight HIV/AIDS stigma by effectively harnessing the power of mass media. It will enable Valley Trust to record, edit and disseminate information at the town and village level and both nationally and internationally at conferences and workshops. In addition, organisers hope it will provide a valuable model that can be adopted by other communities and governments struggling to combat the scourge of HIV/AIDS stigma.

Following production, trainees were instructed in script development, filming, editing and the communication skills necessary to facilitate publicity, advocacy and outreach. The video was initially presented to a training group workshop for health workers. Other possible venues for delivery include the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and the Internet.

www.col.org/clippings/HIV_AIDS.htm

Col’s Media Empowerment Programme (COLME)

Building community and human capacity and contributing to poverty alleviation includes raising awareness of current community and cultural events, news and health information. Mass media is a powerful tool that can be used to inform and educate those who would otherwise remain unaware of issues that directly affect them. Until now, such capacity has been too expensive for people living in rural conditions throughout much of the developing world. COL’s Media Empowerment programme, however, is demonstrating how communities can benefit from low-cost media applications.

The programme has developed media models – community radio, audio and video production, amateur radio (or HAM radio, licensed, two-way wireless communication), broadcast radio and television – that stress both local participation and transfer of knowledge and skills. It has also created a core of skilled personnel that COL and other development organisations can draw upon for in-country training, and it has provided opportunities for disadvantaged groups to participate and benefit from new technology and media-based initiatives. The main areas of focus have been on gender and HIV/AIDS (The Gambia, South Africa), teacher education (Cameroon, India, Nigeria), agriculture (Dominica, Ghana, Grenada, India, Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis), forestry/environment (Trinidad & Tobago), vocational skills development (Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa) and empowering rural communities to address gender, poverty alleviation, and food security (Papua New Guinea, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Uganda).

COLME initiatives fall within COL’s “ODL Applications” programme – demonstrating how open and distance learning (ODL) applications can benefit individual learners, institutions and member states by accelerating human resource development – and are always implemented with local partners and government backing, often in partnership with other international agencies.

www.col.org/colme