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Open and Distance Learning for Development



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His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo, President of Nigeria and outgoing Commonwealth Chair, speaking at the opening ceremony of the 2005 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Malta. President Obasanjo, host of the last CHOGM held in Abuja in 2003, called on Commonwealth countries to embrace "zero tolerance" policies on corruption "as a matter of urgency" in order to fight poverty and political instability. The Government of Nigeria is also committed to open and distance education, in support of the country's basic education programme as well as in further education, and is a major financial contributor to COL. COL is working in Nigeria and West Africa in a number of areas. The Honourable Dr. Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister of Malta and host of the 2005 CHOGM, will be Commonwealth Chair for the next two years.
CREDIT: E. WONNACOT, DOI MALTA

CHOGM 2005: STRENGTHENING COMMONWEALTH NETWORKS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Commonwealth leaders pledged to strengthen their networks of co-operation to promote greater development for the association's mostly developing member states at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Malta from 25 to 27 November 2005.

In their *Malta Declaration on Networking the Commonwealth for Development*, the leaders agreed to use information and communication technology to bridge the digital divide among the developed and developing countries of the Commonwealth.

Heads of Government reaffirmed in a separate *Gozo Statement on Vulnerable Small States*, the Commonwealth's commitment to advocate for the vulnerable small states and to highlight their concerns, particularly in the "erosion of preferential trade access arrangements; rapidly growing debt burdens; additional demands and compliance costs associated with global efforts to combat terrorism; increased environmental risks associated with more frequent and severe natural disasters; the spread of HIV/AIDS and its impacts; and rising levels of youth unemployment."

The leaders also pledged to support and assist small states in their efforts to stabilise and diversify their economies by building levels of resilience to their vulnerabilities.

In their *Communiqué* issued at the end of CHOGM 2005, Commonwealth leaders addressed

various other political and development matters and expressed appreciation for the work of Commonwealth agencies such as COL and specifically noted COL's efforts toward establishing a Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth.

COL's report to CHOGM, addressing this year's CHOGM theme, was entitled, *Networking Learning Communities for Development: The Commonwealth of Learning and the Millennium Development Goals*. Dr. Lewis Perinbam, O.C., Chair of COL's Board of Governors, presented the report to CHOGM's Committee of Foreign Ministers.

The next CHOGM will be held in Kampala, Uganda, in 2007. Trinidad & Tobago will host CHOGM 2009.

www.thecommonwealth.org

www.col.org/programmes/reporting/#CHOGM

www.col.org/speeches

VUSSC UPDATE

COL is working with the Commonwealth's small states on project proposals for creating courseware and launching new programmes under the auspices of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). The development of the VUSSC is focussed on helping Commonwealth countries with fewer than 4.5 million people reach their development objectives. Significant progress has been made in 2005.

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PCF4

OCHO RIOS, JAMAICA

30 OCTOBER - 3 NOVEMBER 2006



Details on the call for papers, programme, theme and sub-themes of COL's fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF4) are now available on the Forum's official web site: www.col.org/pcf4.

PCF4 addresses *Achieving Development Goals* through open and distance and technology-mediated learning. This fourth Forum is designed to enable delegates to explore the contribution open and distance learning (ODL) and technology-mediated learning makes to overcoming poverty and building a more stable and prosperous world. Sub-themes – innovation, learning, collaboration and foundations – relate to ODL and technology-mediated learning and have been chosen as a means to interrogate the development potential of our practice.

Deadline for submitting abstracts for consideration is 31 March 2006. Once accepted, the deadline for papers is 30 June 2006. Abstracts and papers can be submitted online through the PCF4 website.

Registration details and options are also available on the web site. The Forum will take place at the Sunset Jamaica Grande in Ocho Rios, Jamaica (www.sunsetjamaicagrande.com). Delegates who choose to stay at this hotel will be able to take advantage of a special "registration & accommodation" package. Some delegate subsidies will be available.

PCF4 is being organised and hosted jointly by COL and the University of the West Indies' Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC), in co-operation with the Caribbean Association for Distance and Open Learning; the Jamaican

Association for Distance and Open Learning; the Trinidad & Tobago Distance Learning Association; and the Office of Continuing Education and Distance Learning at the University of Technology, Jamaica.

www.col.org/pcf4

pcf4-information@dec.uwi.edu

ASHA KANWAR NAMED VP

Professor Asha Singh Kanwar has been appointed Vice President of COL effective 1 April 2006.

Professor Kanwar joined COL in 2003 as Education Specialist, Higher Education. In this role, she has worked in over 15 Commonwealth countries and has been particularly active in developing partnerships with governments and institutions in West Africa. Previously, she held a joint UNESCO/COL appointment at UNESCO's *Bureau Régional pour l'Éducation en Afrique (BREDA)* in Dakar, Senegal.

A national of India, Dr. Kanwar obtained her BA and two Master's degrees at Panjab University before completing her Ph.D. at the University of Sussex. In 1988 she joined the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) as a Reader, becoming a Professor in 1992 and also serving as Director of the School of Humanities and Pro-Vice-Chancellor. During this phase of her career she was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Iowa, a Visiting Fellow at the University of Leiden and an Indo-Canadian Shastri Fellow at the University of Toronto. Her extensive publications include *The Unforgetting Heart: An Anthology of Short Stories by African American Women Writers*, which served as a textbook in several US universities.

Professor Kanwar succeeds former Vice President, Mr. Brian Long, who had to step down due to ill health. (See page 11)



ASHA KANWAR

IEC TO CLOSE ITS DOORS

The U.K.'s International Extension College (IEC) is closing due to funding difficulties. One of the leading sources of distance education and open and distance learning (ODL) to the developing world since 1971, IEC focussed on giving the marginalised access to quality education. It was instrumental in raising funds to establish and provide support to a large number of organisations including the South African Institute of Distance Education, Sudan Open Learning Organisation, Botswana Exten-

sion College and Malawi College of Distance Education. IEC also worked long and hard for the establishment of COL.

"It is sad to see the passing of IEC, which has done a magnificent job in advancing distance education in the developing world," said Sir John Daniel, the President of COL. "Its passing is a measure of its success, because thanks to IEC's work ODL is now well embedded in many countries. COL will now need to take on a greater responsibility for helping to sustain and develop the ODL institutions that IEC helped to create. We shall do so knowing that we inherit a proud tradition – and in gratitude to IEC for its role in getting COL established."

IEC leaves a legacy of organisations and alumni that will continue to widen access to education in the developing world. It ceases operation on 31 March 2006.

www.iec.ac.uk

EDUCATION GOOD PRACTICE AWARDS

The Commonwealth Secretariat has introduced an award for good and promising practices in education in Commonwealth member states. An Education Good Practice is a programme, project, policy strategy or significant intervention that has made a positive difference to the status or condition of primary school children, their teachers or the education system of a country in one or more of six defined Action Areas. The deadline for submissions is 31 March 2006. The Good Practice Awards will be presented at the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Cape Town, South Africa in December 2006.

www.thecommonwealth.org/education

VUSSC — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The Commonwealth's small states are looking for existing course materials in tourism, small business management, agriculture, teacher training and the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in education. The plan is to use existing Open Education Resources (OERs) where possible. The targeted launch date for the first VUSSC courses is early 2007.

In the meantime, the VUSSC is actively looking for funds to support course development. Development agencies and others that are interested in pursuing this opportunity are encouraged to contact Mr. Paul West, COL Knowledge Manager and Education Specialist at pwest@col.org.

EXCELLENCE IN DISTANCE EDUCATION AWARDS



COL is continuing its tradition of recognising excellence in distance education through awards to be presented at the Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006. We are currently soliciting nominations for the Excellence in Distance Education Awards – institutional achievement, materials and student experience. The deadline is 31 March 2006.

www.col.org/edea



COL PRESIDENT SIR JOHN DANIEL IS SHOWN FEATURES OF THE TAN SRI DR ABDULLAH SANUSI DIGITAL LIBRARY AT THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF MALAYSIA BY SHARIPAH HANON BIDIN, CHIEF LIBRARIAN, (FAR LEFT) AND HAZNA AMHAD, MANAGER OF LEARNER MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS. SIR JOHN MADE THE VISIT DURING A TRIP TO MALAYSIA IN JANUARY 2006.

ILO SIGNS ON FOR WRITING EFFECTIVELY

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has signed up for COL's writing communication course for international organisations. As COL has done for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Health Organization, UNAIDS and the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the successful "Writing Effectively" course is being tailored for the ILO to ensure it meets the unique writing challenges faced by ILO staff members based in Geneva headquarters and in field offices. The ILO course will feature on-line course materials, accessible from anywhere in the world, and tutoring through e-mail.

"Writing Effectively for ILO" is being launched to an initial group of 100 learners in 2006. By the end of 2006, the course materials will be available in English, French and Spanish.

LEARNING FOR MDGs

COL and the Centre for Environment Education in India have launched an online module that provides education and communication professionals with useful resources on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development. "Learning for MDGs" gives an introduction to the Decade of Sustainable Development and the eight MDGs. It presents case studies from different parts of the world, giving examples of how a particular MDG has been achieved at a local, regional and national level. The module also outlines the contribution that education and communication can make in the processes of achieving these goals.

www.desd.org/mdgs

KNOWLEDGE FINDER: YOUR PERSONAL LIBRARIAN

COL's Knowledge Finder is an online tool that mines open and distance learning (ODL) resources available on the Internet. The Knowledge Finder acts like your personal research assistant – it finds online documents, reads them, discards irrelevant material and sorts them into different categories. While using a search engine is like looking for information in a library without the help of a librarian, using an indexing tool such as the Knowledge Finder is like having a librarian at your service. The Knowledge Finder is automatically updated as websites change, so you will be led to the latest articles and not to information that has been taken off sites. The result is an efficient and comprehensive search for information related to a specific subject.

COL is making a concerted effort to include information related to Open Education Resources (OER, also known as open source courseware). There is a growing need for information, as educational institutions increasingly become aware of the advantages of using OER. If you are aware of useful information, articles or websites about OER that should be available through the Knowledge Finder or for more information, contact Mr. Paul West at pwest@col.org.

www.col.org/kf

www.colfinder.org

OPEN SOURCE OR PROPRIETARY SOFTWARE?

Educational institutions are faced with important decisions when it comes to deploying technology. One is the choice between proprietary (closed source) software and open source software. Proprietary software such as Microsoft Windows is functional but expensive. Open source software has a lower cost (it's often free) but assuring functionality places greater demands on the IT staff and requires training in Linux. However, significant sums of money are at stake. Australia's Northern Territory Government recently saved AUD \$1 million and was able to add 1,000 computer terminals to schools after moving to open source software.

This is a complex issue, not least because optimal arrangements will often call for a mix of closed and open source software and the cross-training of staff to be proficient in both. For that reason these are decisions that management cannot simply delegate to their technical specialists. The role of management is to get the best results from the available resources. For educational institutions in the developing world, that means using limited IT budgets for maximum cost effectiveness. Management should look for a rational and judicious blend of open source and proprietary software.

This is a call for management to treat IT decisions as strategic choices. They can have a huge impact on your organisation.

For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see the speech made by COL President Sir John Daniel (co-authored with Paul West) to the Online Education conference in Berlin in December 2005 at www.col.org/speeches.



STAFF OF THE FREETOWN TEACHERS COLLEGE SHOOT VIDEO DURING A MULTIMEDIA TECHNOLOGY TRAINING SESSION

BUILDING MULTIMEDIA CAPACITY IN WEST AFRICA

COL has worked extensively in West Africa to build capacity with teacher education institutions. This has included training workshops on the development of multimedia capacity in Nigeria at the National Teacher Institute and most recently at Freetown Teachers College (FTC) in Sierra Leone. The initiative with these institutions builds upon the COL's efforts to develop the West Africa Teacher Education Consortium, which brings

together teacher education institutions in The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Cameroon.

COL Education Specialist, Mr. David Walker, worked with FTC in November 2005 to build a media centre and train staff on multimedia technology. The College will use audio and video production to aid in teacher training in the classroom and provide support to FTC regional centres throughout the country.

PROMOTING SOUTH ASIA LITERACY AND LIVELIHOODS

Representatives from five South Asian countries met to discuss literacy and livelihoods at a COL-organised meeting in Bangladesh in September. "Awareness and Advocacy: Using ODL for Literacy and Skills Development: A South Asian Consultative Meeting" was a follow-up to COL's first International Literacy and Livelihoods Experts meeting in Vancouver in November 2004. The meeting brought together policymakers and practitioners from Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to strategise about using open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communications technologies (ICTs) for literacy and skills development.

In addition to reviewing the situation in their own countries, participants identified opportunities for collaboration across the region. Already there has been sharing of course materials and broadcast facilities among organisations in South Asia. COL is encouraging continuing co-operation and sharing of knowledge through a Literacy and Livelihoods association that is being formed by meeting participants. Similar regional meetings will take place in the Pacific and Africa in 2006.

PARTICIPANTS AT THE AUTHORS MEETING FOR FOREIGN TERTIARY EDUCATION PROVIDERS IN THE ANGLOPHONE CARIBBEAN IN TRINIDAD & TOBAGO IN OCTOBER



CROSS-BORDER HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CARIBBEAN

The Caribbean has become an attractive destination for cross-border providers of higher education. A number of organisations from the United States, the U.K. and other countries are active in the region. However, there is little data on the number and type of providers, which makes it difficult for appropriate policies and regulatory mechanisms to be put into place.

COL, in collaboration with the University of West Indies Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC) and UNESCO, is commissioning a book on *Foreign Tertiary Education Providers*

in the Anglophone Caribbean. Sixteen authors from Anglophone Caribbean countries have been asked to write a chapter each on the status and trends of cross-border higher education in their respective countries. The project moved ahead significantly with a three-day meeting of the authors in Trinidad & Tobago in October 2005. Authors discussed draft chapters and the challenges of data collection and information sharing.

COL plans to release the book at the Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Jamaica in November 2006.



THE WRITE STUFF

DEIRDRE MAULTSAID WAS ONE OF EIGHT TUTORS FOR COL'S WRITING EFFECTIVELY COURSE FOR INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES WHO RECEIVED LONG SERVICE AWARDS TO RECOGNISE FOUR YEARS OF TUTORING LEARNERS WORLDWIDE. THE AWARDS WERE GIVEN AT THE ANNUAL TUTORS PROFESSIONAL ENRICHMENT DAY IN OCTOBER. THIS SESSION BROUGHT TOGETHER 18 VANCOUVER-AREA RESIDENTS, WHO ARE AMONG THE PROGRAMME'S 25 TUTORS, FOR LEARNING, SHARING OF TIPS AND NETWORKING.



(FROM LEFT TO RIGHT) PROFESSOR RICHARD SIACIWENA, COL CONSULTANCY TEAM MEMBER; MR. JAMES SILWIMBA, ACTING CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER, TEACHER EDUCATION, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (MOE); MR. C.R. PILLAI, COL CONSULTANCY TEAM MEMBER; MRS. RACHEL THOLE, SENIOR EDUCATION OFFICER, PRE-SERVICE, MOE; PROFESSOR MOHAN MENON, COL EDUCATION SPECIALIST AND CONSULTANCY TEAM LEADER; MR. M.D. HAKASENKE, DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE OF TEACHER EDUCATION AND SPECIALISED SERVICES (TESS), MOE; AND MR. EDWARD TINDI, SENIOR EDUCATION OFFICER, IN-SERVICE HIGH SCHOOLS, MOE AT THE DISSEMINATION WORKSHOP IN ZAMBIA IN NOVEMBER 2005.

DEVELOPING ZAMBIA TEACHER EDUCATION STRATEGY

COL has helped to formulate a Teacher Education Strategy for Zambia for implementation over the next ten years. A team of COL consultants conducted the three-month long project for Zambia's Ministry of Education.

The Ministry selected COL from among other international bidders in July 2005 to conduct this Danish Development Agency (DANIDA) funded project. The consultancy was required to develop a number of alternative strategies for the Ministry of Education to contemplate, taking into consideration factors such as the financial constraints through

government funding, the commitment of the donor community, public sector reform and other policy decisions that could affect the situation.

After extensive interviews, discussions and review of documents, the draft report was presented to a group of over 60 stakeholders in a Dissemination Workshop organised by the Ministry of Education in November 2005 to obtain their feedback. Mr. M.D. Hakasenke, Director, Directorate of Teacher Education and Support Services, who chaired the Dissemination Workshop, thanked COL for completing the work on time and to the satisfaction of the Ministry.

With this strategy in place, COL will look at working with Zambia to help implement some of the recommendations.



SARDEC STARTS UP

MR. THULAGANYO THUTOETSILE AND MS. TOPOYAMA MOGOTSI HAVE BEEN NAMED COORDINATOR AND DEPUTY COORDINATOR RESPECTIVELY OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL DISTANCE EDUCATION CENTRE (SARDEC). THIS REGIONAL CENTER OF EXPERTISE IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING IS LOCATED AT THE BOTSWANA COLLEGE OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (BOCODOL). SARDEC ORGANISES, PROMOTES AND SUPPORT DISTANCE EDUCATION DEVELOPMENTS AND ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE REGION. IT IS SUPPORTED BY THE BOTSWANA MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, BOCODOL AND COL. THE REGIONAL UNESCO OFFICE IN ZIMBABWE HAS ALSO PLEDGED SUPPORT.



CEMCA MOVES

DR. JAGDISH SINGH, A LONG TIME FRIEND AND ASSOCIATE, LIGHTS THE TRADITIONAL LAMP TO SYMBOLISE BRIGHT NEW BEGINNINGS AT THE OPENING OF THE NEW OFFICE OF THE COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA (CEMCA) IN NEW DELHI IN DECEMBER. JOINING HIM ARE CEMCA'S DR. USHA REDDI (FAR RIGHT) AND MR. NANDA KUMAR. WWW.CEMCA.ORG

SEEKING BANDWIDTH SOLUTIONS IN NAMIBIA

COL recently facilitated a meeting of educational institutions in Namibia to explore the issue of affordable bandwidth. Hosted by the Namibian Open Learning Network Trust (NOLNet), the meeting included representatives from educational institutions and the Government of Namibia.

There are wide disparities in Internet connectivity among developed and developing nations, with countries in regions such as Africa facing much higher costs – more than 100 times higher – than many other countries for bandwidth. This has a significant negative impact on access to information for students. While bulk bandwidth purchasing has reduced costs in some African countries, this is not the case in many other countries, such as Namibia, where prices are controlled by monopolies in the telecommunications industry. Some of the solutions discussed were better management of connectivity in institutions, more training for staff and users in responsible Internet usage and strategies to make optimal use ICTs.

As a result of the meeting, NOLNet has agreed to form a Bandwidth/Connectivity sub-group to focus on connectivity issues. COL will continue to work with stakeholders in Namibia to develop solutions to meet the challenges of low bandwidth.



EDUCATIONAL RADIO IN NAMIBIA

The Ministry of Education in Namibia recently initiated a project aimed at enhancing educational radio broadcasting in that country. One of the project's primary objectives is to develop the capacity of staff from various ministries and educational institutions to write, record and produce high-quality radio programmes. COL supported training for a core group of 26 participants in August/September 2005.

Building on this experience, participants are now busy developing a series of pilot programmes that will be broadcast on radio stations of the National Broadcaster during the first half of 2006. This will be followed by an evaluation before educational radio programmes are produced on a larger scale. Most of the ministries and educational institutions involved are affiliated to the Namibian Open Learning Network Trust (NOLNet), a charitable organisation that aims to promote the development of open and distance learning (ODL), which, along with the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), helped to facilitate the training. As a direct outcome of this project, institutions would be able to use radio extensively in the future to supplement/complement ODL programmes on offer to the Namibian nation.

TRAINING TVET TEACHERS IN GHANA

The University of Education, Winneba (UEW) in Ghana is developing a distance education programme for a Bachelor of Education in Technical/Vocational Education and Training (TVET). COL is helping UEW to adapt existing Diploma of Technical Teaching (in-service) materials that were developed by the University of Technology, Jamaica and other Caribbean partners with COL. The modules will be evaluated and piloted in 2006. By offering this programme through distance education, UEW will train more teachers and help to meet the need for more technical and vocational education in Ghana.



BANGLADESH BOATS PROJECT RECEIVES \$1 MILLION AWARD

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation presented its 2005 Access to Learning Award of US\$1 million to Shidhulai Sanirvar Sangstha, a non-governmental organisation in Bangladesh for its pioneering approach to bridging the digital divide by providing free public access to computers and the Internet. The Mobile Internet Educational Units on Boats programme

provides educational services, access to technology and computer training to poor communities in northern Bangladesh. The boats, which anchor at remote villages, rely on generators or solar energy and mobile phones for Internet access. COL helped Shidhulai Sanirvar Sangstha develop the programme, which has now received worldwide recognition.



LEADING THE KNOWLEDGE REVOLUTION IN RURAL INDIA

Three kiosk operators with the Lifelong Learning for Farmers project were recently named National Virtual Academy for Food Security and Rural Prosperity (NVA) Fellows in a ceremony hosted by the President of India, His Excellency Dr. Abdul Kalam. The NVA Fellows are individuals who are recognised for serving as torchbearers for the knowledge revolution in rural India.

On 11 July 2005, 140 people were awarded NVA fellowships at a function in New Delhi. Calling the programme "a celebration of our rural core competence," Dr. Kalam told recipients they were being empowered to promote rural transformation. The NVA Fellows will be supported through capacity building and networking. The initiative is part of Mission 2007, which aims to establish knowledge centres with modern information and communications technologies (ICTs) in every village in India by 2007.

Three of the NVA Fellows are kiosk operators in the Lifelong Learning for Farmers Project in Tamil Nadu. This innovative pilot



MS. BARATHI SALA, A LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS PROJECT KIOSK OPERATOR (LEFT), WITH THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, HIS EXCELLENCY DR. ABDUL KALAM, AT THE NVA FELLOWSHIP CEREMONY IN NEW DELHI

project is a partnership among COL, the State Bank of India, n-Logue Private Limited and a consortium of universities. The kiosks, which are managed by n-Logue Communications and financed through loans from the State Bank of India, provide farmers with access to ICTs for distance learning, information gathering and communication.

The NVA Fellows from the Lifelong Learning for Farmers Project are Mr. A. Gnanakulandai of Uppukottai, Ms. K. Bharathi Sala of Thrukalakudi and Mr. G. and Ms. Murugaveni Chandrasekaran of Govindanagaram.

www.col.org/programmes/capacity/l3farmers.htm

COL PARTNERS WITH UNESCO ON TEACHER TRAINING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

On 1 January 2006, UNESCO launched a ten-year teacher training initiative to dramatically improve teacher training capacities in 46 Sub-Saharan countries. The programme is designed to assist countries to synchronise their policies, teacher education and labour practices with national development priorities for Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals through a series of four-year cycles.

Of the 17 countries participating in the first cycle of the Initiative, five are Commonwealth countries: Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Zambia. COL has been active in all of them, providing support for the



A TEACHER WORKS AT A COMMUNITY TELE-LEARNING CENTRE SUPPORTED BY COL IN ZAMBIA

use of open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communications technologies (ICTs) for teacher education. COL's ongoing support of teacher education and school development in these five countries will be a major focus in its next Three-year Plan 2006-2009.

www.unesco.org/education

MORE GREEN TEACHERS IN INDIA

The Diploma in Environmental Education developed by COL and the Centre for Environment Education (CEE) in India is growing in popularity. Navodaya Vidyalaya Sansthan, a Government of India establishment with more than 450 rural residential schools across India, has enrolled a group of its teachers in the Environmental Education – or “Green Teacher” – programme. Navodaya expects to enrol a new group of teachers in the programme every year. This innovative distance education programme is aimed at broadening access to environmental education and contributing to sustainable development.

The initial presentation of the Green Teacher course is being evaluated by two consultants, Dr. Vasant D. Bhat and Dr. B. Phalachandra from India's National Council for Educational Research and Training. COL and CEE are now working on converting the Green Teacher course to an online course and making it available throughout South Asia and Africa.

www.ceeindia.org

IMPROVING TVET IN THE PACIFIC

By Perive Tanuvasa Lene

Pacific Heads of Government have discussed applying Australian quality standards to technical/vocational education and training (TVET) institutions in the Pacific. In addition to improving the standards of TVET education, this will help Pacific Island immigrants find employment in Australia and New Zealand. There have also been changes at Samoa Polytechnic. Perive Tanuvasa Lene, Chief Executive Officer of Samoa Polytechnic explained the situation in this recent report.

Samoa Polytechnic has become one of the two institutes under the umbrella of the National University of Samoa (NUS). It is now known as NUS's Institute of Technology, while the programs currently run by the NUS will form the Institute of Higher Education. The roles of the two institutes will remain the same and an integrating Open Flexible Pathways between the two institutes will be in place to encourage students, especially in the TVET area, to continue studies towards an academic degree when they complete a TVET program. Their academic results in TVET will be accredited towards academic studies.

As a graduate of the Samoa Trades Training Institute in 1971, before it became Samoa Polytechnic 1993, I found that only a very limited number of us have had a chance to continue academic studies to the post-graduate level. This was only possible because of our own initiative,

and sometimes we had to fight for it. Almost all the annual scholarship awards offered by donor countries and organisations were for academic studies only. Although it has now changed slightly, there is still nowhere near enough support for TVET students, considering the increasing number of students graduating from TVET providers. Thus, the graduates from TVET still have the mentality that they are only studying to get a job and that is it. Yet as we all know, there is quite a high number of graduates from our institutes that may not have done well in the secondary school system but it is amazing how some of these students open up after spending one or two years doing a TVET course. Their future potential and high level of confidence is incredible.

So as a TVET graduate, I am supportive of our merger with our university; to bring down this wall that TVET graduates had to put up for years and open up further educational opportunities for all TVET students regardless of what entry level they had to meet.

I believe we can use this model in the development of TVET in the Pacific to change the perception that TVET is only a second choice when you cannot make it to a university, but rather that it is another option for future education.

www.nus.edu.ws

INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

U.K. Open University (UKOU) has launched an International Fellowship Programme, funded by donors to the OU Foundation. Applications are welcomed from professionals working in higher education – academics, administrators or civil servants in universities, non-governmental organisations or government ministries – who wish to carry out a project at the Open University in the U.K. The only stipulation is that their project should be clearly linked to open, online or distance education in a higher education setting. Fellows will spend three to six months working in a faculty or student support role at UKOU. They will work alongside colleagues and share experience of open and distance learning (ODL), with the ultimate objective of completing their project and returning with a productive outcome that will benefit their home organisation. Travel, accommodation and subsistence are fully funded by the programme.

www.open.ac.uk/international-fellowships

EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF OPEN

By Ms. Susan Phillips, COL Education Specialist, Basic Education

COL's mandate includes working at the leading edge of open/distance education and using technology to deliver and support learning opportunities for those living in developing countries. There are ample examples of COL's work in these areas – and none are more obvious than the early and continuing work in Open Schooling.

COL embarked on its first major work in the area in 1994, when it produced one of the first known publications on Open School-

“New schools cannot be built in time, nor can more teachers be trained quickly enough.”

ing, long before there was much recognition or acceptance of it as a possible remedy to some of the educational challenges facing the developing world.

Today, at least partially because of COL's work, there are new Open Schools being established throughout the developing world,

community. These two initiatives emphasise the importance of providing basic education to the populations of the developing world, and both have assisted many developing countries to move closer to achieving universal basic education.

However, along with the success of these initiatives, comes a new challenge for educators. Now that many more children, youth and adults are primary school graduates, there is a new need – the need to provide more opportunities for post-primary learners to access secondary education. Without opportunities to continue their schooling, neo-literates can quickly return to their earlier state of illiteracy. Similarly, if there is no post-primary educational path, those that are currently enrolled in basic education programmes may lack the incentive to continue.

not support the increased costs.

Of course, class sizes may be increased so that there are more students in existing classrooms. This is a common strategy to save money, both in developing and in developed countries. However, research has proven that it does not work after a certain class size has been reached; more students may be in the classroom but the quality of the education decreases. The disadvantages associated with stretching resources – teachers, desks, books and paper – along with the decrease in personal attention to individual students more than offsets any advantages offered through increasing the size of the class as a means to provide additional access to education.

Education ministries and departments have learned that increasing the access in the conventional system through increasing the class size but keeping the funding levels the same leads to a rapid reduction in the quality of the education

“With the dramatic increase in primary school graduates, there is a gr

and existing institutions that offer school-level education through non-conventional means are being strengthened and improved in a variety of ways. There is now an acceptance of Open Schooling as a viable and feasible alternative way of filling the gap caused by the dual lack of qualified teachers and conventional schools that plague many countries in the developing world.

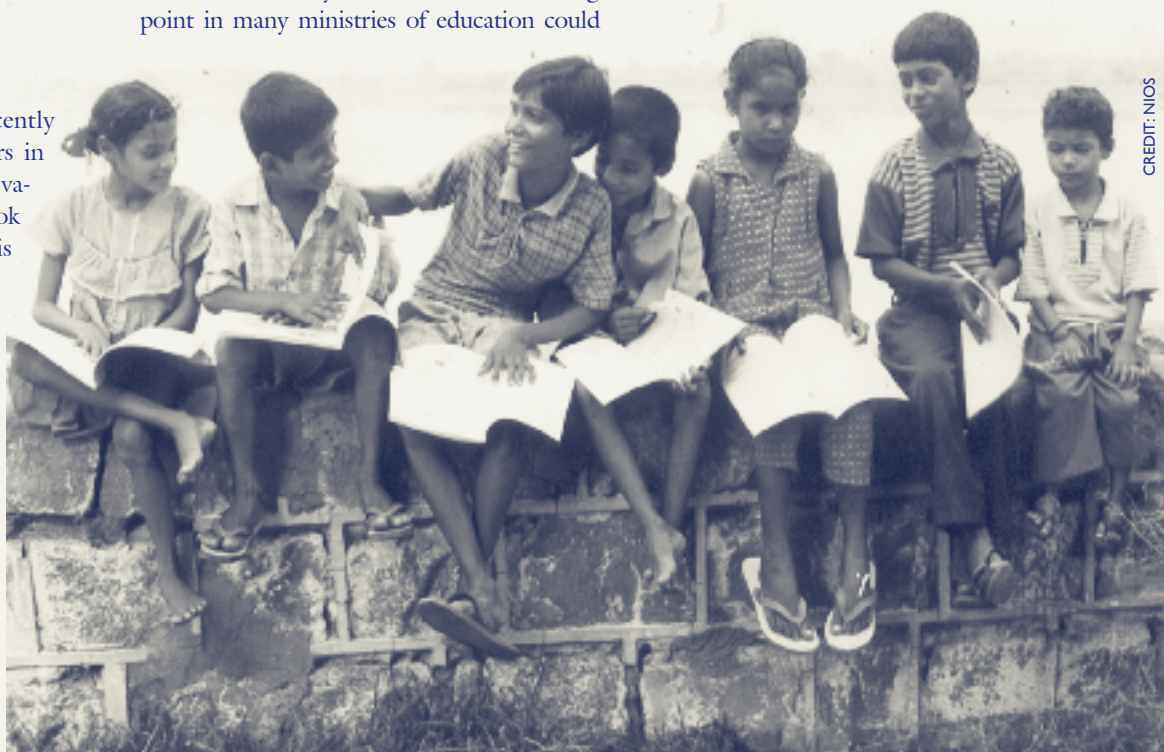
A means must be found to provide quality secondary education, coupled with technical/vocational training where appropriate, in a cost-effective, timely manner. New schools cannot be built in time, nor can more teachers be trained quickly enough. Even if there were schools and teachers available, limited budgets that are already stretched to the breaking point in many ministries of education could

provided. However, through using non-conventional means such as open learning, once a certain investment is made in the system, student numbers can increase, quality can remain high and only a nominal increase in funding is required.

The growth of basic education

Why has Open Schooling recently become so important to educators in developing countries? There are a variety of factors to consider as we look at the multi-faceted answers to this question.

Over the last fifteen years or so, the development community has focussed much of its work on increasing access to basic education. First there was the Jomtien World Conference that launched UNESCO's *Education for All* initiative in 1990, followed by the endorsement of the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 by world leaders and the development com-



CREDIT: NIOS



NIOS LEADS THE WAY

The largest Open School in the world, the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) plays an important role both in India and internationally. Established as an autonomous institution by the Government of India in 1989, NIOS has a cumulative enrolment of more than 1.3 million students. NIOS offers basic education for children and adults, secondary and senior secondary courses, and vocational programmes. It provides education mainly to out-of-school children, including drop-outs and socially and economically challenged learners.

NIOS also acts as a national resource agency for Open Schooling in India, assisting states to establish their own State Open Schools. It provides technical and resource support, including sharing of courseware and joint development of courses. With COL's support, NIOS is actively working to expand the system of State of Open Schools to all of India's 28 states.

COL also supports NIOS by providing training in multi-media, instructional design and quality issues. By sponsoring visits for NIOS staff to open polytechnics that offer vocational training through ODL, COL is working to help NIOS expand course offerings into vocational areas. COL has also facilitated consulting and expert support provided by NIOS staff to other Open Schools worldwide. COL and NIOS have collaborated on a number of Open Schooling institutes held at NIOS for education ministry officials and educators from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, as well as many countries in Africa. Through these gatherings, developing countries gain valuable insight and firsthand experience with NIOS best practices that can help them establish or enhance the Open Schooling system in their home countries.

www.nios.org

SCHOOLING

How is this possible?

Open/distance education is an excellent argument for economics of scale. Although to have a successful and high quality open/distance education system, there must be an initial investment in quality materials, delivery and student support systems, once these are in place, large student numbers can be accommodated with a minimum increase in funds.

To provide quality education to an increased number of students in an ODL system, there must be additional materials provided, and the student support system must be able to accommodate the increased numbers; however, these costs are low compared to building new schools and training more teachers. Further, the time required to put in place the support for additional students in an ODL system is short, compared to the time required to adequately ready the conventional system for increased student numbers. And time is not a luxury that most developing

- Youth that missed out on schooling in their childhood can enrol in courses which will provide them with the equivalence of secondary education without their having to endure the embarrassment of being in classrooms with children much younger than themselves.
- Young mothers can take secondary level education through studying at home, and attending tutorials only when necessary and their responsibilities permit.
- Working adults can enrol in one or two courses at a time, and study whenever their personal and work commitments permit.
- Young adults can acquire skill training coupled with academic subjects while self-employed or working as non-skilled labour.

The openness facilitates the learning – anyone can enrol in any course at any time and

growing need for access to secondary education.”

countries have when it comes to providing increased opportunities to their populace for secondary education.

Is open schooling distance education?

There are different views on what Open Schooling is. COL uses a very broad, but simple definition – the physical separation of the school-level learner from the teacher, and the use of unconventional teaching methodologies, and information and communications technologies (ICTs) to bridge the separation and provide the education and training.

Open Schooling is not called open/distance schooling for a reason. Open Schooling may follow different patterns, but the most common scenario is that the learners study specially designed open learning materials on their own – at home, in their workplace, wherever it is convenient for them – and then they meet together with a facilitator on a regular basis. The “open” in Open Schooling refers to the openness of the system – seldom are there are rules dictating student ages, prerequisites, content of courses to be taken or number of courses in which students must enrol. For example,

study at their own convenience and schedule.

The face-to-face sessions with the facilitator are mainly to clarify any difficulties that the students may have experienced when working through the learning materials. These sessions are seldom mandatory. It does not affect a student if he or she has to “drop out” for a period of time – they can pick up their stud-

“COL recognises the vast opportunities for education and training that can be provided through successful Open Schooling initiatives.”

ies once again, when it is convenient for them to do so. The facilitators do not teach the learners. In fact, the facilitator may not know much about the subject area at all. The role of the facilitator is to guide the learners and assist them to understand how to study the content in the material.

In addition to the facilitator, there is usually a subject matter expert available – possibly through telephone or e-mail contact – who will respond to questions relating to the subject content. Having the expert available is key.

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RECOGNISING THE REALITIES OF OPEN SCHOOLING

By Professor Tony Dodds



CREDIT: WEF

They also need to learn in groups with leaders, tutors or facilitators who are more educated than they are – even if not qualified teachers – to transform the knowledge and ideas contained in the distance learning materials into comprehensible and absorbable forms. This also has serious effects on costs. It is in the training and support of primary school teachers and adult learning facilitators that ODL has its greatest potential at these levels...but that is another story.

- The more common forms of distance learning, therefore, are most appropriate for older adult learners, or at least adolescents or young adults, who cannot get into or continue in formal, traditional schools but who have had some basic, elementary education. There are many millions of such learners in developing countries and it is on them that open schools, or as I prefer to call them, open colleges of lifelong learning, should be concentrated. Even here, however, the younger the target audience and the lower their level of formal education, the greater the need for guidance, support and structure. It is possible, though not proven, that the new interactive media could provide much of this structure and support, but this target audience in most developing countries is the least likely to have access to such technology.
- To be successful, open schools need a considerable lead-in time, very significant financial and trained personnel resources and heavy investment and involvement by the local communities in which they are based.

It is simple common sense that Open Schooling cannot be all things educational to all men, women and children. It is my fervent belief that these cautions in no way decrease the urgency of effective expansion of Open Schooling. They only emphasise the conditions of effectiveness.

Professor Tony Dodds is an international education consultant and former Director, Centre for External Studies, University of Namibia. He recently authored a report under COL auspices about the creation of a national open school in Nigeria.

Open Schooling is one of the top open and distance learning (ODL) priorities of developing countries at the present time. There is widespread recognition of the potential of Open Schooling to meet urgent educational and development needs, as well as the need to rapidly expand access to school-level education. But it is important that the hype and over-simplification that often surround the Open School movement don't obscure the realities that must be addressed. If these realities are not addressed, the Open School movement could turn out to be another "alternative" red herring in the search to provide education for all. Hopeful scenarios need to be tempered by an awareness of the constraints that have often prevented the movement from reaching its lofty goals.

The realities to which I refer include the following:

- Distance learning in its purer forms, i.e. when the learners are detached from a teacher or tutor for most of the time (a common definition of distance education) has nowhere, in my knowledge, been shown to provide an effective learning environment for young children. The effective models of distance learning for such age groups appear to be those in which very regular, almost continuous, face-to-face tuition/tutoring/guidance is in place. This is a contradiction in terms and inevitably interferes with the economies of scale argument of which distance education is so proud. Open learning through distance education is not therefore, in itself, a solution to the problem of the millions of children not yet in school.
- Similarly, these models of learners learning mainly on their own with occasional tuition have not in themselves, as far as I have seen, proved effective learning systems for illiterate or semi-literate adults.

OPEN SCHOOLING FILLS A GAP IN BANGLADESH

By Dr. Arshed Ali Matubber, Dean, Open School, Bangladesh Open University

Three years ago, COL started work with the Open School of the Bangladesh Open University (BOU) and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to develop a proposal for a pilot designed to demonstrate the use of a non-conventional model to provide junior secondary education to out-of-school children who have completed Grade 5 at non-formal/community schools. In Bangladesh, nearly 400 NGOs provide primary education at non-formal/community schools to nearly 10 million students.

The Open School, with assistance from COL, developed the proposal in association with staff from NGOs and the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), a coalition of NGOs. The Royal Netherlands Embassy and Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation agreed to jointly fund the project through the CAMPE offices. Staff at both BOU and in the NGO network will work to produce the materials and implement the programme, which emphasise both vocational and academic courses so that graduating students will have the opportunity for involvement in income generating activities.

The Open School has begun to develop the curriculum for the distance education courses for the Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) programme for out-of-school children who graduated from non-formal/community schools. Currently, these graduates do not have the opportunity for further education. The Open School offers the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) programme for Years 9 and 10, so after students complete Years 6, 7 and 8 in the JSC, they can continue their secondary education with the Open School.

The Open School is developing the curriculum using an innovative method so that the new programme is suitable for the target group. The process comprises a literature review of existing materials, focus group discussions and the submission of the draft curriculum for review in a national level expert workshop. The Open School is planning to incorporate more ICT-based vocational courses to increase the opportunities for better livelihoods. After the draft curriculum is submitted to the Curriculum Committee of the University for final ratification, the focus will be on developing texts and audio-video materials. COL has agreed to provide an instructional design consultant to ensure quality issues are addressed during the materials development process.

COL BOARD

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, His Excellency the Right Honourable Don McKinnon, has accepted the recommendation of the Board of Governors of the Commonwealth of Learning to re-appoint **Mr. Lewis Perinbam, O.C.**, as Chair for a second term when his current term ends on 31 December 2006. In accepting re-appointment, Mr. Perinbam said, "It is an honour to serve COL and a privilege to work with its distinguished Board of Governors. I shall continue to do my best to help the Board and COL's President and CEO, Sir John Daniel, as COL moves forward to an era of unprecedented opportunity."



LEWIS PERINBAM

COL STAFF

Mr. Brian Long joined COL on 1 September 1998 as Director with responsibilities for programme and staff management, resource allocation and representation to the wider community. In June 2000, he was promoted to Vice President and in July 2002, he was given the additional responsibility as Chief Operating Officer of COL International and of overseeing COL's fee-for-service activity.



BRIAN LONG

Sadly, his health deteriorated in 2005 and he had to step down from the Vice Presidency in September on medical advice.

Sir John Daniel, President and CEO of COL, noted that, "it was a privilege to work with Brian. As well as carrying out his formal duties with distinction, his friendly personality and care for each member of staff helped to create the very pleasant working environment that COL enjoys."

Prior to joining COL, Mr. Long was a long-time member of Canada's foreign affairs service. His last position being Director of the International Academic Relations Division placed him at the centre of Canada's actions in international education. In that role, he was also a persuasive and knowledgeable advocate for COL and the Commonwealth.

He has received a number of honours for his work in support of Canadian Studies internationally.

Brian continues to take an active interest in COL's work as well as in politics, economics and human resource development. Our best wishes go with him in this next phase of his life.

Associate Professor Wayne Mackintosh will join COL as Education Specialist, Educational Technology: Policy on 1 May 2006. The founding director of the Centre for Flexible and Distance Learning (CFDL) at the University of Auckland, Mr. Mackintosh has extensive experience in the theory and practice of open and distance learning. At the University of Auckland, he was responsible for implementing eLearning strategy and leading the CFDL team. Previously, he worked at the University of South Africa (UNISA) for 11 years. A committed advocate of free/libre and open source software for education, Mr. Mackintosh was the project leader for the eLearning XHTML editor (eXe) project. In his new role with COL, he will help Commonwealth countries realise their educational potential through information and communications technologies (ICTs) for development.



WAYNE MACKINTOSH

CEMCA

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) welcomes **Mr. Nanda Kumar** as its Head of Finance and Administration. A chartered accountant, Mr. Kumar brings with him over 20 years of experience in both the private and public sectors. He takes over from **Mr. Dalip Kumar Tetri**, who has returned to Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) as its new Registrar. **Dr. Pankaj Khare**, Programme Officer with CEMCA is also returning to IGNOU, taking on the position of Deputy Director with the International Division.



A LEARNER IN COL'S WRITING EFFECTIVELY PROGRAMME, VERONICA RIEMER, ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO), WAS SELECTED TO TAKE THE OFFICIAL RECORD OF A RECENT MEETING BETWEEN KOFI ANNAN, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS (CENTRE), AND LEE JONG-WOOK, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF WHO.

DENNIS IRVINE, 1926–2005

We were saddened to learn that Dr. Dennis Irvine died on 27 November 2005. He was a true Commonwealth citizen who served on COL's staff as Director of Caribbean Programmes as well as of Materials Acquisition and Development from its early days in July 1989 until July 1994. On his retirement, he returned to Jamaica but continued to assist COL as Co-ordinator of COL's Programmes in the Caribbean from 1994-96 and later as Regional Adviser to COL's President until June 2000.



DENNIS IRVINE

Dennis had a distinguished academic career. After earning a first class honours degree in Chemistry from the Leeds University and a PhD from Cambridge, he began his career at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria where he was first a lecturer and then Professor of Chemistry. He was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Guyana for 13 years and later UNESCO's Science Adviser to the Caribbean and Education Consultant to the Jamaican Government in the 1980s, before joining COL.

Dennis served on the boards of and as a consultant to many national and international agencies. They included UNESCO, UNDP, UNEP, Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) and the Government of Jamaica. Just this year, he was elected founding President of the Caribbean Regional Association for Distance and Open Learning (CARADOL).

In 2002, he was named an Honorary Fellow of COL and received Jamaica's highest national honour, Commander of Distinction.

Dennis is remembered at COL for his wisdom, dedication and commitment. Above all, he was a kind and understanding colleague who became a valued friend of many. We will miss Dennis. Our thoughts are with his wife, Mona, and family to whom we offer our heartfelt condolences.

Lewis Perinbam, O.C.

COL'S HELEN LENTELL (LEFT) PRESENTS A CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE TO DR. EMMA KRUSE VAAI OF SAMOA POLYTECHNIC AT THE "OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE AUSTRALIA PACIFIC REGION" WORKSHOP



MS. HARVINDER KAUR OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF MALAYSIA PRESENTS HER GROUP'S RESEARCH PROPOSAL AT THE DISTANCE EDUCATION RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES WORKSHOP

PACIFIC EXPLORING ODL AND DEVELOPMENT

A group of 35 policy makers, educators and open and distance learning (ODL) practitioners from the Pacific region met in Adelaide in November 2005 to explore the development potential of open and distance education. The meeting was sponsored by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia (ODLAA) and facilitated by Mr. Marquis Bureau and Ms. Helen Lentell for COL. The workshop took place before, during and after ODLAA's biennial conference. This was the first time that aboriginal educators from Australia met with fellow educators from the Pacific Islands. Indeed participants rarely have the opportunity to meet given the large distances involved and the very real challenges travel poses.

Participants defined the form and issues of the workshop using "open space" and much experience and knowledge was shared and friendships built. As a result of the meeting,

PRIDE – the Pacific Islands Association for Distance Education – was revitalised and a list of recommendations was drawn up. The recommendations, recognising the huge challenge of development and nation building faced in the region, saw that ODL is a primary tool for building the most important resource for economic development in the Pacific Islands – the people.

The recommendations covered networking, advocacy, sharing resources, the importance of technical/vocational education and training (TVET), professional development, research, quality provision, funding, technology and digital strategies. COL is working with colleagues in the region to take these recommendations forward.

ASIA INSTITUTE ON OPEN SCHOOLING AT NIOS

COL facilitated a ten-day Institute for Officers of Open Learning at India's National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) in September 2005. Open schooling representatives from Bangladesh, Ghana, Nigeria, Pakistan and Sri Lanka interacted with the various officers and divisions of the NIOS. They also visited regional and study centres in Rajasthan and several other open learning institutions in India, including Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).

By providing open schooling leaders with exposure to the experience of India's institutions, COL is facilitating widespread capacity building.

ASIA-PACIFIC BUILDING RESEARCH CAPACITY IN MALAYSIA

COL and the Open University of Malaysia recently hosted a five-day workshop on research methodology in distance education. Thirty-eight educators from 12 Malaysian institutions were trained in distance education research methodologies, and six project proposals were developed for further investigations. As a result of the workshop, participants are now equipped to carry out similar training independently, publish research reports and enhance the quality of research.

This event was the fourth in a series of research methodology workshops facilitated by COL. The others were held in India, Sri Lanka and Nigeria.

AFRICA COPYRIGHT FORUM CONFERENCE

More than 120 experts in education, library and information science, law and technology from 16 Africa countries, Europe, India, North America and the United Kingdom attended the Africa Copyright Forum Conference in November 2005 in Kampala, Uganda. The pan-African event was jointly organised by the Uganda Library and Information Association (ULIA) and the National Library of Uganda (NLU) and sponsored by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions and COL.

Focussing on "Copyright and Access to Information", the conference explored the important connection between copyright and education, research, innovation, publishing and the creative arts, and protection of indigenous information. There was consensus that developing countries need more balanced and appropriate copyright laws. Conference participants agreed to form an Africa Copyright and Access to Information Alliance and an



HONOURING CARIBBEAN TVET GRADUATES

COL PRESIDENT SIR JOHN DANIEL JOINS TEACHERS FROM THE BAHAMAS WHO ARE THE FIRST GRADUATES OF THE SPECIAL DIPLOMA PROGRAMME IN TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (UTECH) IN JAMAICA. COL, UTECH AND OTHER CARIBBEAN PARTNERS JOINTLY DEVELOPED THE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

UPCOMING EVENTS

5TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WEB-BASED LEARNING (ICWL 2006)

19 - 21 JULY 2006. EVERGREEN LAUREL HOTEL, PENANG, MALAYSIA.
THEME: LIFELONG LEARNING IN A KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY: THE WEB WAY FORWARD. WWW.ICWL.NET

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING

30 OCTOBER - 3 NOVEMBER 2006
OCHO RIOS, JAMAICA
THEME: ACHIEVING DEVELOPMENT GOALS: INNOVATION, LEARNING, COLLABORATION & FOUNDATIONS. WWW.COL.ORG/PCF4

16TH CONFERENCE OF COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION MINISTERS (CCEM)

11-14 DECEMBER 2006
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA.
THEME: ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION: FOR THE GOOD OF ALL



TEACHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS AT THE JOINT MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE IN SINGAPORE

Interim Board was elected to start the process of addressing copyright and related issues in Africa, with particular reference to education, libraries and people with disabilities.

www.col.org/copyright

ASIA

TOWARDS A CULTURE OF QUALITY

Netaji Subhas Open University hosted an international conference, "Towards a Culture of Quality", in Kolkata, India in November. Organised in collaboration with COL and UNESCO, the three-day international conference covered a wide spectrum of issues related to quality assurance in distance education and cross border education. The event brought together government officials from India, open university officials, educational administrators, college principals and a broad representation from people involved in open and distance learning. Open and distance learning leaders from Canada, France, Hong Kong, India, Thailand and the U.K. spoke at the conference.

The combination of growing connectivity and open educational resources has enormous



PROFESSOR BRENDA GOURLEY, VICE CHANCELLOR OF U.K. OPEN UNIVERSITY (LEFT) AND PROFESSOR SURABHI BANNERJEE, VICE CHANCELLOR, NETAJI SUBHASH OPEN UNIVERSITY WERE AMONG THE SPEAKERS AT THE "TOWARDS A CULTURE OF QUALITY" INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN KOLKATA, INDIA

potential for strengthening quality higher education, said COL President Sir John Daniel in his keynote address. He discussed the importance of institutional leadership in ensuring quality and why eLearning should be assessed using criteria already in use rather than new models and approaches.

ASIA

COL-SINGAPORE JOINT MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

The fifth presentation of the Joint Management Development Institute (MDI) for Directors and Principals of Teacher Training Colleges and Institutes in Commonwealth Sub-Saharan Africa organised by COL and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Singapore, was held from in November 2005 in the National Institute of Education (NIE)'s Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Twenty heads of teacher education institutions from 12 Sub-Saharan countries participated in the Institute, which included workshop sessions, talks and visits to different institutions. The focus of the Institute is on innovations and good practices in education and teacher education, especially the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) and open and distance learning (ODL) for teacher education.

Over the past five years, 95 teacher education administrators from all 19 African Commonwealth countries have participated in the Joint Management Development Institute. MFA, Singapore and COL intend to continue to host the Institute in coming years, but are looking forward to an evaluation and impact report, which will be available in March 2006.

CARIBBEAN

SHARING EARNING EXPERTISE

The latest in COL's series of eLearning training workshops took place in Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, in November 2005. Forty managers and academics took part in the three-day workshop held at the University of the West Indies' St. Augustine Campus. COL arranged for eLearning experts from Kenya and South Africa to take part, bringing African expertise to the Caribbean. The workshop focussed on providing the knowledge and tools needed to successfully implement eLearning at the University.



COL PRESIDENT SIR JOHN DANIEL VISITS WITH A STUDENT DURING A SCHOOL TOUR IN FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE, IN NOVEMBER. HE WAS THERE FOR A PLANNING MEETING FOR THE UPCOMING CONFERENCE OF COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION MINISTERS (CCEM) IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA, IN DECEMBER 2006.



CREATING LEARNING MATERIALS FOR OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING: A HANDBOOK FOR AUTHORS & INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNERS

By Richard Freeman

This comprehensive handbook is for anyone who plans and writes learning materials for use in open and distance learning (ODL). The three main target audiences are teachers, instructional designers and writers. This handbook focuses on instructional design, providing both a high level overview, a discussion of key issues and the opportunity for the reader to develop their skills and knowledge in the instructional design of ODL materials.

This is the third in a developing series of handbooks for practitioners of ODL. The previous two titles focus on planning and implementing ODL and tutoring in ODL.

In developing the series, COL seeks to address the need for accessible and practical training materials for professional development in ODL. All three handbooks are fully available at no cost online at: www.col.org/resources/startupguides/odlsystemsHB.htm

STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

Andrea Hope and Patrick Guiton, Editors
November 2005, 181 pages

COL, in association with the British academic publisher RoutledgeFalmer Press, has released the sixth volume in its World Review of Distance Education and Open Learning book series. *Strategies for Sustainable Open and Distance Learning* examines the nature of sustainability in order to provide a guide to successful implementation of open and distance learning (ODL). The book draws heavily on case studies by experienced field practitioners and seeks to use their individual and collective experience to inform analysis of some of the factors that foster adaptability and sustainability of ODL operations. The full text of each of the 18 case studies and information about ordering the book are available at www.col.org/worldreview/volume6.htm.

Strategies for Sustainable Open and Distance Learning is also available, while quantities last, through COL at a 25% discount. For orders from developing Commonwealth countries, shipping charges will be waived. Orders must be accompanied by a prepayment of CDN \$30 (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 Govt, 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

RESOURCE MATERIAL FOR MULTI-GRADE TEACHING

The Commonwealth Secretariat, in collaboration with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), has released a publication geared towards assisting teachers in applying educational techniques at a multi-grade level. The seven-module resource guide was designed as part of a wider effort to assist countries to achieve universal primary education by 2015. It focuses on using limited resources and teaching staff to provide good quality education in a multi-grade setting.

The content focuses on what multi-grade teaching is, why it is needed, its characteristic features, and its advantages and challenges. The modules are presented in an accessible, hands-on interactive format, providing support for both pre-service trainees and in-service teachers. They outline case study formats and exercises for teachers to follow while working in a multi-grade environment.

This title can be purchased online at www.thecommonwealth.org/publications

OPEN SCHOOLING IN FOCUS: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Although he or she may only be called upon once in a while, it is important that facilitators are aware that someone is there to answer any content questions that might arise.

The student-facilitator meetings are often held in learning centres located in libraries, churches, non-governmental organisations

"Today, at least partially because of COL's work, there are new Open Schools being established throughout the developing world..."

(NGOs), schools or other semi-public places. The meetings may be fixed times during a week, or may be held at the students' and facilitators' convenience. Having the learning centres located in local neighbourhoods add to the increased access of the education, especially for girls and women who would

not usually be permitted to travel any distance to a public school. Sometimes the meetings may be virtual, organised through teleconferencing, interactive radio or television broadcasts or e-mail listservs.

The facilitators or experts mark the students' exercises and assignments, and provide feedback designed to assist the students in understanding content when their answers indicate this is required. Sensitive, careful marking is necessary, as it encourages and supports the learners while helping them to understand their mistakes.

Open Schooling is most often offered at the secondary level to students/learners that have achieved a basic level of literacy, although there are some notable exceptions,

such as the Interactive Radio Instruction literacy initiative in Zambia.

The potential of Open Schooling at the primary level is great because of the additional opportunities that are feasible due to the newly available and affordable ICTs. However, more research needs to be undertaken, and new models examined and explored before expansion of Open Schooling at the primary level can be successfully rolled out.

COL recognises the vast opportunities for education and training that can be provided through successful Open Schooling initiatives. We will continue to work to increase the availability and quality of all levels of schooling provided through non-conventional means and to work with local ministries and institutions to help them meet the education and training needs of their most disadvantaged communities.



LOW COST PCs FOR THE DEVELOPING WORLD

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan unveiled the first working prototype of the US\$100 laptop at the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunisia on 16 November 2005. The brainchild of Nicholas Negroponte, chairman and co-founder of the Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the laptop is an ultra-low-cost, full-featured computer. It is the central project of the One Laptop per Child (OLPC) association, which is working to equip the world's schoolchildren and their teachers with a personal, portable, connected computer. OLPC's plan is to design, manufacture and distribute laptops that are inexpensive enough to provide every child in the world access to knowledge and modern education.

The \$100 laptop has a 500-megahertz processor and flash memory instead of a hard drive – so it has no internal moving parts, which reduces both manufacturing and maintenance costs. To save on software costs, the laptops run the freely available Linux operating system. The full-colour, full-screen computers can connect to Wi-Fi wireless networks and be part of “mesh” networks in which each laptop can relay data to and from other devices, reducing the need for expensive base stations. One of the most innovative aspects of the \$100 laptop is a hand crank that can power it when no electricity is available.

Negroponte says he expects production of the \$100 laptop to begin in 2006, with initial distribution to children in Brazil, China, Egypt, South Africa and Thailand.

Meanwhile, a Canadian company has begun manufacturing a Read Only Memory (ROM)-based computer. The Ink-PC has an embedded custom version of the Linux operating system and key application programmes. This avoids the need for software licenses while protecting the computer from viruses and spyware. Files can be saved on a USB device. Fully Internet capable, this computer is Wi-Fi ready, has 256 megabytes of memory and includes five USB ports. The Ink-PC will be priced from US\$180. Mercurial Innovations International Inc. has received large orders from governments and private sector clients in Asia and will begin shipping the first Ink-PCs in 2006.

<http://laptop.media.mit.edu>
www.ink.mi-2.biz

CHOOSING A LMS

A Learning Management System (LMS) is the online environment in which students can read study material, share information with other students, chat with learning facilitators and classmates, and submit assignments. Course materials can be created by simple add-on tools such as OpenOffice Writer or Microsoft Word (word processors) or by using Netscape Composer or Microsoft FrontPage (website editors). With more sophisticated Learning Content Management Systems (LCMSs), content can be uploaded to a learning object repository, which stores all the individual pieces of courseware, or “learning objects”. The institution or person offering the programme can download the learning objects or course material and import them into the institution's LMS.

Institutions looking to acquire an LMS are faced with a choice of some 300 products. Many are free; others cost anywhere from US\$15,000 to over \$150,000. Free, open source LMS software, such as ATutor, KEWL.NextGen and Moodle, is becoming more and more popular as it can also be a learning environment for staff and student programmers and IT professionals. Institutions that work with open source “communities” such as these enjoy the opportunity to have programming staff and learners participate in the further development of these systems. From their student experience, learners often produce valuable programming code to add to the LMS. Learners also gain experience in working in groups, irrespective of

their location. Collaborative software development is an ideal way of exposing and benefiting from the programming pool of talent in developing countries without contributing to the “brain drain”. The AVOIR (African Virtual Open Initiatives and Resources) group of developers is an example of collaboration in software development across Africa.

ATutor is a popular open source web-based LCMS that enables educators to assemble, package and redistribute instructional content, retrieve and import prepackaged content and conduct courses online. Content developers can create reusable content that can be shared among different eLearning systems. Developed in Canada, ATutor is accessible to all potential learners, instructors and

LMS CONTINUED...

administrators, including those with disabilities who are accessing the system using assistive technologies. Institutions across North America, Africa and South Asia are adapting ATutor to suit their specific requirements.

The Knowledge Environment for Web-based Learning (KEWL) is one of the first comprehensive LMSs available as open source. Originally developed by Professor Derek Keats and his team at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa, KEWL is suitable for use in any online learning situation, including schools, corporate training and higher education. It allows institutions to develop and offer online courses.

The latest version, KEWL.NextGen, is a collaborative effort amongst academics and programmers from five African institutions. It uses open, cross-platform standards for maximum compatibility with open source and proprietary servers. KEWL can be used in many languages, including English, Xhosa, Zulu, Italian and Portuguese. It has also been designed for use in the low-bandwidth environment that characterises most developing countries.

Moodle is a free, open source software package course management system used by educators to create effective online learning communities. The U.K. Open University recently chose Moodle as the platform for its Internet-based courses. Starting in mid-2006, Open University students will use Moodle instead of a variety of software to access their course work, interact with tutors and other students, use the library, submit assignments and handle administrative paperwork. This will be the largest use of Moodle in the world. Moodle is also used by Athabasca University in Alberta, Canada.

COL offers a software tool that helps management evaluate LMSs. Through a series of spreadsheets and questions, the tool helps institutions determine which LMS best meets their needs. Created by 3waynet and licensed to COL, this free online tool is available at www.col.org/Consultancies/04LMSEvaluation.htm

www.atutor.ca

<http://kewl.uwc.ac.za>

<http://moodle.org>

AVOIR: <http://jsiu.uwc.ac.za>

OER SURVEY

OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation is carrying out a study on Open Educational Resources (OERs) in higher education. As part of the study they are launching a web-based survey for individual teachers, instructors and researchers using or producing OER. They are inviting anyone working in a higher educational institution that uses or produces open learning content, such as courses, courseware, content modules, learning objects, collections and journals, or open software tools to develop, use, re-use and deliver learning content, to take the survey. It will take 10-15 minutes to complete. Survey participants will receive a free electronic copy of the final report.

The survey is at www2.oecd.org/survey/Surveys/TakeSurvey.aspx?surveyid=1075

www.oecd.org/edu/oer

UNESCO, GNET LAUNCH DECISION SUPPORT TOOL

UNESCO and the Global Distance Education Network (GDENet) have launched an online tool to help people make choices about distance education programmes. Funded by UNESCO as part of their Higher Education Knowledge Base on Open and Distance Learning, the Decision Support Tool was conceptualised by Neil Butcher, an educational consultant with the South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE), and developed by Blue Matrix software.

The purpose of the Decision Support Tool is to assist decision-makers (in international organisations, as well as at the national and institutional level) to make first-level assessments about the viability and quality of new and/or existing distance education programmes. The tool assumes that many of the decision-makers may not be experts in distance education and therefore require a simple, understandable decision-making framework. After completing a questionnaire, users are provided with a set of results that helps them determine whether new or ongoing investments in specific programmes are justified.

Registration is free, so anyone in the public domain can use the Decision Support Tool.

www.africaodl.org

www.gdenet.org/dst



EVALUATING MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTS

When multimedia products fail to deliver results, it is often because the product has not been properly evaluated. In fact, evaluation is a critical element for any project using multimedia for delivery of content.

Any multimedia courseware package merits serious evaluation – both of educational outcomes and medium delivery, explains Dr. Usha Vyasulu Reddi, Director of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) in an informative article on the subject appearing in the June 2005 issue of CEMCA's news publication, *EduCom Asia*. Dr. Reddi examines the types of evaluation, what should be evaluated, methods of data collection and reporting evaluation results.

www.cemca.org/newsletter/jun2005/jun2005.pdf
(page 17)

Connections

FEBRUARY 2006 | VOLUME 11, NUMBER 1

Connections is published by the Commonwealth of Learning. COL is an international organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning/distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.

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EduTech News is written and compiled by David Walker, Paul West and Dave Wilson. Descriptions of products are provided for information only and do not constitute endorsement by COL.

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