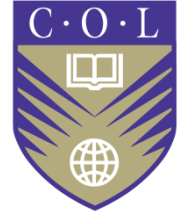


Educational Transformation



*Indian Consortium for Educational Transformation
(I-CONSENT)*

Virtual Schools and Learning Homes

Launch of three programmes:

Prayog Pariwar Kendra (PPK) Learning through Experimentation and Exploration; NETS pilot of the Science Olympiad; and OER Spaces for Student Learning

Pune, 5 April 2008

Remarks by

Sir John Daniel

Commonwealth of Learning

It is an honour and a privilege to be with you at this historic event. A colleague remarked earlier that I-CONSENT had benefited from warmth and moisture as it has developed. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has certainly tried to supply some collaborative warmth and being fresh from Vancouver I am pleased to offer some of the moisture that Maharashtra lacks!

I have followed the development of I-CONSENT closely since I joined COL in 2004, this being the fourth I-CONSENT event that I have attended. I realise, looking back, that your discussions have always forced me to think harder than usual. You are creating the future at scale. Confronting my old assumptions with the new vision that you are articulating is both challenging and bracing.

I particularly admire the way that you are marrying commitment to community with top-flight technology. You are using technology as an equaliser that puts rural and urban people on the same footing. Moreover you are using MKCL (Maharashtra Knowledge Corporation Limited), an extraordinary institution, as a driver of innovation in exciting developments such as the technique of Continuous Contour Trenching that is transforming the availability of water hundreds of villages.

I-CONSENT is a new paradigm and a new organisation for educational transformation: you call it a movement. But although I-CONSENT has been in gestation for some years you have waited until now to require formal commitments. I was proud to act as the formal witness two days ago when the member

institutions came to the stage one by one and signed the consortium document. They do so knowing what their roles are and what programmes they wish to achieve through I-CONSENT. This approach will create a more robust and productive consortium than the usual pattern where members sign up at the start before they are clear about what they want to achieve.

Today it is commonplace for educational bodies to say that they focus on learning rather than teaching. Too often this is simply a rhetorical statement but I-CONSENT is walking the talk. One example is the way that your eB.Ed programme is training the teachers themselves to put the accent on learning. Another is your PPK programme that promotes learning science through experimentation and exploration. This resonates strongly with me because half a century ago my school in England, Christ's Hospital, was a pioneer of learning by discovery.

I am especially pleased to see the thoughtful way that you are developing Open Educational Resources to create spaces for student learning. In the West OERs are in danger of losing their impact because although there are many creators, their products seem to be getting lost in the undergrowth of informal learning. You seem to have thought through the whole value chain from creator to user so that OERs can have a major impact on formal learning. I see good opportunities for collaboration with COL, which is committed to facilitating the development of OERs in the context of Open Schooling.

I note that in this session I have not heard the term 'Web 2.0', which refers to the increasingly interactive nature of the Web. MKCL is, of course, taking advantage of the interactive nature of its networks on a huge scale, but your use of language is admirably focused on educational outcomes rather than technical jargon. You are doing an admirable job of harnessing the informality of networks to the natural desire of students to achieve formal recognition for their learning.

Before I formally launch these three I-CONSENT programmes I must pay a special tribute to two people. I have followed with admiration the breathtaking development of MKCL since its creation in 2001. It is a powerful combination of the right business model, inspired use of technology and excellent leadership. Much of that leadership has come from its Managing Director, Vivek Sawant and I offer him my warm congratulations.

Also centrally involved in the success of MKCL, as well as many other innovations, is the President of I-CONSENT, Professor Ram Takwale. He will celebrate his 75th birthday next week, yet his ability to stay ahead of all of us in creating the future is as great as ever. Of all the people that I have worked with over the last two decades, at the UK Open University, UNESCO and COL, Ram Takwale is the friend who has made me think hardest. I thank and congratulate him.

Finally, it gives me great pleasure formally to launch a suite of three programmes within I-CONSENT's Virtual Schools and Learning Homes: Prayog Pariwar Kendra (PPK) Learning through Experimentation and Exploration; the NETS pilot of the Science Olympiad; and OER Spaces for Student Learning.

I wish you every success as you take these exciting initiatives forward.