TVET Challenges

Addressing technical/vocational education and training challenges

COL (Commonwealth of Learning) is an international organization created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the advancement of educational broadcasting, and to undertake local production of programs and have time available in their schedules to accommodate educational programming. The study also found that educational broadcasting has strong support from schools in the Caribbean for Open/Distance Learning.

Further details on the project are available from the Commonwealth of Learning. COL is an international organization created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage local production of programs and have time available in their schedules to accommodate educational programming. The study also found that educational broadcasting has strong support from schools in the Caribbean for Open/Distance Learning.

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TVET encompasses many levels. It includes: initial training for manual trades through to technical and para-professional occupations; any or all of the labour market, from agriculture to management and from plumbing to tourism; delivery in schools, polytechnics and colleges, as well as on-the-job and on-the-farm; and formal, relatively long term and accredited, non-formal (short term) or informal (incidental, unstructured and unplanned) programming.

Meeting needs
The changing demands of the labour market require imaginative and innovative responses. Public, private and the non-profit (not-for-profit and non-governmental) enterprises have to respond and sometimes embrace many explicit, notably new technologies, e-commerce, globalisation, multi-national expansion and shifting demographics of the labour supply market.

Some countries have established sophisticated systems within labour or employment ministries to predict the future labour needs of the country. These inform the TVET providers so that their output meets the demand – a demand-driven system as opposed to a supply-driven system that is controlled by existing physical resources and mandated staff.

Should TVET be teaching broad generic skills that are relevant to a suite of employment situations or should it be teaching narrow job-specific skills that apply to a much smaller range of occupations? The former is more expensive and will take longer, the latter might be learnt in a shorter time period. To most people, the former is in the best interest of the individual, while those funding the training might prefer the latter.

Is TVET respectable?
While it is commonly accepted that education will help people to “get on,” to “improve themselves” and to get “better” jobs, many parents believe that only a university education will offer their children the opportunity to win a “good” job. As a result, many countries find that the number of graduates from universities far exceeds the capacity of the labour market to provide appropriate employment. At the same time they are unable to attract enough people to train for those positions of greater need, which might be “blue collar,” may involve manual labour and may be dangerous, dirty or difficult. Quality TVET programmes and improved workplace standards can help to address this problem.

Recognising qualifications
Systems are also needed to capture skills, knowledge and abilities acquired through formal programmes, non-formal training and on-the-job and informal experience. Accredited awards must be provided that are accepted by employers and other education institutions – a “skills passport” which facilitates mobility and flexibility of learners.

Increasing access to TVET
Governments must adopt better ways of delivering programmes given the size and urgency of the demand for TVET. Open learning, distance education and flexible learning in all their various guises offer part of the solution. Providers must ensure that TVET learning materials are appropriate to the target group and that the skills and competencies learned are those required by occupational groups and appreciated by employers. There must be sufficient potential in the labour market to attract students to become employed, self-employed and/or employed at higher levels. The programmes must be “sold” to the community as being worthwhile and not second-rate simply because they are delivered in a non-traditional way. The courses must have an accreditation that is accepted by both employers and other educational institutions.

Small states
Within the Commonwealth, there are 24 countries with populations of less than one million. Ten of these are small island states, who live on nine tiny atolls in the South Pacific, have embraced the Internet, which has become the nations single largest source of income – simply through the sale of the Internet domain name .tv.

In turn, dotTV, the US based firm that won the bidding war for .tv, has made sizable profit selling web site and e-mail rights for use of the domain. “We sold our whole asset base, now we are getting some money from the market of assets like the .domain name dot-tv,” said Reko Talkin, a member of the parliament who helped negotiate the deal and now has a seat on the dotTV board. dotTV representatives will represent national and international agencies, as well as institutions and NGOs that offer non-conventional educational programmes to working and homeless children. Further information can be obtained from the National Open School or from The Commonwealth of Learning.

Events

Networking education in the Caribbean
At the request of The Honourable Mia Mottley, Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, Barbados, The Commonwealth of Learning organised a meeting to examine how improved networking among educational policy makers, institutions and students at all levels could enhance and strengthen regional collaboration and facilitate the sharing of expertise and resources. The meeting was held in Barbados in February 2000.

In bringing together representatives from Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago and from the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean

Times, it is one of the worlds most wide- spread and dense rail networks. It stretches across the countries poorest and most remote regions with 9,000 stations sitting at an average distance of eight kilometres from one another and bundles of underemployed communications cable running side the track between them.

A pilot project will begin to route tele- phone calls and Internet data along a 60- kilometre section of railroad in south-central India. Employing Internet protocol “IP switching” on modified digital subscriber lines, researchers estimate that the railway cables can support a bandwidth of one million bits per second, allowing the hun- dreds of people near each station to be connected to telephone and the Internet for the first time.

Networking cyber-cafes located in each station will be connected to the railway cable. The system would join the national telephone network and Internet through high-speed digital links at major towns.

Source: International Herald Tribune

Tuvan cashes in on .tv
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De researchers meet
The First Conference on Research in Distance and Adult Learning in Asia (CRIDAL.A 2000) was hosted by the Open University of Hong Kong’s Centre for Research in Distance and Adult Learning (CRIDAL) in June 2000. The conference theme was “Research as professional development.”

In bringing together governments, COE, President and CEO, Dato’ Professor Gajjaran Duraisam noted that, “The Commonwealth of Learning is keen to see research networks that are concerned and developing countries especially there is a need for institutions to know as much as they can about their clients, the quality of services offered, the efficiencies of systems, the market impact, the place of self learning, the policies on the societies in which they function and how best the technologies that are there and emerging can be fitted into our traditions of independent learning and interactive teaching.” COE sponsored some participation from Commonwealth Asia.

World Education Market
Over 2,200 participants from the public and private sectors attended the first World Education Market in Vancouver in May. While representation from developed countries was light, there were over 1,000 participating companies and institutions from 64 countries. The large exhibit showcased almost 500 vendors from 35 countries.

Plenary sessions were broadcast live on the Internet, produced by two new ISDN and British Columbia’s educational television service, the Knowledge Network. The video coverage remains available on the conference web site.

The event also attracted demonstrations and an unforfeited parallel conference focusing on the commercialisation of education.

De and the Olympics
The University of South Australia, in conjunction with the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE), is hosting a major internationally supported distance education and open learning conference in Adelaide, 11-15 September 2000 – immediately prior to the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. Several corporations, associations and agencies, including The
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People

Mr. Brian Lang, who joined COL as Director in September 1998, has been promoted to Vice President. Prior to joining COL, he was with the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Development, most recently as Director of the Department’s International Academic Relations Division.

Mr. Patricia Williams, COL’s Education Specialist (Training) has left COL’s staff and relocated to Southern Africa to pursue her career there. Her many contributions to COL since her employment in August 1993 were principally related to her work in the area of staff training and interchange initiative initiatives throughout the Commonwealth. Prior to joining COL, she was Co-ordinator, Distance Education with the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST), Canada.

Pehin Datu Abu Bakar Apong, Permanent Secretary (Professional and Higher Education), Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam, through His Majesty’s Government, has accepted an invitation from the Commonwealth Secretary-General and the Chairman of COL to complete the term of office as regional representative for Asia on COL’s Board of Governors. The position was formerly held by Haji Mohd. Deen Rosdee, who retired recently as the Minister’s Director General. Pehin Abu Bakar was a Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Brunei Darussalam until last year.

The search for cheaper ways of bringing telephones and Internet access to the world’s most populous countries has researchers turning to India’s famous 19th-century communications network: its railway system.

How this might or might not benefit lower-income students and those living in developing countries is yet to be seen.

The railway system is available through the Internet. These online databases are intended to both provide a central repository of up-to-date information on distance education courses and programmes that are available remotely and to make it easy for users to locate information directly relevant to their specific needs.

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The education projects in Africa

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), in collaboration with Bellanet, has launched an online database of education projects in Africa. The project database currently includes descriptions of 850 projects and is up-to-date, bilingual (English and French) and fully searchable by region, area, function of institution and keyword. prime.ademe.org

Restructuring education in Nigeria

At the invitation of the new Nigerian Government, COL was represented at a Donors Agencies Coordination Meeting that was held in Abuja in late March. The meeting seeks to transform and modernise an education system that has been set back by years of political instability. The meeting was designed by the Government of Nigeria to help it mobilise and offer resources. It laid foundations for collaboration among donors and between Nigeria and the donor community.

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COL in Action

Youth internships

Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has selected COL as an implementation partner for its International Youth Internship Program. DFAT is providing funds for COL to enable free young Canadians to obtain international work experience and gain skills while working on COL projects. Further information is available on COL’s web site (www.col.org/internship).

Gender and development

The concept includes promoting the role of women in the field of development and integrating women’s values into development work.

The gender training resources database is endorsed by the United Nations Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and currently includes materials from the United Nations and Commonwealth systems. The database was demonstrated at the UN’s General Assembly Special Session on “Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century” (“Beijing +5”) in June in New York, and consultation on further development was held with those attending the session. Further participation in the development of the database is invited (www.col.org/GenderResources).

Networking schools

COL has re-designed its CENSE web page. The Commonwealth Electronic Network for Schools and Education is an initiative of COL, the Commonwealth Secretariat and OSAC (Open and Flexible Education for Commonwealth Countries). The CENSE web site hosts new information and communication technologies to help achieve IDF goals.

Commonwealth countries continue to lead the world in the imaginative ways in which they have applied distance and open learning. However, that capability is neither distributed equally among the nations nor in all sectors of education in those countries. However, there is a shift in instructional paradigms where the instructor or teacher no longer need be the sole source of knowledge but rather a facilitator, supporting student learning.

Distance education is being incorporated into mainstream education and training efforts, it is redefining the new educational landscape, including to whom and how education is delivered. Educational designs are being developed as rapid increases in technology continue to collapse spatial boundaries. Within the Distance Framework for Action there are commitments to “humanising new information and communication technologies to help achieve IDF goals.”

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New association for open schools

With support from COL, an association to open schools in the Commonwealth has been established with headquarters at the National Open School in New Delhi, India.

The Open Schooling Association of the Commonwealth (OSMAC) will foster consultation and exchange of resources among members. It also plans to promote research and development activities and take steps to ensure the quality of standards.

Networking other organisations, institutions and organisations in the Commonwealth directly involved in providing education at the school level through open and distance learning are eligible for membership.

For further information contact: Chairman, National Open School, 208, 31st Floor, Chittaranjan National School, B-8, 8-L, Kailash Colony, New Delhi, India 110048 (fax: 91-11-6214483) or visit the NO day.net web site (www.osmac.org).
Most of these underprivileged learners will be living in Commonwealth member states located in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. These countries will also suffer educational deprivation at other levels on the educational ladder. These young people, and the billion or so other adults who never received or benefited from education when they were young, will find themselves attempting to function in a global environment where:

- there is acceptance that long-term job stability exists in a society such as continuous learning regardless of profession, geographic location or age;
- developing a strong human resource base is being recognized as essential for economic and social development and the upgrading of skills and knowledge necessary to improve the productive capacity of a labor force and to promote economic growth;
- relevant education and training have been accepted as potential solutions to address key issues such as environmental degradation, high population and domestic violence; and
- the impact of technology and increased levels of education on governance issues is being recognized, assessed and appreciated.

How can they be helped by development agencies as tools for education? How can they be shaped by government? How can one capitalise on the potential of technology to reshape civil society and member states as part of the larger context of governance?


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How this might or might not benefit lower-income students and those living in developing countries is yet to be seen.

The venture will be formed by News Corporation's wholly owned subsidiary, TEL Education Ltd., and the commercial arm of Universities 21.

News Corporation's diversified global operations in the United States, Canada, continental Europe, the United Kingdom, Australia, Latin America and the Pacific include the production and distribution of motion pictures and television program- ming; television, satellite and cable broad-casting; the publication of newspapers, magazines, books; the production and distribution of promotional and advertising products and services; the development of digital broadcasting; the development of conditional access and subscriber manage- ment systems; and the creation and distribu-tion of online programming.

Universities 21 is a company incorporated in the United Kingdom with a growing membership network of currently 18 uni-versities in 15 countries. The members are prominent institutions in Australia, Canada, China, Singapore, Japan, Europe, the United States and the United Kingdom. www.universities21.co.uk

Online course databases

Distance education is a booming field with the number of courses offered through remote delivery increasing daily. At the same time, progress in the areas of accessibility and support for learners wanting to pursue educa-tion and training without basic computing skills has not always kept pace. Individuals interested in taking a particular course, or in simply finding out what is available, may find themselves frustrated as they try to locate the courses they want.

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL), in collaboration with Bellanet, has launched an online database of course material or existing technical institutions.

At the invitation of the new Nigerian Government, COL was represented at a Donor Agencies Coordination Meeting that was held in Abuja in March 1998. The Meeting seeks to transform and modernise an education system that has been set back by years of political instability. The meeting was designed by the Government of Nigeria to help mobilise and optimise available resources. It laid foundations for collaboration among donors and between Nigeria and the donor countries.

The presence of COL ensured that open and distance education figured prominently on the agenda. COL was able to signal that, whilst it cannot be considered a major donor of cash, it can provide a significant contribution through ideas, knowledge and expertise. Nigerian officials were enthusiastic about COL's potential role.

Railway web

The search for cheaper ways of bringing telephones and Internet access to the world's most populous countries has researchers turning to India's famous 19th-century communications network: its railway system.

Under construction since British colonial times, this railway system is its railway system.

The Honourable Remy G. Namaduk, Minister for Education, Namibia; Y.B. Tan Sri Dato’ Musa Mohamad, Minister of Education, Malaysia (host); and The Honourable Dr. S. Langi Kavaliku, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Civil Aviation and Works, Tonga (Chair).

Dr. H. Irn Macdonald, Chairman of COL's Board of Governors, meets with the Honourable Murti Manohar Joshi, Indian Minister for Human Resource Development, in New Delhi (April 2000). Photo credit: G.P. Sharma, Government of India

The Honourable Remy G. Namaduk, Minister for Education, Namibia, left to right: The Honourable Remy G. Namaduk, Minister of Education, Namibia, Y.B. Tan Sri Dato’ Musa Mohamad, Minister of Education, Malaysia (host); and The Honourable Dr. S. Langi Kavaliku, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Civil Aviation and Works, Tonga (Chair).

At the official opening of the COL-sponsored meeting of Pacific Education Ministers, left to right: The Honourable Remy G. Namaduk, Minister for Education, Namibia; Y.B. Tan Sri Dato’ Musa Mohamad, Minister of Education, Malaysia (host); and The Honourable Dr. S. Langi Kavaliku, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Civil Aviation and Works, Tonga (Chair).

Mr. Brian Long, who joined COL as Director in September 1998, has been promoted to Vice President. Prior to joining COL, he was with the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and before that as Director of the Department's International Academic Relations Division.

Mr. Patricia McWilliams, COL's Education Specialist (Training) has left COL's staff and relocated to Southern Africa to pursue her career there. Her many contributions to COL since her employment in August 1995 were principally related to her work in the area of staff training and interchange initia-tives throughout the Commonwealth. Prior to joining COL, she was Co-ordinator, Distance Education with the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST), Canada.

To the right of Mr. Brian Long is COL's Education Specialist (Training) Mr. Patrick McWilliams, who has left COL's staff and relocated to Southern Africa to pursue her career there. Mr. McWilliams' contributions to COL since her employment in August 1995 were principally related to her work in the area of staff training and interchange initia-tives throughout the Commonwealth. Prior to joining COL, she was Co-ordinator, Distance Education with the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST), Canada.

Pehin Dato Abu Bakar Apong, Permanent Secretary (Professional and Higher Education), Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam, through His Majesty's Government, has accepted an invitation from the Commonwealth Secretary-General and the Chairman of COL to complete the term of office as regional representative for Asia on COL's Board of Governors. The position was formerly held by Haji Mohd. Deos Roske, who retired recently as the Minister's Director General. Pehin Abu Bakar was appointed as a Vice Chancellor of Universiti Brunei Darussalam until last year.
TVET encompasses many levels. It includes: training for manual trade skills through to technical and para-professional occupations; any or all of the areas of the labour market, from agriculture to management and from plumbing to tourism; delivery in schools, polytechnics and colleges, as well as on-the-job and off-the-farm; and formal, relatively long-term and accredited, non-formal (short-term) or informal (incidental, unstructured and unplanned) programming.

Meeting needs

The changing demands of the labour market require imaginative and innovative responses. Public, private and the not-for-profit and non-governmental enterprises have to respond and sometimes embrace many explicit opportunities, notably new technologies, e-commerce, globalisation, multi-national expansion and shifting demographics of the labour supply market. Some countries have established sophisticated systems within labour or employment ministries to predict the future labour needs of the country. These inform the TVET providers so that their output meets the demand – a demand-driven system, as opposed to a supply-driven system that is controlled by existing physical resources and tenured staff.

Should TVET be teaching broad generic skills that are relevant to a suite of employment situations or should it be teaching narrow job-specific skills that apply to a much smaller range of occupations? The former is more expensive and will take longer; the latter might be learnt in a shorter time period. In most cases, the former is in the best interest of the individual, while those funding the training might prefer the latter.

Is TVET respectable?

While it is commonly accepted that education will help people to “get on,” to “improve themselves” and to “get better” jobs, many parents believe that only a university education will offer their children the opportunity to win a “good” job. As a result, many countries find that the number of graduates from universities far exceeds the capacity of the labour market to provide appropriate employment. At the same time they are unable to attract enough people to train for those positions of greater need, which might be “blue collar,” may involve manual labour and may be dangerous, dirty or difficult. Quality TVET programmes and improved workplace standards can help to address this problem.

Recognising qualifications

Systems are also needed to capture skills, knowledge and abilities acquired through formal programmes, non-formal training and on-the-job or informal experience. Accredited awards must be provided that are accepted by employers and other education institutions – a “skills passport” which facilitates mobility and flexibility of labour.

Increasing access to TVET

Governments must adopt better ways of delivering programmes given the size and urgency of the demand for TVET. Open learning, distance education and flexible learning in all their various guises offer part of the solution. Providers must ensure that TVET learning materials are appropriate to the target group and that the skills and competencies learned are those required by occupational groups and appreciated by employers. There must be sufficient potential in the labour market for graduates to become employed, self-employed and/or employed at higher levels. The programmes must be “wid” to the community as being worthwhile and not second-rate simply because they are delivered in a non-traditional way. The courses must have an accreditation that is accepted by both employers and other educational institutions.

Small states

Within the Commonwealth, there are 24 countries with populations of less than one million. Ten of these are small island states in the Caribbean, eight in the Pacific, two in the Indian Ocean and two in the Mediterranean. There are an additional seven countries with under five million people. To provide a sufficiently large pool of high-quality training to meet the needs of local employers is a challenge. They are probably illiterate. They are a small part of the very large group for whom there is very little access to education and training. They are probably illiterate.

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The Commonwealth of Learning is a not-for-profit international agency that promotes learning for all. It has four main components: Commonwealth E- Learning, Commonwealth Distance Learning, Commonwealth Professional Development, and Commonwealth Policy, Planning, and Research. COL's primary mandate is to increase access to quality learning resources and promote the use of technology in teaching and learning. COL has a presence in over 30 countries and serves as an international forum for knowledge exchange on learning issues. COL's website provides access to a wide range of resources, including reports, publications, and multimedia materials. COL is an open-access organization that welcomes inputs and contributions from all parts of the world.