

CONNECTIONS



LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



His Excellency Danny Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles, at PCF9.

PCF9: Innovations for quality education and lifelong learning

Close to 550 policy makers, practitioners and thought leaders from across the Commonwealth and beyond came together at PCF9 to discuss the role of open and distance learning in meeting the challenges of the changing world. Themed “Innovations for Quality Education and Lifelong Learning,” the forum was held from 9 to 12 September in partnership with the UK’s Open University (OU) at the historic BT Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Celebrating 30 and 50 years of their respective commitments to education and learning, COL and OU deepened their partnership to identify ways to accelerate progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4).

The participation of His Excellency Danny Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles, and eight education ministers underscored the forum’s importance.

Professor Asha Kanwar, COL President and CEO, in her opening remarks said: “Lifelong learning is no longer an option, but an

imperative for sustainable development. We need to change the business-as-usual approach and the brick-and-mortar mindset if we want to achieve SDG4.”

Forum participants looked at effective ways to move from capacity to capability, share best practices and harness innovation for change – all with a view to providing employability skills to young people, offering a quality education to all regardless of circumstances, and identifying practical ways for technology to speed up progress.

PCF9 further strengthened COL’s leadership in open, distance and technology-enabled learning, demonstrated its convening power and increased its circle of partners. The Edinburgh Statement captures the aspirations of PCF9 participants and outlines a roadmap for further action and is available at www.pcf9.org. COL and OU will continue to profile actions and innovations that delegates have taken throughout the year ahead.



“Lifelong learning is no longer an option, but an imperative for sustainable development.”

COL pre- and post-PCF9 meetings and workshops



The **Open/Innovative Schooling** workshop built on the work started in 2018 to reimagine and reinvigorate the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA) and explored how open schooling can address the challenges of out-of-school youths.



The **Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F)** session involved setting targets and creating strategies for scaling up to the meso and macro levels. Participants established plans for extending their reach and impact through innovative modes of delivery and the rigorous tracking of results.

Directors of national quality assurance (QA) agencies and QA units in universities attended a **Higher Education** workshop to discuss the integration of employability guidelines in national frameworks. COL presented its Employability Model and various employability tools and strategies.



A milestone towards wider acceptance of the **Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)**

Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) was announced at the meeting of the TQF committee, when it was reported that the new CARICOM Qualifications Framework was now referenced to the TQF.



The **Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD)** initiative organised a workshop on “Establishing and improving workplace-based plus open and distance learning models of TVET practice.” After PCF9, partners reviewed the draft theory of change and planned a community of practice. They also visited two construction sites to experience workplace learning and technology-enhanced learning in a mature TVET system. The site visits were organised by the Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust.



The **Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)** Partners’ meeting included representatives of partner institutions implementing TEL projects and several consultants. Participants discussed the outcomes evaluation of the TEL initiative and strategies to achieve the targets.



The **Teacher Education** workshop focused on new and emerging technologies. Professor Asha Kanwar noted partners’ commitment to innovative teacher professional development and called for more research on the use of new technologies in improving learning outcomes.



The **Regional Centres** meeting focused on compatibilities in research, deepening engagement, and acquiring data and outcomes from partners, as well as devising a joint communications plan to augment the collective visibility of the regional centres.



COL congratulates Honorary Fellows



At PCF9, COL conferred the title Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning on eight eminent individuals from different corners of the Commonwealth. The designation of COL Honorary Fellow recognises outstanding individual

contributions to distance education in areas such as: leadership and service; published works, including courseware, lectures and presentations; and mentorship. Consideration is typically limited to citizens of Commonwealth countries, and designations are for life.

COL Honorary Fellows:



Professor Abdalla Uba Adamu, Vice Chancellor and CEO, National Open University of Nigeria, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the cause of open education, social equity and excellence.



Professor Mandla Makhanya, Principal and Vice Chancellor, University of South Africa, in recognition of his contribution to lifelong learning in the Commonwealth.



Ms Anne Gaskell, Chief Editor, *Journal of Learning for Development*, PCF Programme Manager (United Kingdom), in recognition of her outstanding contribution to learner support and the promotion of research and scholarship in open and distance learning.



Professor Nageshwar Rao, Vice Chancellor, Indira Gandhi National Open University, India, in recognition of his outstanding service to the advancement of open and distance learning in the Commonwealth and his leadership of open universities.



Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, Vice Chancellor, University Sains Malaysia, in recognition of her leadership in lifelong learning in the Commonwealth, especially for women, and her outstanding service to the advancement of higher education and science in Malaysia.



Professor Emeritus Clement Sankat, President, University of Belize, in recognition of his outstanding service to the advancement of quality higher education that has made a difference to the lives of many learners in the Commonwealth.



Mr Kamaraj Keppanan, Founder of Vidiyal NGO, India, in recognition of his outstanding service to the advancement of lifelong learning for farmers in the Commonwealth and contribution to sustainable development.



Dr Linda Sissons, CEO, Primary Industry Training Organisation, New Zealand, in recognition of her outstanding contributions to the cause of vocational education and lifelong learning in the Commonwealth. Currently, she chairs COL's Board of Governors.



Pacific regional workshop

A Pacific regional workshop to identify priority activities in skills development was organised in Fiji from 13 to 15 August by COL in partnership with the Pacific Centre for Flexible & Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), New Zealand. Participants from seven countries in the region joined the workshop and developed activity proposals. The focus was on resilience education, youth and gender. Mr Jone Nemani, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Government of Fiji, and Mr Tom Haig, Senior Advisor, MFAT, New Zealand participated in this workshop, which was convened by Dr Som Naidu, Director of PACFOLD. Dr V. Balaji, Vice President, represented COL at this event, which was followed up by a workshop on the Pacific during PCF9, where ministers and senior officials endorsed the activity plans.

Meeting strengthens regional collaborations



On 18 September, the Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL) and the Vice Chancellor's office of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) co-hosted a meeting with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The ECOWAS delegation of 13 representatives was led by the Director of the Education, Science and Culture division, Professor Abdoulaye Maga, and Ambassador Babatunde Nurudeen, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to ECOWAS. The meeting concluded with promises for further collaboration, along with a commitment to have ECOWAS staff trained at NOUN.

COL Chairs

A meeting was held with the three COL Chairs to discuss their initiatives in research and thought leadership. The premise of the meeting was to engage more collaboratively given the synergies in their work, particularly in the areas of artificial intelligence, OER, and re-conceptualising teaching practice in relation to the ubiquity of networked technologies.

Left to right: Dr Kirk Perris, Prof Mohamed Ally, Prof Mpine Makoe and Prof T.V. Prabhakar



COL is pleased to announce the appointment of two additional COL Chairs: Professor George Veletsianos, School of Education and Technology at Royal Roads University (Canada), and Professor Martin Weller, Institute of Educational Technology at The Open University (United Kingdom).

COL Chairs contribute to capacity building across the Commonwealth and enhance COL's academic and intellectual presence in the fields of open and distance learning (ODL), open educational resources (OER), technology-enabled learning and learning for sustainable development.

Professor Veletsianos will research trends in flexible learning for under-represented groups, particularly women.



In collaboration with young researchers located around the world, **Professor Weller** will focus his work on developing open education practices (e.g., research guides and methodologies) to promote the uptake of OER.

Both Professor Veletsianos and Professor Weller are strong advocates and internationally renowned scholars in open education.



GIRLS Inspire panel

GIRLS Inspire hosted a panel discussion with the participation of partners and representatives from Global Affairs Canada and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia. The session demonstrated how gender equality was mainstreamed into development. Participants shared successes and lessons learned, and showcased how learning had resulted in women’s social, political and economic empowerment.



Pacific forum

With the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand, COL and the University of the South Pacific (USP) organised a workshop on skills development in the Pacific. Ministers from Kiribati and Samoa, along with their officials, joined the event with Dr Linda Sissons, COL Board Chair, and Professor Asha Kanwar. A number of senior officials, academics and experts from several countries gave inputs on a plan of activities developed by COL and USP.

Vice chancellors’ roundtable

OU and COL convened a roundtable of vice chancellors to discuss the current status and future direction of higher education in the Commonwealth. Participants expressed interest in developing viable business models, strengthening collaboration and faculty exchanges.



Supporting persons with disabilities

At the recent PCF9 Market Exchange, UNESCO Artist for Peace 2017 Ms Jane Constance demonstrated how assistive technology can increase access to print materials for her as a blind person and by extension to others with print disabilities. Jane described the critical role played by assistive technology in her life: reading brings knowledge, and knowledge helps us to rise above the ordinary.

With assistance from the Commonwealth of Learning, the Global Rainbow Foundation (a Mauritius-based NGO serving persons with disabilities) and Benetech (a non-profit technology company), Jane showcased how the digital learning materials in COL’s VUSSC course “Starting Your Own Business” can be made accessible so that people with print disabilities such as blindness, low vision, cerebral palsy or dyslexia can benefit from the content.

Enrolment in Green Teacher Nigeria crosses 11,000



Since the official launch of Green Teacher Nigeria one year ago, enrolment in this programme offered by the National Teachers’ Institute (NTI) in Kaduna has surpassed 11,000. These teachers will complete their courses having gained knowledge in environmental education as part of their training.

COL has supported NTI in capacity building on pedagogies and technologies for effective delivery of this environmental education programme. The content has now been integrated into Nigeria’s National Certificate of Education 1 and 2 as part of the General Education Studies curriculum.

Along with capacity- and skills-building workshops, COL has also provided support in designing open educational resources and engaging in ongoing review of the programme content.





Excellence in Distance Education Awards (EDEA)

At PCF9, COL recognised excellence in open, distance and technology-enabled learning. Conferred every three years, the EDEA awards acknowledge achievement by institutions/organisations and individuals around the Commonwealth.

The awards honour excellence at many points throughout the learning process: at the institutional level, in the development of learning materials, and in individual educator and student attainment.



EDEA awards winners:

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT



Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (India) was recognised as an institution that impacts positively on those who otherwise had no hope for a better future.

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION MATERIALS

Category A: Innovations in print, electronically delivered materials, or other low-cost media materials:



Open University of Malaysia (OUM) was recognised for its chatbot-driven course, "Object-Oriented Programming." The course demonstrates how artificial intelligence and outcomes-based education can be combined to transform teaching and learning at the tertiary level.

Category B: Design and development of study materials through the innovative use and re-use of open educational resources (OER):



Athabasca University (Canada) has been recognised for the Organic Chemistry I and II (CHEM 350 and CHEM 360) courses that form part of the Bachelor of Science programme in the Faculty of Science and Technology.



The **Open Education Resource Foundation** (New Zealand) was recognised for "Learning in a Digital Age," an open online course that is designed for independent study and aims to develop critical skills and confidence for lifelong learning in the 21st century.

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE IN A DISTANCE OR ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Ms Sakshi Kumari (India)

Due to a hearing impairment, Ms Kumari struggled in a formal school set-up. Through a special programme relying on the use of sign-language videos offered by the National Institute of Open Schooling, she was able to complete secondary-level studies successfully.



She has become an inspiration and a role model for many. Ms Kumari not only excelled at studies but also won two gold medals in cycling at the summer Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi this year.

Mr Jima Ngei (Nigeria)

In just three years, Mr Ngei has completed over 330 MOOCs and has shown remarkable focus, determination and persistence in pursuit of academic knowledge through open and distance learning. He has also become a member of the Community Teaching Assistants team, supporting other learners around the world in their quest for knowledge through MOOCs.





Educating African learners in an era of crises

Professor Asha Kanwar delivered a keynote address at the eighth Distance Education and Teachers' Training in Africa (DETA) Conference at the University of Lagos, Nigeria on 24 July 2019.

In her address, "Educating the African Learner in an Era of Crises: What are the options?" Professor Kanwar explored five crises that impact education: climate change, migration and displacement, out-of-school youth, the "learning crises" and the challenges of pedagogy.

She also provided an overview of the "African learner" and the ways in which the teaching community is responding to these crises. She closed the presentation with a description of some of COL's contributions and the strategies that could help improve teacher education in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Trinidad & Tobago team reflect on open schooling content development



During a recent trip to the Caribbean, Dr Tony Mays, COL's Education Specialist: Open Schooling met with 20 representatives from the Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago, who had been involved in developing open schooling content. Key takeaways for participants in this process included learning about creating interactive and multimedia content and using software they had formerly not known about, as well as getting familiar with OER and copyright issues.

TOP 5 TEL PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATIONS

Technology-enabled learning (TEL) is opening doors to quality learning opportunities that are unprecedented in human history. Learners and educators are making use of new tools and resources to create engaging, effective and efficient learning environments that foster curiosity, creativity and collaboration for sustainable learning. A recent COL publication entitled *Pedagogical Innovations for Technology-Enabled Learning* highlights the following five innovations:

1

Flipped classroom approach

A flipped classroom approach is possible when learners have access to digital devices and the Internet at home. Instead of receiving instruction in the classroom and being asked to put their learning into practice as homework, the process is reversed.

2

Place-based learning

Place-based learning takes students outside the classroom, providing opportunities to spark their curiosity and investigate their environment. It offers a way for them to make connections between the ideas in their textbooks and the practical issues and challenges that their local communities face.

3

Citizen science

Citizen science involves members of the public in inquiry and the discovery of new scientific knowledge. These projects use the scientific method, including systematic observation and the formulation and testing of hypotheses – all made possible due to the availability of suitable technologies.

4

Computational thinking

Computational thinking is a method of structuring any problem to make it easier to solve. This way of thinking can be taught as part of science, mathematics or design technology or in other settings. It also prepares lifelong learners by developing a set of skills that they will use in other subject areas.

5

Bring your own device (BYOD)

Bring your own device leverages students' access to mobile devices to increase learning opportunities. Learners can use their own devices to access a wide range of resources, personalise learning, collaborate with others, access expert opinions and share their work with a wide audience.

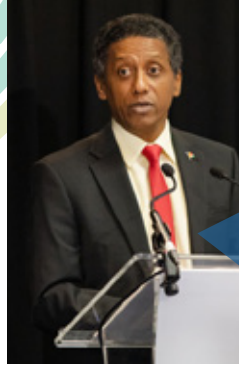


The full text of *Pedagogical Innovations for TEL* is available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3201>



GLIMPSES OF

Keynote speakers:



His Excellency **Danny Faure**, President of the Republic of Seychelles, spoke about empowering youth – our common wealth.



Ms **Sarah Brown**, Executive Chair, Global Business Coalition for Education, stressed the need for increased financing for education to meet the targets of SDG4.

PCF9 was held in Edinburgh, Scotland from 9 to 12 September 2019. The four days of insightful keynote addresses, engaging plenary panels, informative parallel sessions, and other programme highlights provided a unique opportunity to bridge traditional divides between borders and sectors.

Plenary panels

explored the four sub-themes: Employability, Equity and Inclusion, Opening Up Education and Technology.



Commonwealth education ministers had an **informal lunch** with Rt Hon Nick Gibb, Minister of State (Minister for School Standards), UK.



A **Ministerial Roundtable** was held to discuss their priorities and how COL could assist.



Experts from across the Commonwealth and beyond enlivened the **Parallel Sessions** with their insights.

PCF9

Our sponsors and forum partners:



Mr Marc Prensky, Founder of the Global Future Education Foundation, said that achievement benefits only the achiever while accomplishment makes the world better.



Dr Sugata Mitra, Professor Emeritus, Newcastle University, stressed that comprehension, communication and computing should be the key outcomes of schooling.



Professor Rose Luckin, UCL Knowledge Lab, believes that we need to think how to help people understand Artificial Intelligence, so that they are judiciously careful.



In a thought-provoking **Asa Briggs Lecture**, Lord Putnam of Queensgate advised participants that “the time for action is now... as the vulnerable are becoming more vulnerable.”



Several publications were released at **COL's Publication Launch** where delegates received paper copies and digital versions on USB.



The Poster Session and Market Exchange

enabled participants to share key innovations and services informally.



Singer Jane Constance, UNESCO Artist for Peace, treated the PCF9 audience to a moving performance at the **Gala Dinner**.



Papers presented at the forum are available at:

<http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/3125>



OUR COMMONWEALTH



Sustained success for CEMBA/MPA at AIOU

by Professor Dr Syed Hassan Raza
Chairman, Department of Business Administration
Allama Iqbal Open University
Islamabad, Pakistan

Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) in Pakistan offers every citizen of the country affordable education opportunities at their doorsteps. The university is a pioneer in distance learning education in Asia, and it delivers quality education in various disciplines, including business and public administration.

“Learner-centred innovations are why the programme has experienced such sustained success.”

The Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programme is a collaboration between AIOU and COL. Launched in 2003, the programme is designed to escalate the competency levels of busy professionals and managers in both public and private organisations. The programme was initially offered in four locations — Islamabad, Peshawar, Lahore and Karachi — but has since expanded into 11 cities across Pakistan. It caters to executives working in the banking, armed forces, healthcare, pharmaceutical, education, manufacturing, hotel and agriculture sectors.

When the Department of Business Administration put out its first call for applicants, more than 1,000 applications flooded in, and 450 individuals were ultimately enrolled. Due to popular demand, the department decided to offer the programme in both spring and autumn semesters every year thereafter. Prospective student interest remains strong, and the department receives approximately 500–600 applications every semester. Two hundred candidates (40 percent of them female) are admitted. The university provides complete tutorial support to students, as well as a supervisor for research projects. Classes are scheduled on weekends as well as in the evenings, meaning that learners don't need to put

their careers on hold to further their education. Each subject consists of 48 hours of teaching per semester, equating to roughly three hours of class every week. Prudent quality-assurance mechanisms are in place. Internal assessments of students' research projects are done by faculty members, and an oral examination is conducted to assess each student's learning before a degree is granted.

The results of a tracer study conducted from December 2017 to January 2018 on the investment outcomes of CEMBA/CEMPA graduates serve as evidence of the programme's remarkable impact. Dr Salman Qureshi analysed a questionnaire and collected data from control and treatment groups in major cities across Pakistan. The results of the study reveal increases of 37.6 percent in monthly earnings, 31.6 percent increase in annual income. There was also an increase of 28.5 percentage points in the probability of gaining a managerial position, which corresponded to more than twice that probability in 2012 for the treatment group.

In 2009, the department began to offer the CEMBA/CEMPA programme to students residing in remote areas of the country. Today, a total of 147 students are enrolled in different courses of the programme in the online mode. AIOU provides complete tutorial support to these learners and conducts online assessments of assignments through the Open Learning Institute of Virtual Education. This successful initiative provides a valuable learning support system to students. Students include young professionals as well as senior heads of key organisations in Pakistan. These learner-centred innovations are why the CEMBA/CEMPA programme has experienced such sustained success since its inception.

eLearning for International Organisations (eLIO)

Through an agreement with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), COL's eLIO initiative is administering an online, self-paced, virtual orientation programme for professional staff in country offices and headquarters. Two of the very first participants have shared their experiences.

Roger Laly (UNFPA Chad)



"UNFPA's Virtual Orientation programmes helped develop within me robust competencies in community resilience building through the '3E' concept (Education, Empowerment and Employment). I was able to strategically redefine our approach to mainstreaming family planning in our women's and girls' empowerment programme by applying innovative thinking and cultural sensitivity."

Rose Niyonizigiye (UNFPA Burundi)



"The memorable moment for me was the interactions with other colleagues on the discussion forums. It was a great opportunity to share knowledge and lessons learned. I now better appreciate the interconnections between operations and programmes in regular situations and in humanitarian contexts."

Towards inclusive communities in Kenya

As part of the community linkage strategy in the "Teacher Futures" model, COL supported a two-day workshop from 22 to 23 July 2019 at the Kenya Institute of Special Education in Nairobi. The workshop aimed at sensitising the participants on the role of community-based organisations in supporting inclusion both within and outside the school environment. The workshop brought together 44 delegates, with representation from the Ministry of Education, Teachers Service Commission, Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development and Kenya National Examinations Council. Also represented were several associations for the deaf, blind and physically disabled. The objective is to help teachers improve their practices and help learners with disabilities to achieve better outcomes.



School-based teacher development in Rwanda



The Ministry of Education and the Rwanda Education Board held a stakeholder forum from 16 to 17 July 2019 in Kigali, bringing together a total of 49 delegates from the education sector to contribute to the design of "Teacher Futures."

Over the last few years, Rwanda had made tremendous progress in education, the most recent of which was the move from skills to competency-based curricula in the basic education cycle and pre-service teacher education. COL is supporting a school-based teacher development programme enabled by technology.

Developing capacities



COL supported a workshop on Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) at Kaimosi Friends University College (KAFUCO) in Kenya from 20 to 22 August 2019. KAFUCO adopted COL's C-DELTA as a non-credit course to help all students become digital education leaders and lifelong learners. The purpose of the workshop was to enable teachers to develop their capacity as digital education leaders. The content focused on ways to develop digital education competencies, create digital identities, share digital materials and build a personal learning network for teachers to support students' achievement and success.

Increased access to quality TVET



COL's work in the Technical and Vocational Skills Development initiative has helped more than 100 African technical institutes build their capability in flexible and blended (FaB) learning over the last nine years. Institutional partners have reached an additional 30,000 learners through flexible approaches and blended classroom models. Knowledge sharing among colleagues, known as "cascade training," has been a key element of the strategy.

Eight individuals have taken cascade training a step further with a vision that extends beyond their own institutions to the whole of Africa. Together, they created the African Foundation for Quality e-Learning for TVET (AFQuET). This professional association of TVET practitioners aims to "build a community of practitioners striving to increase access to quality TVET programmes at low cost to all through open, distance and e-learning."

PEOPLE



STAFF
ANNOUNCEMENTS



NAVEED MALIK

Dr Naveed Malik was appointed Special Adviser: Technology and Innovation. He has a wide range of experience in information and communication technology (ICT) applications in support of distance education in Asia and is the author of many publications linked to ICTs in education. Dr Malik is the former Rector of the Virtual University of Pakistan.



MOSES TENYWA

Dr Moses Tenywa was appointed Education Specialist: Agriculture and Livelihoods. He has had a long career linked to achieving more effective, sustainable and equitable livelihood results in agriculture and has undertaken a range of consultancies at both national and international levels. Dr Tenywa is a professor from Makerere University.



SHIRLEY PRIYA

Ms Priya has been appointed Programme Officer: Skills at CEMCA. She has a 10+ year track record of working with colleges, community radio stations, and diverse social groups in various capacities.



MARGARET SUDERMAN

COL acknowledges former Communications Manager Ms Margaret Suderman for her valuable contributions to the organisation and wishes her success in her new professional endeavours.

JL4D seeks contributions



Contributions are invited for the *Journal of Learning for Development*, which focuses on innovations in learning — in particular, but not exclusively, open and distance learning and its role in development. Contributions can take the form of research articles, case studies,

commentaries and reports from the field. Please visit the journal's website for more details and to submit work:



www.jl4d.org.

New mobile-based MOOC for farmers



On 1 October 2019, COL and its partners Vidiyal and Reddiarchatthiram Seed Growers Association, in India, launched a massive open online course (MOOC) on corporate literacy. The content has been adapted from original materials developed by India's National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). This course is meant for members of Farmer Producers Organisations, whose shareholders are mostly farmers with limited or no access to bankable assets. COL's Lifelong Learning for Farmers initiative has been working with India-based partners and with NABARD over the last nine months to create a series of measures to build the capacity of these shareholders to access new finances and credit from formal channels.

TEL Community of Practice



In collaboration with Fiji National University (FNU), COL launched the Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) Community of Practice (CoP) platform to develop a network of teachers across the Commonwealth who are adopting technology-enabled and blended learning practices in their teaching. Teachers from 12 institutions that have implemented TEL with the support of COL are currently on the platform. It is open for any teacher to join and actively connect, create and celebrate TEL success in their institution. The goal of the CoP is to empower teachers to effectively use TEL by providing a platform to discuss, debate and collaborate to solve problems and undertake action research for improving the quality of their students' learning.

GIRLS Inspire: their voices

Aimed at providing schooling to girls and young women and skill them for livelihoods, GIRLS Inspire has now reached close to 74,500 individuals in Bangladesh, India, Mozambique, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Tanzania. With support from Global Affairs Canada and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia, COL has brought education and training to remote and unreached communities, and it has positively impacted many lives and many destinies. This feat would have been impossible without the support of our partners on the ground.



Nurnahar (Bangladesh): "I came to know about the... project of COL under which skills training on various trades like fashion garments... [is] provided. After completing the training, I do my online business through my mobile phone. Now my monthly income is around BDT 7,500 and I can afford all my expenses. My family members are very happy, and they are encouraging me to expand my business. I am grateful for [this chance] to be both economically and socially empowered as well as self-reliant."



Khadija (Pakistan): "Getting enrolled in SPARC has been one of the major turning points in my life. If it hadn't been for the skills training, I wouldn't be where I am today. Who knows I might have gotten married by now. SPARC and GIRLS Inspire played a great role in changing my life in the best way possible. Running my own beauty salon has always been my dream, and today living this life is a milestone achieved. I hope they keep influencing other girls' lives by providing them with great opportunities and empowering them to contribute towards progress of the nation."



Malrenu (Sri Lanka): "I joined the GIRLS Inspire project with the Women's Development Centre – Head Office in Kandy, Sri Lanka in May 2019. The training I received on the app development is very helpful in providing support to the team with the uploading of registration data of women and girls to Survey Gizmo. I plan to sit for the GCE O/L examination next year and to complete the Mathematics course so that I can qualify for higher education. The GIRLS Inspire motivation sessions made me see that my life has many avenues in the future."

FAIR COMMENT



Professor John Shawe-Taylor,
Centre for Computational
Statistics and Machine Learning,
University College London

“Why is AI relevant to the demands of education?”

AI for Education

Artificial intelligence (AI) systems have the potential hugely to enhance our capabilities in the world of ideas, possibly enabling a surge in knowledge and creativity. It has been suggested that we are witnessing the equivalent of the Industrial Revolution’s impact on the physical world, but in the sphere of ideation.

One could be excused for asking “What’s new?” Over the last 70 years, computer science has enabled the automation of many processes that were previously performed by humans. Much of this has happened without our being aware that there is a distinction between the computing machines, namely computers, and the intelligence implemented on them in so-called computer programmes, now often referred to as apps.

The capability of these systems has been steadily increasing, with corresponding improvements in many of the systems that we now take for granted, perhaps most clearly visible in smartphones. In this context, one might ask what distinguishes the general development of computer science from that of artificial intelligence currently feted as ushering in a new era in all aspects of our lives and society.

I will argue that there is a confluence of factors that make the potential of the current situation very exciting and challenging, with different aspects of AI development enabling novel approaches and interventions that could justify the claim of a new era for education.

One of the confluent factors is the development of mobile phones and in particular smartphones, which have meant that increasing numbers of people are technology savvy but also have developed a much broader set of interests and understanding of the world. This has led to an increasing understanding of the importance of education and of the very direct impact that technology can have on our lives. It seems that the desire for high-quality education is now the norm, both for personal development as well as for qualifications required in the workplace. This has been particularly striking in developing countries, where technology has reached populations far more quickly than might have been expected from past experience.

This puts demands on educational systems: they need to produce a workforce that has new skills, with a strong focus on creativity in the mental sphere at the same

time as satisfying an interest in ongoing learning and continuous upskilling. As a result, educational institutions have never been more in demand, with people across the globe in both developed and developing countries seeing education as their passport to newly emerging jobs and as the way to satisfy their curiosity for new knowledge.

Another important factor is an increasing interest in studying the process of learning through data collection that could inform improved understanding of what makes learning effective and enjoyable at all levels. All of these developments create a perfect storm that is at the same time a perfect opportunity for AI.

Why is AI relevant to the demands of education? AI can impact education in a number of ways, ranging from more surface, organisational aspects to the potential for re-evaluating our understanding of how people learn and represent knowledge. The X5Gon project (Cross Modal, Cross Cultural, Cross Lingual, Cross Domain, and Cross Site Global OER Network: <https://www.x5gon.org/>) is using AI to create a portal that will enable learners from across the world to access the huge collection of open educational resources (OER) currently available in a plethora of repositories across many continents. These resources provide educational materials for all levels, topics and learning approaches. The difficulty with such a large, diverse collection is finding and organising the material that is appropriate for an individual learner or teacher. X5Gon is creating an infrastructure and portal that will enable learners to make sense of and exploit these amazing resources for both upskilling and recreational learning. AI is involved in the ingesting, understanding, transcribing and translating of OER, as well as in modelling users’ interests and skills, potentially planning a sequence of OER tailored for their particular learning goals.

There is, however, a potential to do more: as data are collected about what works for whom, we hope to gain deeper insight into how learning proceeds and how learners represent knowledge. By uncovering these aspects of learning, it may become possible to make knowledge acquisition an engaging and enjoyable experience, guiding learners in a way that engages their curiosity and excitement, while enabling them to acquire skills and insights that will maximise their chances of profitable and creative employment.

NEW RESOURCES



Knowledge Series: Designing and Implementing Micro-Credentials: A Guide for Practitioners

As online learning and MOOCs become mainstream, it is important to explore new forms of credentialing. This publication provides a step-by-step guide to plan, design and implement micro-credentials and badges in diverse contexts. This provides greater flexibility in the journey of the new learner-earner through a skills and capability framework.



<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3279>



A Blueprint and Toolkit for School-Based Teacher Development: SECONDARY

This toolkit is meant for implementing school-based teacher development to improve the performance of schools and raise the achievement of children. This is a valuable resource which raises the key questions leading to the improvement and quality in secondary schools. It also offers practical activities that teachers can use in their daily practice.



<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3282>

Guidelines on the Development of Open Educational Resources Policies

This new publication provides specific tools to analyse current contexts and policy environments, understand issues related to copyright and licensing and align policy in support of Sustainable Development Goal 4. The guidelines present a systematic process for designing and implementing OER policies and for measuring the impact of these policies.



<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3455>

A Guide to Integrating Employability in Higher Education Institutions: The Commonwealth of Learning's Employability Model

This publication provides clear guidelines on how to integrate employability pathways into instructional systems. From career counseling to career support, the guide demonstrates how institutions can prepare graduates for employment or entrepreneurship.



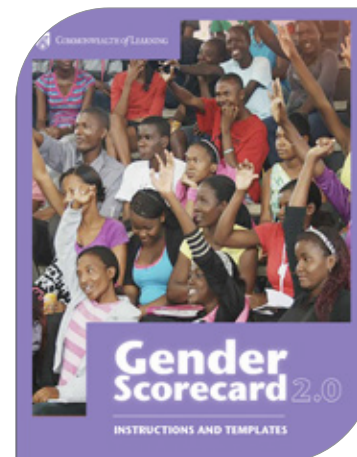
<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3251>

Gender Scorecard 2.0: Instructions and Templates

This is a tool to audit the capacity of institutions to mainstream gender. This helps to analyse existing policies and practices and develop clear steps for the effective promotion of gender equity.



<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3280>



#TECH TRENDS



5G

“It is anticipated that 5G will empower an enormous new wave of innovation in the teaching/learning space.”

5G is the fifth generation of cellular communications technology. Just to recap, the first generation was simple mobile telephony. The second generation, or 2G, introduced the Short Messaging Service (SMS) in addition to telephony. With 3G came higher data speeds, enabling mobile web browsing. 4G enhanced data speeds even further, allowing mobile video access. One would assume that the fifth generation, or 5G, would be just another jump in data speeds, but in reality, it is much, much more. 5G is poised to be a game changer by dramatically improving network connectivity in more ways than one.

5G data rates are expected to be 100 times faster, supporting instant access to applications and services. Higher data speed also means no more buffering when viewing high-definition videos, which has always been a source of frustration. 5G Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) can provide connectivity for households and businesses while significantly lowering costs. 5G also means a more stable and secure connection. The key change is the significantly reduced latency, making delays virtually impossible to perceive. Network slicing technology makes it possible to dedicate a part of the 5G spectrum for special services such as emergency responders or road communications.

So what do the higher data rates, massively higher data carrying capacity and hugely reduced latency collectively promise for the future of communications?

One immediate beneficiary is the Internet of Things (IoT), which will transform from being just a fad to something with tangible value. 5G will enable autonomous vehicles to communicate with one another, or even with smart roads, in real time, leading to the next level of safety and security for passengers. Surgeons performing operations remotely,

without requiring expensive dedicated communication lines, would become commonplace.

The promise of 5G in the learning arena remains to be fully tapped. All aspects of technology mediation in the learning space stand to benefit from the advent of 5G. Experiences associated with accessing learning management systems, viewing content videos, or interacting with a learning community all stand to improve. However, it is anticipated that 5G will empower an enormous new wave of innovation in the teaching/learning space.

A huge impact would come from augmented reality (AR) becoming a mainstream learning tool. Real-time access to AR overlays would empower all types of technical training and maintenance. Courses at all levels would benefit from highly engaging AR content that would be available in real time from a central repository. Students would no longer need to download and install apps on their personal devices.

Embedding virtual reality (VR) into courses would completely transform the learning experience. The technology would enable geographically separated learners to come into a single seamless space, with real-time interaction no longer suffering from the annoying time lags that current systems experience. Expensive laboratory equipment at one location could be operated in real time by distant researchers, leading to the next level of collaboration and efficiency. The massive data requirements of background analytics would no longer be limited by technical infrastructure: adaptive personal learning pathways would become a reality. 5G could prove to be a real game changer in this domain.