Connections

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NEW ZEALAND HOSTS COMMONWEALTH EDUCATORS

COL'S PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING

Over 400 educators and policy makers from over 50 countries attended COL's third Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF3) which was held in Dunedin, New Zealand from 4 to 8 July 2004. Participants, who mostly came from developing Commonwealth countries, focussed their attention on the Forum theme, "Building Learning Communities for Our Millennium: Reaching Wider Audiences through Innovative Approaches", through four working groups that examined latest developments, best practice, emerging issues and research and evaluation. Open and distance learning (ODL) applications in the fields of education, health and local government provided sub-themes for discussion.

In his closing remarks the President of the Commonwealth of Learning, Sir John Daniel, reminded participants that in the world today some one billion adults are illiterate and over a billion children either get no or very little schooling. In their deliberations, participants had insisted on finding ways of reaching a wide audience with quality learning. People are eager for education and will not accept poor or inadequate quality.

PCF3 enabled participants to visit New Zealand's South Island during the middle of its winter and for many this was the first experience to come into contact

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SIR JOHN ARRIVES AT COL

Sir John Daniel arrived in Vancouver at the beginning of June to take on his new role as COL's third President and Chief Executive Officer. He attended his first COL Board of Governors meeting, in Vancouver, two weeks later.

The Chair of COL's Board, Dr. Lewis Perinbam, O.C., took the opportunity while the Board was in Vancouver to host a welcoming reception for Sir John. In addition to Board members, other guests represented the local business, educational and government communities.

In his remarks at the reception, Sir John noted that the "task of leading COL brings together in a remarkable way the different strands of my career", explaining that the focus of COL's work (harnessing the power of open and distance learning for development) is the same goal that he has worked toward when with Télé-université and Athabasca University (both in Canada) and at the U.K. Open University, as well as through his most recent appointment as Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO (another international, intergovernmental body working in education). The theme of his career has also been aligned with the tools of COL's work – the rapidly developing array of educational and communications technologies – ever since he enrolled for a Master's degree in Educational Technology at what was then Sir George Williams University in 1970.

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PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM

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with daytime temperatures as low as 5 to 10°C. The genuine hospitality of the people in New Zealand, the level of support and the social activities were enough to provide warmth on even the coldest of days.

This third Forum followed a significantly different format since only plenary presentations were delivered. No parallel presentations were scheduled, although some participants took advantage of the "speakers' corner"/poster area to talk with smaller audiences. Each day, once the plenary sessions were concluded, participants broke out into their discussion groups and subgroups to debate the Forum themes. Each of the discussion groups was led by a convener who reported back to the conference co-ordinator.

As a four-month lead-up to the discussions at the Forum, COL hosted a series of virtual conferences on the four discussion areas (latest developments, best practice, emerging issues and research and evaluation). About 200 people from around the world participated in each of the virtual forums.

OUTCOMES

Best practice: E-learning was discussed in the PCF3 sessions on best practice and highlighted as requiring "less talking and more delivery" and a more pragmatic approach to its implementation. E-learning needs to cater for people in the "real-world" as opposed to people in the real-world having to alter their existence to sometimes ill-matching technologies created in other parts of the world.

SIR PAUL REEVES, FORMER GOVERNOR GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

Latest Developments: The latest developments agreed with the best practice group and extended the discussions to learning content. If the principle of learner centredness is to be highlighted, educators need to ensure that e-learning content and the technologies implemented are suited to learners. Forum participants felt that placing the learner in the centre included having high-quality materials, meaningful assessments, good interaction and effective communication.

Research and evaluation: The research theme participants distinguished between researcher processes and research topics and then prioritised four research processes: research training, dissemination and communication of results, ownership of the research process and models for good quality research. Priority topics or themes were identified as the effectiveness of ODL methods, barriers to entry and how to overcome them and the question of whether ODL actually reaches the people who are targeted. In his closing remarks, COL's President, Sir John Daniel, emphasised that COL would support the promotion and dissemination of research.

Emerging issues: In the emerging issues working group, the challenge of harnessing ODL for the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (www.developmentgoals.org) was explored. Two key areas are helping smallholder farmers to gain additional skills in agriculture and helping communities improve the health of mothers and children especially by avoiding HIV/AIDS and malaria. Also, as countries begin to achieve universal primary education, large numbers of children will then seek secondary education. Since there will not be enough conventional schools to cater for them, countries will need to consider open schools as part of the solution.

The Millennium Development Goals require that people learn on a massive scale around the world to help eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, improve health (reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and combating diseases), ensure environmental sustainability and develop global partnerships. Events such as the Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning provide a unique opportunity for people from both developed and developing countries, who are working toward the MDGs in their daily lives, to come together and to debate these issues and practical applications. For more on "COL and the MDGs, please see page 10.

The radically different format for this year's Forum will be reviewed in designing the fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning. Most participants wanted the new format retained with some modifications, including the addition of positioning papers at the beginning of each of the main discussion periods. Delegates also asked to be able to change groups from time-to-time. Over 80% of more than 200 PCF3 survey respondents said that they would be better equipped for decision-making with the new knowledge gained from the Forum.

EXCELLENCE IN DE AWARDS

A gala banquet was held during the Forum to announce and honour the 2004 recipients of COL's Excellence in Distance Education Awards (EDEA). Winners of institutional and individual awards, as well as newly named Honorary Fellows of COL, came from nearly every region of the Commonwealth, including the host country. EDEA's Learning Experience Award was a highlight. It was presented to Ms. Swati Wankhede, an assistant teacher at the Sherpada Zilla Parishad Primary School in Maharashtra State, India. Teaching in the remote tribal village of Sherpada, Ms. Wankhede uses her knowledge from several distance education courses to educate her students, their parents and the community in her village. Please see pages 4 and 5 for details on the awards and the recipients.

SUPPORT FOR DELEGATES

More than 150 people from developing Commonwealth countries received subsidies from the organisers to enable them to attend the Forum. The Commonwealth of Learning, the Government of New Zealand, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the British Council, the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the Global Knowledge Partnership provided funds for this purpose. Without the full support of governments and development agencies, people who live in the developing world would not otherwise have a chance to participate in important conferences and discussions affecting their communities – that face some of the world's greatest challenges.

COL received many notes of appreciation. This one, from Dr. Edith Mhehe of The Open University of Tanzania, is typical: "I would like to thank COL very much for the guidance and support to enable me participate fully in this conference. I enjoyed the trip to New Zealand and learned a lot from the conference for personal and my university's development. I am now pushing forward with my women education support service project with better confidence after the conference."

COL thanks the Distance Education Association of New Zealand and Dunedin Conference Management Services for the sterling work they did in ensuring the success of PCF3. The host country and date of PCF4, to be held in 2006, has not yet been determined. Four bids to host PCF4 were received by the deadline and they will be evaluated in the coming months.

www.col.org/pcf3

www.col.org/pcf3/keys.htm

www.col.org/speeches/pcf3_Daniel.htm

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

SIR SHRIDATH RAMPHAL, FORMER COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY-GENERAL

MS. SHONA BUTTERFIELD, NZ TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSIONER

PROFESSOR RUSSELL BISHOP, UNIVERSITY OF WAI'KATO

MR. WALTER ERDELEN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR NATURAL SCIENCES, UNESCO

HONOURABLE MRS. ANN THERESE NDONG-JATTA, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION, THE GAMBIA

SIR JOHN ARRIVES IN VANCOUVER

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JOHN DANIEL

In his remarks that he entitled, "Learning: Our Common Wealth", Sir John also offered the these observations on COL and its work:

While there are a few other international, intergovernmental bodies located in Canada, I am very proud to lead what is, I believe, the only such body actually to have been created here. That was in 1987, when the Commonwealth Heads of Government met here in Vancouver. What an extraordinarily evocative and appropriate name they chose for the new organisation that they decided to create: The Commonwealth of Learning. Learning is indeed our common wealth. That fundamental principle is even clearer, as we move into a 21st century in which knowledge will be the key to prosperity, than it was back in 1987.

Among the Commonwealth Heads of Government who pushed for the creation of COL at that meeting 17 years ago, India's Rajiv Gandhi and his counterpart from Nigeria were particularly vocal and their two countries pledged to make contributions to COL's budget in hard currency. Thus began the focus on open and distance learning for the purpose of national and community development that is the heart of COL's work. This is what I mean by the 'common wealth' of learning. Learning confers benefits to individuals, to be sure, but we must always remember that learning is also a collective endeavour. Our name, the Commonwealth of Learning, captures that brilliantly.

Finally, it will be a great privilege to serve the Commonwealth. For the last three years I have been a proud member of the staff of the United Nations system, travelling the world on a red UN laissez passer. That enriching experience of dealing with the whole world makes me eager to serve a smaller subset of that world, the 53 countries of the Commonwealth. Those countries, which account for a significant proportion of the world's population, are hugely varied. The Commonwealth includes rich countries and poor countries. It includes countries that that are continental and sub-continental in size alongside numerous small island states with tiny populations.

But the countries of the Commonwealth are united, in this diversity, by great common bonds, which you can express as the three 'L's': law, language and learning. The countries of the Commonwealth share traditions in law, language and learning that make collaboration between them particularly natural and fruitful. I have been proud to do my bit, in the UN system, to help countries like Afghanistan and Iraq get back on their feet. However, it will be very satisfying to work with the countries of the Commonwealth, which are mostly at peace and getting on with the task of development in a steady and determined manner.

I am highly impressed by the energy and skills of my new colleagues at the Commonwealth of Learning. We are a small organisation but we are very focussed and I am sure that, with your support, we shall do much to assist the development of Commonwealth countries. The challenge is to eliminate poverty and to create nations of healthy, educated people.

Fundamentally, development is about freedom. The measure of development is the degree to which we increase the freedoms that people can enjoy. Freedom is also the means of development, for it is the free agency of free people that develops families, communities and nations. Education is the high road to freedom and thus to development. I shall do everything I can to ensure that the Commonwealth of Learning, from its base here in Vancouver, becomes one of the world's most effective agencies for development.

www.col.org/jdaniel

RECOGNISING EXCELLENCE

COL'S 2003/2004 EXCELLENCE IN DISTANCE EDUCATION AWARDS WINNERS

THE HONORARY FELLOWS OF COL

BACK: PROFESSOR VASIREDDY SIVALINGA PRASAD, PROFESSOR BADRI N. KOUL, PROFESSOR PETER E. KINYANJUI, MS. SHONA BUTTERFIELD (COL BOARD MEMBER REPRESENTING NEW ZEALAND, 2002 HONORARY FELLOW RECIPIENT AND PRESENTER OF THE 2004 AWARDS), SIR JOHN DANIEL (COL PRESIDENT)
FRONT: DR. H. IAN MACDONALD, PROFESSOR CLIFFORD D. BLAKE (2002 RECIPIENT), MS. JANET JENKINS

On 6 July 2004, COL held a gala awards banquet to announce the 2004 recipients of the Excellence in Distance Education Awards (EDEA). The third EDEA were conferred at the third Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Dunedin New Zealand. Winners came from nearly every region of the Commonwealth including the host country.

COL's Excellence in Distance Education Awards (EDEA) includes four categories, acknowledging excellence occuring at the overall institutional level, in the development of learning materials, of a lifetime's work as an educator and in student accomplishment.

Further information and full citations are available on COL's website. *www.col.org/edea*

HONORARY FELLOWS OF COL

The designation of Honorary Fellow of COL recognises outstanding individual contributions to distance education in the following categories: leadership/service, published works (including courseware), lectures/presentations, international/national presence and mentorship.

- **MS. JANET JENKINS**, author, trainer, consultant in open and distance learning for development and former senior staff member of the Commonwealth of Learning, Colchester, U.K.
- **PROFESSOR PETER E. KINYANJUI**, Commissioner of Human Development in the e-Africa Commission of the New Partnership in Africa's Development (NEPAD), consultant in open and distance learning for development and former senior staff member of the Commonwealth of Learning, Nairobi, Kenya.
- **PROFESSOR BADRI N. KOUL**, author, consultant in open and distance learning for development, former Director of Distance Education, University of the West Indies, former Head of Distance Education/Open Learning, Tertiary Education Commission, Mauritius and former Director of the Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education, Indira Gandhi National Open University, India.
- **DR. H. IAN MACDONALD**, O.C., President Emeritus, Professor of Economics and Public Policy and Director, Master of Public Administration Program, York University, and former Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Commonwealth of Learning, Toronto, Canada.
- **PROFESSOR VASIREDDY SIVALINGA PRASAD**, Director, National Assessment and Accreditation Council, Bangalore, India, and former Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Indira Gandhi National Open University, India, and former Vice Chancellor of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, India.

INSTITUTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

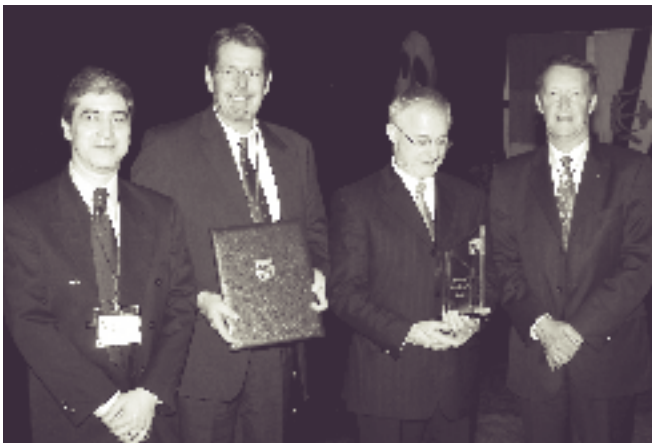
The Awards of Excellence for Institutional Achievement recognise significant institutional achievements in the innovative and effective application of learning technologies and open and distance learning (ODL) methodologies to reach students who might otherwise not have participated in the learning or training experience.

- **THE OPEN POLYTECHNIC OF NEW ZEALAND** — Accepted by Dr. Paul Grimwood, Chief Executive
- **UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND** — Accepted by Professor William Lovegrove, Vice Chancellor

PHOTO CREDIT: REG GRAHAM, ALL PCF & EDEA IMAGES ON PAGES 1-5

MAORI DANCERS PROVIDE CULTURAL ENTERTAINMENT AT THE AWARDS BANQUET

DISTANCE EDUCATION MATERIALS WINNERS LEFT TO RIGHT: MR. GARY FLETCHER (PEARSON COLLEGE), PROF. LES EASTCOTT (UNPG), MR CHRIS BAKER (UKOU) WITH PROFESSOR MOHAN MENON, CHAIR OF MATERIALS AWARD SELECTION COMMITTEE (COL)



INSTITUTIONAL WINNER PROFESSOR WILLIAM LOVEGROVE, VICE CHANCELLOR UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND, AND HIS COLLEAGUES WITH SIR JOHN DANIEL

INSTITUTIONAL WINNER DR. PAUL GRIMWOOD, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, THE OPEN POLYTECHNIC OF NEW ZEALAND (CENTRE) WITH SIR JOHN DANIEL AND PROFESSOR ASHA KANWAR, CHAIR OF INSTITUTIONAL AWARD SELECTION COMMITTEE (COL)

DISTANCE EDUCATION MATERIALS

The Awards of Excellence for Distance Education Materials recognises excellence in distance education materials produced by publicly funded or not-for-profit organisations of Commonwealth countries. There are two categories under this award:

Category A: materials as part of a distance education course/programme.

- **BACHELOR OF MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC POLICY** – A professional undergraduate degree programme for employees of public service and non-governmental organisations submitted by New Guinea Open College, University of Papua New Guinea. Accepted by Prof. Les Eastcott.
- **UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN** – An innovative and multi-disciplinary course in the Openings Programme which seeks to make use of students' experiential knowledge submitted by the Centre for Widening Participation of The Open University, U.K. Accepted by Mr. Chris Baker.

Category B: multi-media materials supporting non-formal education.

- **RACEROCKS.COM** – An Internet-based community outreach programme on the Race Rocks Ecological Reserve and Marine Protected Area submitted by Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific. Accepted by Mr. Garry Fletcher

DISTANCE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The Award recognises a life-changing experience through open and distance learning and how that experience has subsequently impacted the learner's contribution to his/her institution and country.

MS. SWATI WANKHEDE, Assistant Teacher, Zilla Parishad Primary School, India

Living and teaching in the small and remote village of Sherpada Mrs. Wankhede's only access to professional development is through open and distance learning means. She completed the Bachelor of Education programme offered by the Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, YCMOU by distance learning.

Mrs. Swati Wankhede has applied the knowledge gained through open and distance learning, to directly benefit her students, their parents and the people of Maharashtra.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE AWARD MS. SWATI WANKHEDE (CENTRE) WITH SIR JOHN DANIEL, PRESIDENT OF COL; AND MS. ANGELA KWAN, CHAIR OF LEARNER EXPERIENCE AWARD SELECTION COMMITTEE (COL)

A VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH

AN UPDATE FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

BACKGROUND

The idea of creating a virtual university for the small states of the Commonwealth emerged in discussions between Ministers at the 14th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers of Education (CCEM) held in Halifax, Canada in November 2000. At that time the 'dot-com frenzy' was at its peak and the press was full of stories about the revolutionary changes that online technologies would bring to all aspects of life – most notably to education.

Education Ministers from the small states, fearing that their countries would be left behind in the online world for want of the critical mass of human and financial resources properly to exploit the new technology, proposed collective action in the form of a virtual university for small states. Later in the CCEM meeting the Ministers asked the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to develop the concept further.

Aided by a Technical Advisory Committee, COL then developed a proposal for a virtual university. A small group of Ministers of Education met in the Seychelles in March 2003 to review the proposals and presented them, with a supportive communiqué, to the 15th CCEM, held in Edinburgh in October 2003. The proposal described the vision of the virtual university as follows:

The vision that is proposed for a virtual university serving small states is that of a consortium of institutions, enabled by appropriate ICT applications, working together in practical ways to plan programmes, develop the required content and ensure the delivery of those programmes and support services to learners.

The proposal also noted that the virtual university:

- is not being proposed as a university in the conventional institutional sense;
- will be as much concerned with "adding value" to conventional on-campus instruction as with serving learners at a distance.

At the conclusion of the 15th CCEM the Ministers stated that they:

…endorsed the proposal, requested at the 14CCEM, for a Virtual University for Small States, designed to offer opportunities for expanded access to education, teacher training and upgrading, and which may also benefit other regions and states of the Commonwealth. Ministers decided that COL should take leadership of this capacity-building initiative, and collaborate with existing resource institutions in member countries. In order for this initiative not to be a burden on COL, Ministers directed COL to work with the Commonwealth Secretariat to identify sources of funding to take this concept forward.

Further details on this background and the Report to Education Ministers is available on COL's web site at *www.col.org/Consultancies/02virtualu.htm*

CURRENT SITUATION

The changing world of e-learning

Partly because of a change of president at COL in July 2004, relatively little follow-up work on the global organisational aspects of a virtual university has been done since the 15th CCEM. COL is now returning to this task in a climate very different from that of the dot-com frenzy of 2000. Expectations of the role of online technology in education have now been tempered by experience in the use of e-learning from which a number of conclusions can be drawn.

First, there has been a steady expansion of the use of e-learning in all types of institutions. In the majority of cases it is acting as a complement to existing methods of teaching and learning, rather than replacing them.

Second, however, the title of a recent report, Thwarted Innovation: What Happened to e-learning and Why? (Zemsky and Massy, 2004) indicates that results have fallen short of expectations. "e-learning was an interesting idea that simply got hyped to the point that it created expectations that couldn't be met", says Zemsky, "e-learning is a real revolution. It will just happen more slowly, more painfully. And the challenge now is for advocates to deliver more and promise less".

Third, most attempts to create new institutions based solely on e-learning have not been successful. Some have folded or been closed, like the UK's e-Universities project and New York University's NYUOnline, others have evolved into multi-media distance teaching programmes. Two of the largest users of e-learning, each with over 100,000 students online, are the UK Open University and the US University of Phoenix. In both cases e-learning is simply one aspect of a broadly-based student experience that is organised at scale.

Fourth, the provision of the technology and courseware for e-learning does not, in and of itself, change the habits of either teachers or students. Both groups require training if they are fully to exploit the potential of e-learning.

Fifth, the most effective applications of e-learning tend to be in skills training. The UK's misnamed University for Industry, now called learndirect, has, since 2000, attracted over a million learners to improve their skills and knowledge in many areas, mostly employment related and not at tertiary level. However, with hundreds of learning centres around the UK, learndirect is not a pure e-learning model.

Sixth, there has been a steady evolution in the technology and platforms that support e-learning and virtual education. However, although systems are becoming easier to use and present fewer challenges of compatibility, Zemsky still finds that "one of the impediments to keeping online learning from moving into every facet of education is the lack of a standardised format or software tool for creating online enhancements".

Finally, there has been widespread development of content for e-learning and some progress in making this content adaptable and re-usable through the notion of learning objects. Alongside this an open courseware movement, that will facilitate the sharing of content and learning materials, is gathering support.

COL's role in technical developments

COL already helps institutions in small countries to apply electronic technologies to their needs such as, to give just one example, the expansion of technical and vocational education and training in the Pacific island states of Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and Kiribati. COL has also created a course to train e-learning practitioners how to create learning content online and facilitate online learning. This may be offered either in a fully online format or in a computer laboratory as COL is doing in Kenya in collaboration with the African Virtual University.

A round table on the establishment of a learning object repository (LOR) has been held in South Africa with Schoolnet Africa and another will be held in India in August by the University Grants Commission. This is expected to lead to national repositories of learning content. COL is striving to ensure that international standards are applied in the design of LORs to facilitate transferability of content between institutions and countries.

Open source programmes have been developed to support both learning management and the storage of learning content (LORs). Many countries are beginning to take advantage of the available open source programmes

and COL has responded to this in three ways.

First, COL has reviewed the available open source Learning Management Systems (LMSs). COL hosts an open source LMS and runs training programmes to support countries in expanding their available skills in e-learning.

Second, COL has created a decision support tool to assist those wishing to choose between a range of LMSs. This tool is designed for decision makers needing to consider and choose between seemingly similar software products.

Third, COL has been working closely with the Canadian open source community responsible for the development of software for LORs. In this last area, Canada is sharing its substantial investments in development with other countries in order to facilitate the emergence of a global network of interoperable LORs.

These activities have provided a platform for materials development and sharing using standardised multimedia tools and training to supplement print-based instruction. Designing a common platform for educational development cuts costs, especially in small states where capacity and infrastructure are limited. Such work, which strengthens local institutions and enhances collaboration between them, must be the basis of the development of a virtual university.

A NEW APPROACH

Against this background COL will now take a different and more gradual approach to the development of a virtual university of small states than the earlier documents foresaw. Although the planning process they recommended was not entirely 'top down', the early proposal did emphasise the challenge of organising and funding a consortium spanning the world.

More recent developments indicate that a bottom-up approach will be more productive and easier to fund and manage. COL will therefore start by helping selected educational and training institutions in small states to make greater use of electronic technology in their teaching activities. COL is already doing this in a number of small states and can recommend systems that facilitate networking with other states facing similar challenges. Because it is an extension of what is being done already this work can generally be carried out within COL's regular budget. It can be speeded up if donors choose to support developments in particular small states.

As the number of small-state institutions using virtual methods grows, COL will facilitate the creation of coordinating mechanisms to ensure the efficient sharing of technology and materials. However, unlike the top-down approach that would begin with these mechanisms, the bottom-up approach will simply help them to emerge as needed. The first requirement will be for effective technical cooperation rather than common governance structures, something that COL has done successfully on many occasions. Should it prove desirable to have common qualifications or assessment frameworks in some skill or topic areas, COL could advise on how to set them up without creating a new institution.

Special emphasis will be given to:

- Common standards – which enable collaboration between institutions and countries;
- Sharable resources – both sharable learning content, computer programmes and systems that can facilitate increased speed of innovation in education in small states;
- Management development – to address the challenges of change management and help decision makers create environments in which professional educators can work effectively.

FUNDING

At the Edinburgh CCEM, Ministers directed COL to work with the Commonwealth Secretariat to identify sources of funding to take forward the concept of the virtual university of small states. Subsequent work has revealed that donor countries are not enthusiastic about funding the organisational aspects of the international consortium. They doubt that such an investment would advance their own development funding priorities and they are leery of committing ongoing support to a new international organisation.

However, the same donors – and the small states themselves – are interested in funding the modernisation and expansion of educational and training institutions that already exist, especially where the output of these institutions directly contributes to the country's development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Such initiatives at the local level in individual small states are part and parcel of COL's ongoing work and can draw in the normal way on its core funding, extra budgetary funding and appropriate contracts.

THE WAY FORWARD

Experience with e-learning since 2000 argues for a gradual and careful approach to the expansion of the use of this technology. The

focus must be on the knowledge and skills acquired by learners and not on the introduction of technology for its own sake. The following conditions need to be met:

- Governments of small states should select and propose to COL a limited number of existing institutions that have the potential to use new learning technologies successfully on a wider scale and are eager to do so;
- These governments and institutions, in consultation with COL, should agree on priority areas where knowledge and skills need to be expanded within the population – most will likely not be at university degree level;
- COL should draw on its extensive experience to propose both technical means for enhancing the technology available to institutions and any existing learning materials that can be acquired or adapted to local conditions;
- COL should also consult with the larger states (e.g., India) that have expressed interest in helping with this initiative in order to clarify the nature of their assistance;
- Agreements between the Government, the institutions, COL and any participating donors would lay out the scope, scale and funding of the initiative in a perspective of long-term sustainability;
- COL would propose, for each participating small state, a programme of training to accompany the introduction of the new approach. Experience shows that without this technology-mediated instruction improves neither pedagogy nor learning;
- COL would facilitate communication and information sharing between participating states and arrange to share, on a regular basis, the lessons being learned around the world from the development of technology-mediated education in general and e-learning in particular; and
- In its work on repositories of learning objects COL would pay particular attention to the interests of participating institutions and states.

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MAKING THE GRADE: ODL FOCUS IN MOZAMBIQUE

TUTORING SESSION AT NAMIALO LEARNING CENTRE

TAKING THE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Portuguese-speaking Mozambique is one of the Commonwealth's newest members. Joining in 1995, sponsored by the several Commonwealth countries that surround it in Southern Africa, it has one of the world's lowest Gross National Products (GNP), a life expectancy (at birth) of 39.2 years and an adult literacy rate of 45.2% (2001 figures from UNDP's Human Development Indicators, 2003) – but these figures are improving as Mozambique is also one of the world's most notable countries in its tenacious dedication to educational, economic and social advancement. Mozambique has taken the initiative to form strategic development partnerships, actively participating alongside Commonwealth and other African neighbours in the Southern African Development Community (SADC; *www.sadc.int*) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD; *www.nepad.org*), among others. Mozambique and its Ministries of Education and Higher Education, Science and Technology are firmly committed to the country's long-term development plans despite setbacks, including disastrous flooding in 2000–2001 that destroyed school buildings, crops and infrastructure.

COL IN MOZAMBIQUE

The Mozambique Government and Ministry of Education (MinEd) maintain a "can do" approach toward meeting Education for All goals for an estimated 4.5 million school-age children and youth, forging ahead with establishing a national, fully integrated open and distance learning (ODL) education system as a core component of an ambitious Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP). COL has responded to Mozambique's education challenge and is one of the country's key development implementation partners, providing expertise for the just-launched national Secondary Education by Distance Education pilot programme and as co-ordinator of the recently concluded Course in Training and Professional Development in Distance Education for practitioners and administrators.

SEDE STUDENT

TOWARD A NATIONAL ODL SYSTEM

COL had begun collaboration with MinEd on an Out-of-School Secondary Education project (OSSE; *www.col.org/clippings/mozambique.htm*) in 1998, with funding assistance from the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID; *www.dfid.gov.uk*). OSSE was based on recommendations from an earlier feasibility study by COL and other regional agencies.

Why a secondary school-level project? Among other factors, Mozambique's statistically high number of secondary school-age and out-of-school youth was a decisive determinant. Also, given the developing world's current focus on basic education, COL was interested in demonstrating how ODL could be used to provide opportunities for larger numbers of youth and adults who will find it difficult to continue their schooling once they have completed primary education.

Mozambique is firmly committed to its long-term development plans

COL collaborated closely with the MinEd project manager, Mr. Anisio Matangala, on management, administration, training and course design, the latter with the assistance of a Portuguese-speaking instructional designer, Ms. Rosario Passos, working from Vancouver, Canada.

Originally projected for a four-year run, with staggered student enrolment beginning in early 2001, the OSSE would phase in a Grade 8–10 curriculum of up to 27 courses based on the MinEd secondary education syllabus for delivery through regional learning centres. Target learner groups included out-of-school young adults, girls and women, primary teachers without secondary education, and district administrative officers.

ODL FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION

While OSSE became partially sidetracked by an interim diversion of resources to flood-related humanitarian effort and infrastructure recovery in 2000–2001, COL and MinEd subsequently worked toward a renamed update: the recently launched Secondary Education by Distance Education pilot programme (SEDE).

About 1,000 teachers, students, tutors, learning centre supervisors, community representatives, district directors and the media attended the SEDE launch ceremony at a learning centre in the Namialo district of Mozambique's highly populated Nampula province, with keynote speeches by Mozambique's Minister of Education, the Honourable Dr. Alcido Eduardo Nguenha, and the Provincial Governor of Nampula.

Minister Nguenha noted in his address that the SEDE would contribute significantly to the expansion of secondary education in the country by opening up access opportunities to those unable to enrol in a school, and urged Mozambicans to support the SEDE initiative.

The programme has encountered further difficulties and delays but it is also showing successes. Students and participating communities are enthusiastic about it and initial student test results have been encouraging, according to the provincial SEDE manager. The programme's current cohort of 250 students is enrolled in five learning centres throughout Nampula, in groups of about 50 each. The students receive Grade 8-level instruction through print materials, supported by trained tutors, peer study initiatives, audio-visual aids and scientific laboratory kits/experiments.

MANAGING ODL SYSTEMS

The success of any ODL initiative, including programmes like the SEDE, is reliant on support from a strong education infrastructure; in many cases, existing systems must be re-evaluated or redesigned for ODL compatibility, new systems implemented as needed, and personnel trained. COL recognises and addresses these fundamental requirements with a specific programming focus on ODL systems development in its Three-year Plan, 2003-2006, Building Capacity in Open and Distance Learning (*www.col.org/programmes/reporting/3year_plan.htm*).

To help galvanise Mozambique's national ODL strategy, COL firstly conducted a short

COURSE IN TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION: PARTICIPANTS USING WALL CHARTS FACILITATE DISCUSSIONS (LEFT) AND PARTICIPANTS RECORDING A RADIO SPOT (RIGHT)

training/orientation programme for senior managers that took place last year, and then won a World Bank-funded contract to design, co-ordinate and deliver – in collaboration with Mozambique's Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology and its Distance Education Task Force (CIINED) and addressing their defined needs – a nine-month, full time Course in Training and Professional Development in Distance Education. Held in Maputo, it was attended by representatives from key organisations and institutions, including the two Education Ministries, Eduardo Mondlane University, Universidade Pedagogica (Pedagogical University), the Higher Polytechnic and University Institute (ISPU); the Academy of Police Sciences (ACIPOL), the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of State Administration. The programme's objective was to equip a core, supportive group of practitioners and administrators with the knowledge and skills to assess ongoing ODL needs from a broader perspective, and to implement ODL strategies and systems in the long term.

One of the difficulties encountered was that of the original 51 people enrolled in the course, 12 were unable to continue after starting it.

COL's delivery of the programme was assisted through collaboration with the Higher Education Ministry, the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE; *www.saide.org.za*), the British Council (*www.britcoun.org*) and other partners who provided field advisory and monitoring support. The programme was geared mainly toward the assessed training needs of Mozambique's new National Institute for Distance Education (INED) – an autonomous organisation soon to be established by the Government of Mozambique (with COL's support) to manage ODL human resource, methodology and infrastructure development. The training emphasised honing critical skills such as research, analysis and organisation, along with teamwork and group work, as core elements of programme participation and delivery.

The 39 participants who completed the course received Certificates at a May 2004 closing ceremony, attended by dignitaries including Mozambique's Vice-Minister of Education, the Honourable Dr. Telmina Manuel Paixão Pinho Pereira; Mr. Adalberto Alberto, representative of the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology; ISPU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Lourenço do Rosário; ACIPOL Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Mr. Alberto Mondlane; and CIINED Co-ordinator, Dr. Arnaldo Nhavoto. Dr. Nhavoto is currently at COL in Vancouver on a three-month professional secondment.

PROFESSIONAL ODL TRAINING

Consistent with ODL principles, the training programme's "hands on" approach focussed on small group discussion, individual projects and research, peer review and self-assessment. The English and Portuguese course texts and suggested reading material explored a comprehensive spectrum of ODL topics, issues and best practice, including aspects of ODL planning, management and implementation; student centred learning, including student support; quality assurance-related issues, such as assessment and evaluation structures; costs and budgeting; dual-mode delivery; institutional collaboration and co-operation; and any INED-specific needs.

> *COL is one of Mozambique's key education development partners.*

Local and international guest speakers offered expert insight into the ODL topics covered. COL-contracted consultants facilitated the course sessions, working closely with a staff of five ODL-experienced training assistants to provide overall guidance that included helping participants – all of whom held higher education degrees – maintain the focus and structure of group discussion and individual projects. The latter accounted for a substantial percentage in the programme's marking scheme, designed through consultation, research and consensus by the participants themselves.

To meet the fundamental challenge of delivering a fully bilingual programme, COL supervised the translation of English texts into Portuguese; ensured that training assistants were fluently bilingual; and that interpreters and translators were available to facilitators and participants. The British Council was also on hand to provide English lessons, as necessary.

How effective was the training programme? Final grades for the course, awarded by a jury of peers that included a training assistant, a CIINED member and an external moderator, reflected the participants' considerable enthusiasm. In an evaluation report, programme supervisors, Mr. Sid Verber and Dr. Barbara Spronk, noted that group discussions were lively and challenging, and that many participants produced individual projects that exceeded the programme's requirements: "If [the participants] had not bought into the participatory approach, nothing we could have done would have produced the results that we saw."

BUILDING ON AN ODL FOUNDATION

Based on the encouraging result in Mozambique, and taking into account lessons learned from there, COL expects to adapt the Course in Training and Professional Development in Distance Education for use in other countries and regions as an ODL management and systems training tool, delivered in collaboration with local and international partners.

Ongoing plans for the SEDE include adapting and designing Grade 9-10 curriculum courses for delivery and purchasing more learning support materials and vehicles, contingent on funding approval. Also slated for implementation are a programme evaluation and monitoring system, as well as training for additional tutors and support staff.

SEDE INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER ROSARIO PASSOS CARES FOR A CHILD WHOSE MOTHER IS VISITING THE LEARNING CENTRE

Consistent with Mozambique's strategic education plan goals, INED is working to establish a national network of 11 ODL resource centres and has defined plans for a number of priority pilot projects, including in-service training for secondary school teachers (led by Universidade Pedagogica), developing learning materials for upper secondary education (Grades 11 and 12) for youth and adults (led by MinEd), a preparatory course for entry into higher education (led by the Higher Polytechnic and University Institute), and a pilot course on Management at the higher education level (led by Eduardo Mondlane University).

Votos de sucesso para Moçambique!

COL IN ACTION

COL AND THE MDGs

World leaders, meeting at the United Nations in 2000, set eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that aim to transform the condition of humankind in the 21st century. These Goals now guide the policies of Governments and the priorities of development agencies (*www.developmentgoals.org*).

Achieving the MDGs will require a massive expansion of human learning. Traditional methods of education and training cannot address the scope and scale of the task. Technology has already revolutionised other areas of human life and the world must now harness it to learning and teaching.

COL is the only international intergovernmental agency that focuses exclusively on using technology to expand the scope and scale of human learning. It operates on the premise that knowledge is the key to individual freedom and to cultural, social and economic development. It helps Governments to develop policies that make innovation sustainable and to build systems or applications that expand learning and works in partnership with other international and bilateral organisations working on the MDGs.

COL is a small agency. It achieves high impact through its focus on technology; placing special emphasis on open and distance learning (ODL) because of its proven effectiveness.

COL starts from the premise that the use of human reason, and the knowledge that flows from it, is the key to enabling all people to enjoy healthy and decent lives. As a world leader in the new field of knowledge management, COL has a special mission to help people access and use knowledge that can help them.

The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals does not depend on knowledge and learning alone. Political decisions, for example to make trading arrangements more equitable for developing countries, also have a vital role. However, ready access to usable knowledge can enable people in developing countries, from farmers to academics, to take rapid advantage of favourable changes.

Development depends on the creation, dissemination and application of knowledge by everyone. COL believes that technology can greatly facilitate these processes. The techniques of open and distance learning give farmers the know-how to improve their livelihoods and rural women the knowledge to raise a healthy family. Schoolnets create communities of practice among teachers and give children access to the best materials. e-learning and the knowledge media are gradually enriching the curriculum for all universities.

COL is an effective partner in combining knowledge and technology to advance development.

A new brochure that describes COL's work programme as it relates to the Millennium Development Goals is available online or upon request.

www.col.org/mdg

COL AND IICD

COL has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) to officially confirm their partnership in the area of information and communications technologies (ICTs) for education.

IICD assists developing countries to realise locally owned sustainable development by harnessing the potential of ICTs.

COL has been working with IICD since January 2003 and sharing each other's knowledge and networks. In Zambia, COL and IICD have been supporting the Government in formulating an ICT policy for the education sector. Both organisations also collaborated together with other agencies and NGOs to convene the ICTs in African Schools Workshops in Botswana in April/May 2003. While closely working together both organisations discovered other potential areas of co-operation.

In the MoU, COL and IICD agree on four shared principles:

- The exchange of ideas between cultures and increasing cultural diversity is an opportunity, not a threat.
- Education, in any form, plays an essential role in development (as is reflected in the UN Millennium Development Goals) and in the establishment of a society based on respect for diversity and human rights.
- New ICTs offer enormous potential to speed up development processes, facilitate learning and create global communities that assist the alleviation of poverty.
- The "Information Society" is becoming a reality all over the world, which calls for "ICT literacy" and information skills in the education system and for society as a whole.

COL and IICD are now also working with the Ministry of Education in Tanzania in support of developing an ICT policy, providing assistance in the establishment of a SchoolNet Zambia, helping to co-ordinate a teacher training system for East Africa and hosting an electronic discussion on ICTs for education.

www.iicd.org

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY UPDATE

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CONCLUSION

Improving education and training can contribute to development and the reduction of poverty in the small states of the Commonwealth. Appropriate technologies, including e-learning, can contribute to that improvement if properly designed and implemented.

Furthermore, by allowing them to participate in the globally networked world, the introduction of these technologies can give an important psychological boost to institutions in small states. Given the inevitable disappointments that followed the excessive expectations vested in e-learning five years ago, small states should now worry less about being left behind technologically and more about how to benefit from the lessons of the brief but chequered history of e-learning in the rest of the world.

Provided that these lessons are learned, growing a virtual university from the grassroots, instead of putting in place its international organisational framework first, will maximise development benefits. By encouraging a diversity of approaches this approach will also help the community of small states to identify good practice.

NEXT STEP

COL will now approach the Ministers of Education of small states on this basis and canvass their interest in taking part in this programme for harnessing the potential of online learning to the development of the small states of the Commonwealth.

Sir John Daniel
President & CEO,
Commonwealth of Learning
www.col.org/04virtualu.htm

PEOPLE

SAMOAN WINS IGNOU GOLD MEDAL

TAUVAGA VAAI (LEFT) WITH THE HONOURABLE FIAMÉ NAOMI MATA'AFA, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SAMOA, AND COL BOARD MEMBER.

Several hundred Indian and international students have been working toward a Post-Graduate Diploma in Distance Education (PGDDE) through the distance education programme offered by India's Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), which leads to a Master of Arts in Distance Education (MADE) degree. Forty-five of them are sponsored by COL under its Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme (RGFS), which provides the professional development opportunity to open and distance learning (ODL) practitioners in selected Commonwealth countries (nominated by Ministries of Education). Of the 750 students who earned their diploma this year, including most of the COL-sponsored group, the Gold Medallist – achieving the highest mark on his final exam – was **Mr. Tauvaga Vaai**, an RGFS fellow, who is a member of the ODL team at Samoa Polytechnic.

The Medal was awarded to Mr. Vaai, in absentia, during IGNOU's 15th Convocation in March, and presented to him during a Samoa Polytechnic Council dinner later in the month by Samoa's Minister for Education, **the Honourable Fiamé Naomi Mata'afa**, who is also the Pacific Region representative on COL's Board of Governors.

Two of Mr. Vaai's colleagues on the Polytechnic's ODL team are also taking the programme under RGFS sponsorship and earned their PGDDE at the same time. "It was not easy for us," he recalled: "Although we have the full support of the institution we serve, we have our academic obligations such as full time teaching loads, training to conduct, curriculum to develop and administrative work. It was a struggle for all of us. My schedule was (and still is) hectic. Aside from that, distance learning is not that easy compared to the classroom setting we are used to. Here, we have to do our research, consult with our supervisor and do a lot of analysis, synthesis and evaluation relating to research work and other summative assessments in the programme. We have to put our best foot in because we must depend on our own initiative and effort, no spoon-feeding from our tutor and to come up with the best academic assignments. We were studying five courses that required research projects … What really helped us was our team work. We had peer interactions, and peer study group. These were opportunities for us to share academic aspects of the programme. The support of our local tutor/supervisor, **Dr. Emma Kruse-Vaai**, has been great during our struggle."

Mr. Vaai intends to continue in the programme up to the completion of the Masters degree. He sees himself working fulltime as an ODL course developer. "With the qualifications that we are pursuing, the capacity of Samoa Polytechnic to offer courses through the ODL mode, will be strengthened. So far, Samoa Polytechnic has already offered two ODL courses. One was to our local clientele and the other one was to the regional countries of the Pacific, on "Supporting Distance Learning though Policy Development."

"I would like to see an ODL unit operating in full swing. I believe that ODL mode has social and academic credibility and should be given full support from the Government and the community. If ODL mode is widely accepted, I believe that it will definitely increase access to learning, for all the members of the community and it will break down the barrier of elitism in education."

Congratulations, Tauvaga, and also to other RGFS fellows!

DHANARAJAN RETIRES FROM COL

GAJARAJ (RAJ) DHANARAJAN IN NIGERIA EARLIER THIS YEAR, AT A CEREMONY WHERE HE WAS NAMED A FELLOW OF NIGERIA'S NATIONAL TEACHER'S INSTITUTE (NTI), WITH DR. AHMED MODIBBO MOHAMMED, NTI'S DIRECTOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEFT), AND HIS EXCELLENCY GENERAL (RTD) OLUSEGUN OBASANJO, PRESIDENT OF NIGERIA (RIGHT). SHORTLY AFTER NIGERIA'S COMMONWEALTH MEMBERSHIP SUSPENSION WAS LIFTED IN 1999, PRESIDENT OBASANJO PERSONALLY REQUESTED RAJ TO LEAD A COL DELEGATION TO ADVISE AND TO ASSIST NIGERIA IN THE REFORM OF ITS EDUCATION SYSTEM AND THE INTEGRATION OF ODL INTO IT.

COL's second President and Chief Executive Officer, **Dato' Professor Gajaraj (Raj) Dhanarajan**, retired from COL on 31 May 2004.

When Raj joined COL as President and CEO he left a large, well established and securely financed institution to head a fledgling agency with a small staff and uncertain financial resources. He vigorously met the challenge of fashioning a creative and dynamic international, intergovernmental organisation that would demonstrate the value and the potential of open and distance learning (ODL) in the advancement of education and development in the Commonwealth – and one that would respond swiftly and effectively to the demands and needs of Commonwealth countries and their Governments.

He succeeded in doing both, so that today COL is recognised as the premier international organisation in using ODL for development purposes. In many parts of the Commonwealth there is widespread testimony to COL's efforts, under Raj's leadership, to harness ODL as a vital force for development purposes and to transform conventional and sometimes outdated education systems to meet contemporary needs.

Pioneer, innovator and risk taker – these are the marks of Raj's leadership and vision. Quick to seize opportunities he made COL a results-driven organisation long before results-based management came into vogue.

Raj leaves behind him an extraordinary legacy that enables COL to face the future with confidence. There could be no greater tribute to his leadership and vision.

Lewis Perinbam,
Chair of COL's Board of Governors

We are going to miss this modest, unassuming man who has determinedly and resolutely throughout his career at COL advanced the cause of education as the driver of human development and ODL as the most efficient and effective means of harnessing scarce resources for maximum educational benefit. Raj has said, "If we accept the premise that education, more than any other factor, can make the difference

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EVENTS

COL CHAIR SPEAKS AT ISMAILI CENTRE

The Chair of COL's Board of Governors, Dr. Lewis Perinbam, O.C., spoke on 15 April at the Ismaili Centre in London as part of the Centre's annual Lecture Series. In his address, entitled "Bridges to Global Security – the Promise of Education", he noted that, "the long chronicle of humankind's accomplishments reveals the constant presence of a single motivating feature. It is the ability of the species to acquire, to utilise, and to enhance knowledge. The word best employed to describe how that process is passed from generation to generation is education. It changes form and assumes differing guises from the primary grades through to tertiary levels in universities. It is at times theory-based; at others of immediate practical application. Education is the irreplaceable key to understanding our world and ourselves; to anticipate the future and to husband our natural environment for the benefit of all human beings. It is both the expression, and the adhesive, of the commonality of humankind."

LEWIS PERINBAM

He pointed out that, "COL has been a pioneer and a leader in this respect. It has recognised the value and the potential of open and distance learning to bring education within the reach of all, to improve its quality and to contain the costs of doing so. Since its inception in 1987 COL has proven effective in helping to lift the burden of poverty from countless citizens in Commonwealth nations by using new technologies and techniques to overcome illiteracy, improve educational standards and train hundreds of thousands of new teachers."

He added that, "no one should underestimate the immense range of rich benefits, including economic, that result from increased education. In India it is estimated that a one-year increase in the average number of years of primary schooling of the workforce would raise outputs by some 23%. In Bangladesh the average salary of secondary-school educated women is about seven times that of women with no primary education. More than a quarter of a century ago, the Economic Council of Canada calculated that the single highest return of any investment – over the longer term – was to be found in the field of education. Today, in the dawn of the 21st Century, when the critical ingredient in humankind's quest for security is an understanding of our commonality as a species, education is the necessary tool to meet that end. Simply put, education today is the most effective of all bridges to global security."

www.col.org/speeches

MASSEY UNIVERSITY DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR, PALMERSTON NORTH, PROFESSOR IAN WARRINGTON (LEFT) WITH COL PRESIDENT, SIR JOHN DANIEL

SIR JOHN SPEAKS AT MASSEY

While in New Zealand for COL's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, President and CEO, Sir John Daniel, visited Massey University, accepting an invitation to speak to its staff. Massey University is a nationally funded "dual-mode" institution with a 70-year history and three campuses on the North Island. It has 37,000 New Zealand and international students, nearly half of them studying through distance education.

The following is reprinted with permission from *Massey News*, Massey University, New Zealand:

Education is the key to development, and technology will provide the means for education to be provided in the world's many developing nations, according to an international distance education specialist.

Sir John Daniel is president of the Commonwealth of Learning, an international organisation that facilitates education in developing countries. As a provider of distance education, Massey has been involved with the Commonwealth of Learning for many years. Sir John last visited Massey 20 years ago as president of the International Council for Distance Education. He spoke to staff in Palmerston North recently on the role technology will play in helping developing nations.

He outlined what development means. "The measure of development is the degree to which the freedom of people is enhanced – freedom from hunger and freedom from abject poverty. It also means freedom of expression and religion. It means political freedom."

He said freedom is not only the measure but also the means of development, because it is free people who develop communities, societies and nations. "Development enhances the freedom of people and free people enhance development."

He said education is the most effective mechanism for development. However, it is not a one-dimensional solution. "Education itself is not enough. You only have to think of countries that have or once had very good and comprehensive education systems that do not or did not translate into obvious prosperity.

"Sound education policies, political stability and social cohesion are all important for development and the abolition of poverty."

But, he said, no country is likely to get beyond the threshold of development unless it ensures that most of its people receive a good basic education – a conclusion that is inconvenient for some governments because it requires hard slog and national commitment.

However, education is not just about teaching a curriculum and testing whether the kids have learned it, he said. The physical and psychological state of pupils, the competence of teachers and the environment of the school are all crucial factors. "We want child-friendly schools that seek out children to give them the education that is their right, schools that are centred on children, and that link to the families and communities around them."

Sir John noted the "insidious link" that exists between quality and exclusivity in education. He said, however, that recently it has been demonstrated that quality and exclusivity need not be linked. The OECD Pisa programme measures the reading, scientific and mathematical literacy of 15-year-old children. The Pisa programme has found that the countries with the highest average performance, such as Canada and Finland, are also countries with a narrow gap between the top and the bottom performers. Also, the countries with the highest degree of equity, such as Korea and Japan, also show high performance, he said. On the other side of the chart New Zealand has a high average performance but below average equity, similar to the United States and France.

Sir John says access and high quality education are usually linked with high costs but the intelligent use of technology allows us to increase access, raise quality and degrease costs. "This is why I call technology the missing link between education and development."

He cited the success of open universities, which have flourished in Asia and which are now being adopted in other nations such as India, which has 1.4 million in its Open School.

www.col.org/speeches

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA VICE-CHANCELLOR, OLU JEGEDE (LEFT), WITH ASHA KANWAR (COL'S EDUCATION SPECIALIST, HIGHER EDUCATION) AND OTHER WEST AFRICAN DELEGATES AT THE INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS MEETING FOR THE NEW COL/NOUN REGIONAL CENTRE FOR WEST AFRICA (RETRIDAL)

REGIONAL CENTRE FOR ODL, WEST AFRICA

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) and its COL-supported Regional Training and Research Institute for Open and Distance Learning (RETRIDAL) held an international stakeholders meeting in May 2004. Hosted by NOUN in Lagos and facilitated by COL, the aim of the meeting was to develop an action plan for training, advocacy, publicity and research for the new regional centre for West Africa – RETRIDAL. The two-day event drew participants from Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

In his opening remarks, the Vice-Chancellor and CEO of NOUN, Professor Olugbemiro J. Jegede, who also chaired the meeting, pointed out that RETRIDAL is an international institute set up in collaboration with COL to provide training services and opportunities to other emerging open and distance learning (ODL) institutes in the West-African sub-region.

At the end of the meeting, the participants resolved to help build capacity at all levels of education and training using ODL, including technology mediated learning and to be proactive in advocacy, promotion and publicity for ODL. They also agreed to work together to form a cadre of experts in ODL to provide consultation and advice in systems development and other areas; share course materials and resources; support attachments, fellowships and exchange programmes; and facilitate training and forge closer links through conferences, meetings and seminars.

They affirmed that even though RETRIDAL is located in NOUN, it should strive to reach out to other institutions in Nigeria and the sub-region; address the education and training needs of not just higher education, but also primary and secondary education, adult literacy, technical and vocational education, teacher training and non-formal education. In addition, RETRIDAL would mobilise funds from a range of partners such as UNESCO, World Bank and other international agencies in order to support the training activities of francophone and lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) countries in West Africa.

COL'S CHAIRMAN — IN INDIA AND THE U.K.

COL Chairman, Dr. Lewis Perinbam, O.C., visited India in March to chair the annual meeting of the Board of Directors of the Commonwealth Executive MBA/MPA Programme, which includes the Vice-Chancellors of South Asia's four national open universities.

Over 600 students have participated in the programme to date and have expressed their enthusiastic support for it. Four African countries have indicated their interest in extending the programme to their countries. Mauritius and Nigeria have confirmed that they will launch the programme by 2005 and the African Virtual University is interested in offering it to its partners in Commonwealth countries in that region. *www.col.org/cemba*

During his visit, Dr. Perinbam met with the President of India, the Honourable Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. President Kalam showed keen interest in COL and particularly in its efforts to harness open and distance learning for development purposes in the Commonwealth. He also met with senior government/institutional officials and expressed COL's gratitude for India's generous financial support as COL's third highest donor.

He spoke to the vast constituency of India's Indira Gandhi National Open University in a televised address to its 48 regional and 1133 local centres. IGNOU's Vice-Chancellor, Professor H.P. Dikshit, hosted a dinner in his honour.

In May, in London, Dr. Perinbam addressed the Commonwealth's Board of Governors and reported on COL. He also represented COL at a meeting of the Coolum Committee, which brings together the Commonwealth Secretariat and other Commonwealth agencies for periodic consultations on the progress toward the objectives for the Commonwealth's support structure that are contained in the Coolum Declaration that was agreed to by Heads of Government at their 2002 meeting.

In August, Dr. Perinbam addressed the Managing Change Conference, an annual strategic development programme for leaders of Commonwealth Universities in Africa organised by the University of Abertay Dundee, Scotland, and co-hosted by COL, the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the Association of African Universities.

NAMIBIAN EDUCATOR AT E-LEARNING WORKSHOP IN MELBOURNE

E-LEARNING WORKSHOPS FOR SSA EDUCATORS AND TEACHER EDUCATORS

Science and technology teacher educators from Commonwealth countries in Sub-Saharan Africa visited the University of Melbourne, Australia, on their way to Dunedin, New Zealand, for COL's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, to attend an "e-learning" workshop organised by the University's Department of Teaching, Learning and Research Support (TeLaRS) and sponsored by COL.

The workshop provided an introduction to issues and trends in e-learning – using online techniques to expand learning opportunities – with a theoretical background, case demonstrations and hands-on training. It was led by Associate Professor Som Naidu (of TeLaRS) with invited presentations by University of Melbourne staff and from other Victorian universities and the commercial sector.

Senior educators from eleven Sub-Saharan countries also gathered in Nairobi, Kenya, in August to improve their e-learning knowledge and skills by learning from each other and invited experts. This workshop was organised jointly by COL and the African Virtual University and held at the AVU's Kenyatta University Campus.

The organisers and participants suggest that African practice in e-learning may differ from approaches used elsewhere. While the concept of one learner to one computer is an unlikely scenario for Africa in the foreseeable future, African professionals are leading the creative application of the latest techniques and technologies to a continent in great need. Please see *EdTech News* (page 16) for more on this workshop and e-learning.

Participants are being encouraged to remain in contact with each other as they work on expanding existing e-learning support programmes or on introducing these into their institutions.

NEW RESOURCES

COL PUBLICATIONS

COL has published some new open and distance learning resources, including the first in a new series of training handbooks for open and distance learning (ODL) practitioners, that can be used for both self-study and as workshop/training programme resources.

Tutoring in open and distance learning: A handbook for tutors. Prepared by Jennifer O'Rourke

Planning and implementing open and distance learning systems: A handbook for decision makers. Prepared by Richard Freedman

Costing open and distance learning (CD-ROM). While developing the two training handbooks listed above, feedback on early drafts indicated that on some topics readers wanted more depth than an introductory series could provide. In response COL has produced an interactive CD that is designed to help in setting up new ODL programmes as well as in improving the quality of the management of existing programmes. The CD includes fully functioning spreadsheets but is not a panacea for solving problematic institutional costs! The CD-ROM was authored by Mr. Thomas Hülsmann of the Centre for Distance Education, Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany and edited by Richard Freeman.

Practitioner Research and Evaluation Skills Training (PREST) series. Published in collaboration with the International Research Foundation for Open Learning (IRFOL), U.K. Two titles in the series have now been published: ***Researching tutoring and student support systems***, written by Jane Brindley (University of Windsor) with Alan Tait (U.K. Open University) and Som Naidu (University of Melbourne) as critical readers, and ***How to use programme monitoring in research and evaluation***, written by Neil Butcher (South African Institute for Distance Education) with Doug Shale (University of Calgary) and Alan Woodley (U.K. Open University) as critical readers.

Schoolnet Toolkit: This is a guidebook for the use of ICTs to improve the value and quality of education. Prepared jointly by the Asia and the Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok) and COL, it is targeted towards policy- and decision-makers in education, school managers, practitioners, teachers and principals in Southeast Asian countries.

Vocational education and training through open and distance learning. The fifth volume in the COL/RoutledgeFalmer Press *World review of distance education and open learning series* (Cdn.$30.00, a 25% discount from the cover price when ordering from COL). This book follows the pattern established by earlier books in the series on higher education; basic education; teacher education and training; and policy in offering well-founded reports on the current state of good practice and guidance on effective implementation. Edited by Louise Moran and Greville Rumble.

Most of COL's publications are available online or upon request. Requests for COL publications may be sent directly 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; fax: 250.387.1120; e-mail: *QPPublications@gems5.gov.bc.ca*. Orders can be placed online at *www.publications.gov.bc.ca*

Government agencies and institutions in developing Commonwealth countries may receive copies at no charge. Nominal charges apply to orders from developed, newly developed and non-Commonwealth countries — usually Cdn$12.00 plus shipping. These orders must be accompanied by pre-payment or charged to VISA or MasterCard accounts. Titles in the *World review of distance education and open learning* series are not available on a complimentary basis.

CONSULTANTS' REPORTS

Newly released reports commissioned by COL include:

Lifelong learning for farmers (L3Farmers). This report evidences a massive need to improve smallholders' knowledge and skills in the food production-market chain that cannot be met by conventional agricultural extension alone; but it can be met by employing open and distance learning/information and communications technologies (ICTs) and innovative extension methods. Acting on the recommendations, COL has offered to take the lead during 2004–2006 to develop a knowledge management system and collaborate with the strategic partners, in the three targeted regions, that have taken responsibility for developing an open learning network and co-ordinating and training local facilitators.

The role of transnational, private, and for-profit provision in meeting global demand for tertiary education: Mapping, regulation and impact. This is a joint COL-UNESCO study carried out by Professor Robin Middlehurst and Mr. Steve Woodfield of the Centre for Policy and Change in Tertiary Education, University of Surrey, U.K. Five countries were selected for study – Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Jamaica, Malaysia and Senegal.

Distance education and open learning in Sub-Saharan Africa: Criteria and conditions for quality and critical success factors and ***Costing distance education and open learning in Sub-Saharan Africa***. Both of these "Surveys of policy and practice" were conducted on behalf of COL by the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) as part of COL's partnership agreement with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) Working Group on Distance Education and Open Learning. The first report identifies criteria and conditions for quality and critical success factors and the second provides a costing tool. Both reports feature case studies and follow on an early COL-SAIDE report: *Distance education and open learning in Sub-Saharan Africa – A literature survey on policy and practice* (2002).

Reports such as these are available from COL upon request, or through COL's web site whenever possible.

www.col.org/consultancies

DHANARAJAN RETURNS TO MALAYSIA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

between wealth and poverty, health and misery, conservation and destruction, national unity and division, then the levelling of educational opportunities must be a priority for all of us who care about our fellow citizens." It was because of these values that many of us have been proud to work in his team.

Raj has been ideally suited to lead a Commonwealth agency — profoundly believing, both intellectually and in his practice, in the Commonwealth principles of partnership, co-operation and the sharing of experience and knowledge.

For those of us who have worked with Raj, we know he can sometimes be infuriating. He is both a charismatic and patriarchal leader, but we know him best as a man of integrity — and we count ourselves lucky to have had the opportunity to work with him. Raj, we are going to miss you and we wish you well. We know you leave having built a sound legacy for the future of COL and we also know that you are not really retiring. You will be taking the message of education to new places.

COL staff member

EdTech News

LOOKOUT, HERE COMES WIMAX

The availability of bandwidth is a topic that comes up at every conference or discussion on information and communications technologies (ICTs), e-learning or telecommunications. Internet access points are popping up in many countries where one can drop in and use an existing computer (such as an Internet cafe) or upload and download your e-mail via wireless connection (WiFi). The limitation of WiFi in most offices, hotels and Internet cafes is that computers have to be within about 20 metres of the WiFi hub (transmitter/receiver) to be effective. This distance may be extended to about 100 metres in some installations, but connectivity is severely limited.

THE TECHNOLOGY: A WIMAX HUB AND NETWORK TRANSMITTER/RECEIVERS

An emerging technology called WiMAX breaks the distance barrier of WiFi and extends the range up to about 50 kilometres. This technology, requiring no telephone or television cables, has been implemented in Australia and is due out in South Africa by early 2005. The international WiMAX standard, known as "802.16" provides a broadband wireless connection that is faster than either cable modems or ADSL telephone lines can provide. Being a wireless technology and able to cover much larger sections of a city at a time, it is likely to gain a foot-hold in high-density cities where people who are moving about the region are demanding faster Internet access than they can get through conventional dial-up telephone lines.

The WiMAX technology is being backed internationally by Intel and Nokia while its implementation is carried out by local companies. Once a system has been rolled out in a city, a typical user of a notebook PC would have both the WiFi and a WiMAX installed, and the PC will switch automatically between the networks depending on which gives the better signal and where the user has an Internet access account.

Governments, telecommunications agencies and educational institutions who are considering WiMAX as an additional means of providing Internet access for their people should keep in mind that a principal connection to the Internet, via satellite or other high-speed link, will still be required if it is not already available. WiMAX may be used once the signal is "on the ground" and can be redistributed via a ground-based network including telephone, WiFi and WiMAX.

The available bandwidth will no doubt always be outstripped by user demand and, therefore, good bandwidth management is also required. One tool for this is the implementation of proxy cache servers. These are designed to maintain local copies of the majority of Internet pages that people use so that multiple calls on the same page do not require additional Internet access. These are drawn, instead, from the local server. Whether the web pages drawn from the Internet or the cache makes little difference to the user – except that the pages come from the cache will be delivered much faster than the same page coming through the Internet.

www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1759,1610999,00.asp

www.cellular.co.za/news_2004/aug/080504-wbs_announces_nationwide_deploym.htm

www.budde.com.au/Reports/Contents/Australia-Wireless-Broadband-WiMax-Overview-and-Analyses-3255.html

www.squid-cache.org

"802.16" provides a broadband wireless connection that is faster than either cable modems or ADSL telephone lines can provide… and extends the range up to about 50 kilometres.

THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION – ASIA/PACIFIC

Meta-survey on the Use of Technologies in Education in Asia and the Pacific 2003-2004. This is the first survey that maps the use of ICTs in the education systems of an entire region. The project, conducted by UNESCO with the support of Japanese Funds-in-Trust, gathered information on 44 UNESCO member states and provides an up-to-date overview of the state of ICT use in primary and secondary, non-formal, technical and vocational education across Asia and the Pacific. It has a special focus on using ICTs to achieve Education for All goals and also includes a chapter discussing issues relating to ICT use and gender equality, which identifies areas for further efforts to ensure girls and women are not excluded from the educational benefits that ICTs can offer. The survey was edited by Glen Farrell and Cédric Wachholz and published by UNESCO Bangkok.

www.unescobkk.org/ips/ebooks/documents/metasurvey

EXPANDING E-LEARNING IN AFRICA

A group of decision-makers and practitioners recently met in Nairobi, Kenya, to review the implications of implementing e-learning in their institutions. Delegates from ten countries agreed on a statement of intent and created a draft "e-learning policy" document to take back to their institution for internal review. After the policymakers had departed, the practitioners continued on with a skills-enhancement programme that enabled them to gain skills in the creation of e-learning content suitable for storing in a "learning object repository". They also learned about the facilitation of online learning using synchronous and asynchronous chat.

The conventional implementation of online learning may not always be suitable and needs to be adjusted depending on each country's and institution's circumstances. A learning centre may productively use content stored in a learning object repository if it is able to download the material and make it available to learners who are studying in an offline mode. E-learning techniques may therefore be productively used to support many learners whether they be online or offline. In many cases, e-learning methods may be used to support learning facilitators or tutors who, in turn, support learners.

The workshop in Nairobi was conducted in collaboration with the African Virtual University with financial support from both the World Bank and COL.

READINGS ON E-LEARNING

Moderating e-learning discussions

- Moderating online, by Gilly Salmon and Ken Giles: *www.emoderators.com/moderators/gilly/MOD.html*

What has been done before, how has it been achieved, and what challenges are there?

- Reaching wider audiences through innovative approaches, by the Honourable Ann Ndong-Jatta, Minister of Education, The Gambia (delivered at COL's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, July 2004): *www.col.org/speeches/PCF3_Ndong-Jatta.htm*
- Case studies from around the world: The virtual university and e-learning, UNESCO, Susan D'Antoni, ed., 2004: *www.unesco.org/iiep/virtualuniversity/home.php*

Overview of e-learning – COL's Knowledge Series:

- Analysing costs/benefits for distance education programmes, by Greville Rumble, 2002: *www.col.org/Knowledge/ks_costs.htm*
- Designing online learning, by Sanjaya Mishra, 2002: *www.col.org/Knowledge/ks_online.htm*
- Audio/audioconferencing in support of distance education, by Paul Macmullen, 2002: *www.col.org/Knowledge/ks_audioconferencing.htm*

Resource sites:

- e-Learning Centre's Guide to e-learning 2-7-2 – examples of online courses and tutorials: *www.e-learningcentre.co.uk/guide2elearning/2-7/2-7-2.htm*
- Virtual Training Suite, Image Collections: *www.vts.rdn.ac.uk*

E-book resources:

- Effective networked learning in higher education: Notes and guidelines, Centre for Studies in Advanced Learning Technology, Lancaster University, 2001: *http://csalt.lancs.ac.uk/jisc/Guidelines_final.doc*
- Instructional use of learning objects, online version, Edited by David Wiley: *http://reusability.org/read/#1*

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NEW ADDRESS

The Commonwealth of Learning moved to new premises on 1 July 2004. Our new address in downtown Vancouver is:

1055 West Hastings Street, Suite 1200
Vancouver, BC V6E 2E9
Canada

Other contact details – telephone/fax numbers and e-mail addresses – remain unchanged. *Please update your records.*

Connections

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Chairman:
Dr. Lewis Perinbam, o.c.

President & CEO:
Sir John Daniel

EdTech 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.

Commonwealth of Learning
1055 West Hastings, Suite 1200
Vancouver, BC V6E 2E9
Canada

TEL: +1.604.775.8200
FAX: +1.604.775.8210
E-MAIL: info@col.org
WORLD WIDE WEB: www.col.org

Connections is edited by Dave Wilson
Contributing writer: Grace Chin
Layout: Alex Hennig