

Connections



Learning for Development



VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY COURSES AVAILABLE ONLINE

Another milestone in the development of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) has been achieved with the online posting of its newly developed course materials. The materials are available through COL's website, which provides free access to these university-level courses, along with many other courses.

The VUSSC course materials were developed at a series of pan-Commonwealth workshops facilitated by COL. Over the past two years, the Governments of Mauritius, Samoa, Singapore and Trinidad & Tobago have hosted VUSSC workshops to train educators in information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Participants at the workshops began to create course materials, continuing their collaboration after returning home.

More than 80 people have taken part in VUSSC workshops, and many have engaged in training others in the skills they have learned. For instance, workshop participants from Maldives hosted a workshop on eLearning and wiki skills for 20 educators at the Maldives College of Higher Education, and a three-year course on eLearning teaching and training for educators will begin in Maldives in July 2008. The ministries of education of Seychelles and the Bahamas have agreed to host the fifth and sixth VUSSC workshops in 2008.

At the most recent content development workshop in Samoa, 25 educators from 13 countries began to develop course materials in the area of Disaster Management. The course focuses in large part on mitigating climate change as an integral part of disaster management. After learning ICT skills, the workshop participants turned their focus to creating over 200 pages of learning materials on the topic.

The course materials developed at all four workshops are being converted into course modules using COL's Instructional Design Template. The courses are now freely available in multiple formats on COL's website. Institutions, educators, students, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), governments and life-long learners can download the materials, customise and use them in their own programmes.

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LEWIS PERINBAM, O.C., LL.D., 1925-2007

"Lewis Perinbam was an inspiring friend."

– Sir John Daniel, President of COL

Dr. Lewis Perinbam, Chair of COL Board of Governors, died on 12 December 2007. Remembered as "Canada's gift to international development", Dr. Perinbam's many accomplishments include launching the Canadian University Services Overseas (CUSO) and influencing the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) during the agency's early days.

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LEWIS PERINBAM CONTINUED FROM COVER

Born in 1925 in Johor Baharu, (now) Malaysia, Dr. Perinbam was educated in Scotland and later emigrated to Canada, where he steadily acquired a national reputation for fostering Canada's role in international development through his involvement with different organisations, notably the World Bank and UNESCO.

He was the founding Executive Director of CUSO and Executive Director of World University Service of Canada.

As Vice-President of CIDA for 17 years, Dr. Perinbam inspired the creation of its non-governmental organisation and industrial co-operation programmes – the first of their kind in the world – and launched numerous initiatives to involve the private, non-governmental and institutional sectors in international development.

In 1997, Dr. Perinbam was made an officer of the Order of Canada for his “fresh insights into the relationship between developing countries and our own.” He received honorary doctorates from six Canadian universities.

After retiring from CIDA, he moved to Vancouver and COL, serving first as a special adviser to COL's first two presidents, Dr. James Maraj and Dato' Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, before being elected Chair of the Board of Governors in April 2003.

“At an age when most people would be enjoying a well earned retirement Lewis came to his office at COL most days,” said COL President Sir John Daniel. “He was an inspiring friend to members of the staff and during his time as Chair of the Board, COL's governance practices became a model for intergovernmental organisations. It was a privilege to serve under him.”

Everyone at COL and members of the development community throughout the world will miss his wise and humane contribution to their work.

Dr. Perinbam is survived by his wife, Nancy Garrett, a sister and three brothers.

www.col.org/lperinbam

PCF5 RECEIVES OVER 500 PROPOSALS

Judging from participation to date, the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5) is shaping up to be a very significant event. PCF5 takes place in London in July 2008

When the dust settled after the deadline for proposals for contributions, about 550 submissions were counted. And, between its launch in early October and the end of January, the PCF5 website had been accessed by more than 4,500 visitors.

If you are planning to join the Forum in London, you're advised to register as soon as possible, as places are likely to be taken quickly. As July is the peak of the tourist season in London, you should book your flights and accommodation now.

The high level of interest in contributing to the Forum will create a busy programme. PCF5 Programme Chair, Dr. Roger Mills, says, “Instead of placing the emphasis on individual presentations, the PCF5 programme will allocate much time to focussed sessions that bring together scholars and practitioners with a shared interest. That way, we will ensure that everyone can contribute to addressing the main issues facing distance education and development work today.”

All of PCF5's papers and other contributions will be published on the Internet, making them widely accessible to participants and others.

Proposals address each of the Forum's main themes. All accepted proposal titles are now listed on the Forum website. Here's a small sample:

Governance, Conflict and Social Justice

- Is distance learning effective in preventing conflict in developing countries?
- Distance education as a strategy for eliminating gender disparity in Pakistan

Health

- ICT and skills development in an HIV and AIDS context
- Training medical technologists in the Caribbean

Livelihoods

- Constraints faced in introducing technology to suit rural livelihoods
- Open education and training in the travel and tourism industry

Children and Young People

- Quality school education through open and distance learning
- Mobile technologies for students with hearing disabilities

The PCF5 website also contains provisional programme details along with the Forum's first newsletter with more information about the themes and theme leaders.

Guest speakers confirmed to date include:

- **Ms. Carol Bellamy**, President and CEO of World Learning; former Peace Corps Director and UNICEF Executive Director;
- **Mr. Zamal Udinn Biswas**, Grameen Bank, Bangladesh;
- **Professor Lídia Brito**, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique; former Minister of Education, Mozambique;
- **Mr. Nicholas Burnett**, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO;
- **Dr. Astrid Dufborg**, GeSCI (global e-schools and communities initiative);
- **Professor Brenda Gourley**, Vice-Chancellor, U.K. Open University, and Chair of the Association of Commonwealth Universities; and
- **Reverend Professor Barney Pityana**, Vice-Chancellor, UNISA – The University of South Africa.
- **His Excellency Mr. Kamallesh Sharma**, who will be installed as Commonwealth Secretary-General on 1 April (see page 4, “COL marks 20 years of progress at CHOGLM 2007”).

Professor Gourley will deliver COL's Asa Briggs Lecture, which honours COL's founding Chairman, Lord Asa Briggs. A feature of the Pan-Commonwealth Forums since the first Forum in 1999, the Lectures feature renowned speakers who discuss topics of relevance to education in the Commonwealth. A long-time champion of open learning, Professor Gourley is also Chair of the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

Nicholas Burnett previously led UNESCO's team monitoring progress on the



CAROL BELLAMY



BRENDA GOURLEY



BARNEY PITAYANA

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY COURSES AVAILABLE ONLINE

CONTINUED FROM COVER

The course modules on COL's website include:

- Entrepreneurship and Tourism,
- Professional development of educators for practicing professionals,
- Life skills for school teachers and counsellors, and
- Disaster management for entry-level university students and professionals in the appropriate agency.

VUSSC is helping 30 of the world's smallest states to build development capacity and strengthen economies through improved education. Facilitated by COL, VUSSC also receives financial support from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation. Development agencies and others that are interested in providing funds to support course development and future content development workshops for educators from other small states of the Commonwealth are encouraged to contact COL.

www.col.org/CourseMaterials

www.col.org/vussc

www.col.org/TrainingResources (Instructional Design Template)

VUSSC: DISCOVERING THE TRUE SPIRIT OF SAMOA

COL staff members are often the recipients of outstanding hospitality as we travel throughout the Commonwealth. We were especially grateful for the special welcome displayed by our hosts in Samoa at the VUSSC content development workshop in November 2007.

As the workshop was winding up, one of the participants, Mr. Gabriel Carillo from Belize suddenly became very ill. Shortly after being admitted to hospital, numbness in his arm became paralysis in his arms and legs. As the doctors conducted tests, our hosts from the National University of Samoa stayed with him around the clock; one of them even slept on the floor beside his bed at night. Mr. Carillo was diagnosed with a rare disorder of the nervous system. Everyone was relieved when, two days later, he regained function and was able to travel home to Belize.

"The people in Samoa didn't see what they are doing as extraordinary – it's what we do," said Ms. Jenny Williams, a New-Zealand-based COL consultant who helped facilitate the Samoa workshop. "We have a saying in the South Pacific: in times of



MR. GABRIEL CARILLO AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE VUSSC WORKSHOP WITH DR. EMMA KRUSE VAAI FROM THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SAMOA'S INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

an hosts certainly played a part in his quick recovery. Special thanks must also go to Ms. Williams who went above and beyond her role as workshop facilitator in co-ordinating Mr. Carillo's care in Samoa. Thank you also to Ms. Helen Askounis of COL, who was in almost constant email contact with people in Samoa and made complex travel arrangements to ensure Mr. Carillo's long trip home was safe and comfortable.

"I was very moved by the love and concern shown," said Mr. Carillo upon his return to Belize. "Our Samoan counterparts came out in great support and made me feel comfortable at the hospital. I hope we continue to network and strengthen this partnership we've developed both on a personal level but also in support of all our small states."

trouble, your children are our children. That means we will take care of them as our own. Gabriel was a visitor who was a long way from home, so they saw themselves as his family until he was able to leave."

Mr. Carillo arrived home in early December and is doing well. The care he was shown by our Samo-



MS. NOMSA MNDZEBELE, LECTURER WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND, LEADS A TRAINING SESSION FOR TOUR GUIDES USING VUSSC COURSE MATERIALS. THE UNIVERSITY'S INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION (IDE) HOSTED THE FIVE-DAY WORKSHOP IN JULY. THE COURSE MATERIALS WERE DEVELOPED AT A VUSSC WORKSHOP IN MAURITIUS IN AUGUST 2006. THE IDE IS TAKING PART IN AN INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE CO-ORDINATED BY COL TO DEVELOP TRAINING MATERIALS IN CRITICAL AREAS AS IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES, INCLUDING TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY.

INCREASED FUNDING FOR COL

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced at CHOGM that the United Kingdom will increase its financial support of COL by 10 percent to £1.1 million for three years beginning in 2007-2008. Enhanced contributions have also been received from Botswana, India and Jamaica for this year; Nigeria has also announced its intention to increase its contribution level by 50 percent.

COL's \$10 million budget for 2007-2008 is funded primarily by contributions from member countries, along with grants and contract services for the eLearning for International Organisations initiative. A record 38 countries contributed to COL last year, with a similar level expected this year.

Correction: The photo of VUSSC workshop participants on page 4 of the October 2007 issue of *Connections* was from a workshop at the National Institute of Education in Singapore. A photo of the Trinidad & Tobago workshop participants can be found in the online version of the newsletter at www.col.org/connections.

COL MARKS 20 YEARS OF PROGRESS AT CHOGM 2007

COL marked the 20th anniversary of its creation at the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting (CHOGM) in Kampala, Uganda in November 2007. COL was created by Heads of Government at their meeting in Vancouver in October 1987.

COL's report to CHOGM, *Towards a Commonwealth of Learning: Twenty Years of Progress*, shows how COL has contributed to the achievement of the goals and aspirations expressed by Heads of Government at their biennial meetings held over the last 20 years.

The report was presented to CHOGM's Foreign Ministers' Committee by His Excellency, the Hon. Burchell Whiteman, O.J., Acting Chair of COL's

Board of Governors, COL's President Sir John Daniel and Vice-President, Professor Asha Kanwar.

A major strength of COL throughout its history is the flexibility and sensitivity which have characterised its work, Mr. Whiteman stated. "COL represents both the style and the substance of sustainable development initiatives

and reflects the best of the Commonwealth in relation to dialogue, respect and understanding."

Sir John highlighted COL's work in three areas: Poverty and Food Security; Secondary Schooling; and Small States. The Ministers from Mauritius, Maldives and Lesotho paid compliments to COL for its work in the short discussion period following the presentation.

The Communiqué issued after the closing ceremony included one paragraph that dealt directly with COL:

83. Heads of Government expressed satisfaction with the achievements of COL in the 20 years since its creation by the 1987 Vancouver CHOGM. They commended COL's focus on the development agenda in its 2006-2009 Plan, Learning for Development, and progress in implementing the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, in which 29 countries are participating. Heads of Government requested COL to support member countries in enhancing access to quality higher education, encouraging member governments to enhance their contributions, as appropriate, to the budget of COL to enable it to carry out these programmes.



COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY-GENERAL ELECT
KAMALESH SHARMA SPEAKING AT THE OFFICIAL
CLOSING CEREMONY OF CHOGM 2007

His Excellency Mr. Kamallesh Sharma was unanimously elected to become the Commonwealth's next Secretary-General at CHOGM 2007. Ambassador Sharma is currently India's High Commissioner to the U.K. He will take office on 1 April 2008 upon the retirement of His Excellency the Hon. Don McKinnon, who has served two four-year terms.

Ugandan President, His Excellency Yoweri K. Museveni, is now Chair of the Commonwealth.

www.chogm2007.ug

www.col.org/speeches07



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global Education for All objective. His opening keynote address will focus on the central place of education in achieving international development goals.

Collaboration

Organisers anticipate that one of the novel and exciting aspects of this Forum will be collaboration between contributors in advance and following the conference. With all abstracts and papers being posted on the Forum website and on the COL-supported WikiEducator, and ample opportunity for interaction at the Forum itself, organisers hope that participants will look for contributions similar to their own, contribute to the development of each other's papers and discuss possible ongoing collaboration with each other.

Nexus Strategic Partnerships

PCF5 organisers are pleased to announce that they are working with Nexus Strategic

Partnerships, who are co-ordinating private sector involvement with the Forum, PCF5 publications and multi-media productions, and the Forum's *Open Learning Technology Showcase*.

Registration now open

Book your space now. Online registration for delegates is open and links to accommodation options are also provided. The full conference fee has been kept to a low £275 (early bird rate, available until 31 March) and the single day rate is £125. A limited number of subsidies are available for delegates from developing countries with major funding from COL, the University of London, the U.K. Open University and the U.K. Department for International Development. Other sponsors who have already made commitments include UNESCO, the Association of Commonwealth Universities and Athabasca University. Organisers will be pleased to hear from anyone who can help ensure that those who can benefit most from the Forum are not prevented from attending because of cost.

PCF5 is an international conference to explore the contribution of open and distance

learning to international development goals, by opening up access to learning at every level. The Forum is for practitioners, researchers, planners and policy makers in the fields of open and distance learning and development. It provides opportunities to share experience and expertise, and to contribute to future policy and provision. Participants will represent the main Commonwealth, European and international institutions and agencies that are active in the field, including funding bodies and technology providers.

PCF5 is being hosted by COL in partnership with the University of London, as part of the University's celebration to mark the 150th anniversary of the establishment of its External Degrees initiative. Conference Co-Chairs are Sir Graeme Davies, Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, and Sir John Daniel, President and CEO of COL. The forum is being organised by the University of London's Centre for Distance Education.

www.col.org/pcf5

www.WikiEducator.org/pcf5

www.londonexternal.ac.uk/150

www.cde.london.ac.uk

LEARNING4CONTENT HELPS EDUCATORS DEVELOP OERs



OTAGO POLYTECHNIC'S LEIGH BLACKALL, TERRY MARLER AND BONWYN HEGARTY

Learning4Content is inspired by a Native American proverb adopted by the INGOTS open source software training initiative: Tell me and I'll forget, show me and I may not remember, involve me, and I'll understand.

Learning4Content is a new COL initiative that is building the skills of educators to develop open educational resources (OERs) using wiki technology. The project is aimed at building a community across the Commonwealth that works collaboratively to develop free content lessons and other educational materials that can be used by educators, students and lifelong learners.

Learning4Content provides free skills training in wiki technology for educators in the Commonwealth. In return, educators sign a Learning Contract, agreeing to provide a free content lesson on WikiEducator.

WHAT'S A WIKI?

A *wiki* is a type of computer software that allows users to easily create, edit and link web pages. Wikis are often used to create collaborative websites, power community websites, and are increasingly being installed by businesses to provide affordable and effective Intranets or for use in Knowledge Management. Ward Cunningham, developer of the first wiki, WikiWikiWeb, originally described it as "the simplest online database that could possibly work". One of the best-known wikis is Wikipedia.

Source:
www.wikipedia.com

Learning4Content is supported by COL and a grant of \$100,000 from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. This funding will encourage skills development workshops across the Commonwealth. An honorarium of \$US 1,000 is available for each

workshop to support the costs of facilitation and/or hosting.

The project's objective is to train at least 2,500 educators, which means that at least 2,500 free content lessons will be created, to be used in secondary schools, vocational education and post-secondary institutions. The workshops will also help Wikipedia improve the quality of existing articles that can be used for educational purposes, while creating a thriving network of educators collaborating on free content for education.

To help address the gender disparity in information and communication technology (ICT) expertise in the developing world, half of the Learning4Content workshops will be dedicated to building capacity among women. The first Learning4Content workshops are taking place in early 2008.

COL's WikiEducator is a website dedicated to the collaborative development of free content for education that anyone can modify and use. WikiEducator has grown exponentially during its first year of operation and is currently ranked within the top eight percent of most visited websites in the world.

The success of Learning4Content depends in large part on the participation of ICT experts and Wikipedians in presenting training workshops for educators using WikiEducator tutorials. COL is working closely with Mr. Erik Moller, Deputy Director of the Wikimedia Foundation and member of the WikiEducator International Advisory Board, for advice on liaising with Wikipedians and using appropriate wiki technologies.

In partnership with Wikimedia Foundation, WikiEducator has implemented open source software to convert wiki content into PDF format. A public beta testing running on WikiEducator enables users to remix collections of wiki pages and print them out as a document.

WIKIEDUCATOR IN ACTION

Launched by COL in 2006, WikiEducator (www.WikiEducator.org) is a community resource for the development of free educational content. It is an evolving online community of more than 2,300 registered users. Among its users is a team from Otago Polytechnic in New Zealand. Mr. Leigh Blackall, Programme Developer, shares thoughts about his team's experience with WikiEducator.

DESCRIBE YOUR INSTITUTION.

Otago Polytechnic is a public tertiary education institute in New Zealand that offers certificates, diplomas and degrees for skills-based, technical education and occupational training. Our Educational Development Centre is focussed on teacher and facilitator training, staff development, online and flexible learning development, and research into educational development.

HOW ARE YOU USING WIKIEDUCATOR?

We have been using WikiEducator to develop educational resources since mid-2007. At least 15 full-time lecturing staff and five part-time designers regularly use the WikiEducator platform to develop their courses. This number is certain to increase as our teacher training schedules include orientation and skills development in the use of WikiEducator.

HOW IS THIS BENEFITING YOUR INSTITUTION AND YOUR LEARNERS?

There are many benefits of using WikiEducator, including free content hosting, and free and supported access to MediaWiki software. WikiEducator links us to other educational organisations, which opens the door to collaborative development of OERs and resource sharing. By having access to free learning resources, we can expand our course offerings and enhance professional opportunities for our staff.

Ironically, through developing curriculum and content on the WikiEducator platform, we are discovering more opportunities for local collaboration. Because of the open nature of the content, some of our teaching staff are discovering each other's work. This is in contrast to teachers working on a closed Learning Management System (LMS) in an isolated working environment that tends to technically discourage collaboration and reuse of learning materials.

For a more detailed discussion about educational development at Otago Polytechnic, see Mr. Blackall's article on Penn State's World Campus blog at <http://blog.worldcampus.psu.edu/index.php/2007/11>

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ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY

Many aspects of COL's work touch on issues of gender and development. Because open and distance learning (ODL) is especially helpful for women and girls to access educational opportunities, COL uses it to help promote gender equality. COL has a growing number of initiatives aimed at fostering the full participation of women and girls and addressing unequal gender relations that prevent equitable development.

Gender Policy and Action Plan

COL's Gender Policy states that gender equality is a cross-cutting corporate goal that requires that both women's and men's views, interests and needs shape its programmes, policies and processes. Advancing the goals of gender equality and women's empowerment are central to COL's agenda of learning for development.



The Policy describes how mainstreaming applies to COL. For example, COL has adopted gender mainstreaming as an organisational strategy to ensure that gender equality is considered an integral part of its internal policies and processes. It also explains how gender mainstreaming is integrated into COL's programmes. A staff Gender Committee provides direction for COL's work related to gender.



A new Gender Action Plan outlines how COL will implement the policy and promote a perspective with its partners. It focuses on three areas:

- strengthening internal gender mainstreaming capacity,
- identifying a number of specific gender initiatives, and
- promoting gender with partners.

Integrating Best Practices in Gender Mainstreaming

COL hosted a workshop in July 2007 that reviewed the latest best practices in gender mainstreaming. Led by Dr. Tony Beck, an independent consultant who works with the United Nations and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) on gender issues, the session focussed on developing gender-sensitive and gender specific performance indicators and how to incorporate them into COL's work and monitoring and evaluation framework.

A second gender workshop in October 2007 explored how to increase awareness of gender issues within each programme sector and how to encourage positive action among partners. Some of the key issues discussed were how to mainstream gender within COL programmes; how to integrate gender at the initiative level and the challenges of working with partner agencies that may have different cultural beliefs and practices. This workshop was led by Dr. Jyotsna Jha from the Social Transformation Programmes Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Monitoring Trends in Gender and ODL

COL is mapping trends in gender and ODL. This includes identifying the key issues and defining a role for COL. Results of this research will be presented at the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5) in London from 13-17 July 2008.

Supporting Gender Mainstreaming in the Public Service

Another initiative is also exploring how to use ODL to support gender mainstreaming training within the public service of Commonwealth nations. COL is working with the Commonwealth Secretariat's Gender Section and the Governance and Institutional Development Division to research this opportunity.



Online Resources

COL's website offers a wealth of information related to gender including:

- The Gender Management System (GMS) Toolkit: An Integrated Resource for Implementing the Gender Management System Series. This print resource was developed by COL with the Commonwealth Secretariat to help Commonwealth governments to mainstream gender issues into their decision-making and to support the work of those responsible for gender mainstreaming. The Toolkit modules are available for download at: www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/33896/33903/36970/the_gms_toolkit/
- "Producing Gender-Sensitive Materials for ODL": a title in our Knowledge Series that can be downloaded. www.col.org/knowledge
- "Identifying Barriers to ICTs in Education based on Gender Differences": reports from regional experts meetings convened by COL. www.col.org/GenderBarriers
- "The Gender Dimension of ODL": text of a speech by former COL Board member Professor Penina Mlama at the Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in 2006. www.col.org/speeches06
- Gender News Feed (see article on Yahoo pipes on page 16) www.col.org/newsfeeds



www.col.org/gender

www.col.org/policystatements



MEMBERS OF
RUPANTAR PUT ON
A PERFORMANCE
ABOUT GOOD
GOVERNANCE IN
DECEMBER 2007

COL INTRODUCES NEW GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES

“Good governance” is one of the core values of the Commonwealth. It is an integral element in sustainable development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. At the core of good governance is strong, informed decision making, based on participatory, democratic processes. COL is using open and distance learning (ODL) methods to expand the number of people reached in efforts to achieve good governance in several areas of the Commonwealth.

- **Training for civil servants in Papua New Guinea**

More efficient and effective ways of training its 80,000 civil servants is an important part of Papua New Guinea’s Public Sector Reform Initiative. In partnership with the University of Papua New Guinea,



PARTICIPANTS FROM ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA AT A GOVERNANCE WORKSHOP IN DECEMBER 2007

COL is working closely with all levels of government and education partners to address the training needs for officials at the district, local government and village levels as well as civil society. By working with local stakeholders, COL is helping to develop solutions for challenges such as a widespread lack of formal education while finding ways to build on the strong clan system to ensure greater transparency and accountability.

- **ODL policy for the Solomon Islands**

COL has worked with government representatives in the Solomon Islands to develop a Distance Flexible Learning policy.

It focuses on strengthening school boards and school committees, which is expected to result in greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities, inclusive approaches in developing strategic education plans and better performing schools.

- **Conflict resolution training in Vanuatu**

Wan Smolbag is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that works with youth through drama about issues such as witchcraft and conflict resolution. COL is working with Wan Smolbag to create DVDs based on a drama dealing with witchcraft, resolving conflict and women’s role in society. The four-part series will be broadcast to a larger audience in the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu on television, at village cinema events and at secondary schools.

- **Teaching governance, strategic planning for schools in Bangladesh**

Working with Action Aid, COL is developing training to improve strategic planning including financial literacy for civil society related to the operation of primary schools. The existing training resources will be converted to ODL formats to reach the many remote areas of Bangladesh. The aim is to encourage involvement of parents and community members, which will lead to better schools and better education.

COL is working with another local group, Rupantar, an NGO that believes development work is most effective when based in culture using folk songs and drama. In this way, they are able to move forward more quickly in changing attitudes and facilitating dialogue on governance issues with local-level government and with civil society. COL is helping to develop new ODL materials to train the most local-level of government representatives about their newly legislated roles and responsibilities.

SUPPORTING OPEN EDUCATION

COL recently signed the *Cape Town Declaration on Open Education*, showing support for the concept of creating and sharing educational resources. The document arose from a meeting in Cape Town in September 2007 that focussed on accelerating efforts to promote open resources, technology and teaching practices in education. The declaration represents a compromise view, taking into account a spectrum of perspectives. While applauding the ideals of the freedom culture, it reflects the real situations that institutions and governments face in the day-to-day business of conducting education and training.



www.col.org/CapeTownDeclaration

LEARNING4CONTENT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

COL is also working with the Wikimedia Foundation, the Open Society Institute and PediaPress, a technology company that specialises in converting wiki content to printed books, to develop a Wiki-to-word processor. This will put free learning content in the hands of people who have limited Internet access. They will be able to download free content learning materials they source on WikiEducator. This will allow educators to edit study guides on their own computers (for instance, adding local context and content) and print materials as required. COL is seeking funding partners who wish to support this initiative, which will vastly improve access to learning materials.

Anyone interested in participating in Learning4Content as a workshop facilitator, participant or host institution should contact Dr. Wayne Mackintosh, COL Education Specialist, eLearning and ICT Policy at wmackintosh@col.org.

www.wikieducator.org/Learning4Content

SURVEY OF ICT AND EDUCATION IN AFRICA

NEW REPORT DETECTS SHIFT FROM PROJECTS TO POLICIES

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) for education in Africa is shifting from a decade of experimentation and pilot projects to a new phase of integrated initiatives directed by government policies and multiple stakeholders. This is one of the key findings of a new summary report based on surveys from 53 African countries.

“Survey of ICT and Education in Africa” also finds a growing emphasis on developing government policy related to ICT. All but a handful of countries surveyed have a national ICT policy in place or under development. And nearly half of the countries have developed an ICT policy that is specific to the education sector. These national and regional policy frameworks are providing a solid foundation for partnerships and donor participation.

- How are ICT currently being used in the education sector in Africa, and what are the strategies and policies related to this use?
- What are the common challenges and constraints faced by African countries in this area?
- What is actually happening on the ground, and to what extent are donors involved?

THE SURVEY PROCESS

infoDev selected COL to conduct the survey. Following an extensive literature search, researchers prepared reports on each country. These reports included information about:

- National policies, strategies and programmes for the use of ICT in education,

South Africa co-ordinated the research and authored the summary report.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

- **Adoption of ICT in education in Africa in transition.** The past decade was characterised by experimentation in the form of small-scale pilot projects led by NGOs and supported by donors. This appears to be shifting to a new phase of systemic integration directed by national government policies and implementation processes led by multiple stakeholders.
- **Priority placed on national ICT policy.** Most countries have national ICT policies in place or under development. And many of these policies are specific to the education sector.
- **Vast differences in implementation of ICT policies.** While most countries have embraced policy development, there are notable disparities in their ability to implement the policies. South Africa, with its more advanced infrastructure and mature economy, is well-positioned to implement its ICT in education agenda. Many of the countries of North Africa have made excellent progress because of the resources and high bandwidth connectivity they have with Europe. Other countries like Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana and Mauritius are moving toward stable economies and are placing a high priority on ICT applications. However, the largest group is made up of countries that are emerging from conflict and authoritarian rule. While they recognise the potential of ICT to improve capacity for social and economic development, quite often internal conflict and political instability impede progress on ICT for education.
- **Growing public-private partnerships.** There are several examples of partnerships that involve private companies (usually ICT-based), government ministries, educational institutions, donor and development agencies, and civil society organisations working on ICT in education projects. Examples include the Kenya ICT Trust Fund, the Egyptian Education Initiative



The survey was initiated by the Information for Development Program (*infoDev*), a multi-donor partnership housed at the World Bank. *infoDev* investigates issues related to the effective and appropriate use of ICT in developing countries. The survey was undertaken in response to needs expressed by international donor and development agencies, private sector organisations, governments and non-governmental organisations for a consolidated database of information focussed on three key questions:

- The current level and types of ICT infrastructure being used in the various education sectors,
- A list of major initiatives underway, and
- Discussion of factors that enable and constrain the use of ICT.

The project managers were Mr. Mike Trucano, Education Specialist with *infoDev* and Mr. Paul West, COL's Director of Knowledge Management and Information Technology. Project leaders Dr. Glen Farrell of COL and Ms. Shafika Isaacs with Mindset Network in



and the Information Society Partnership for Africa's Development. Bilateral partnerships between ICT organisations and national ministries of education have increased remarkably.

- **Increasing digital content development.** Recognising the urgent need for digital learning materials relevant to local curricula, national level ministries are beginning to encourage collaborative efforts on a regional basis.
- **Growing interest in open source software and operating systems.** While interest in Free/Libre Open Source Software (FLOSS) is growing rapidly, lack of skilled personnel to support such systems is a constraint.
- **More regional initiatives.** A wide range of programmes and projects involve one or more African countries. Examples include the NEPAD e-Schools Initiative and SchoolNet Africa.
- **Collaboration among universities.** There are a number of national research and education networks that enable connectivity among universities, both for collaboration and cost-sharing.
- **Improving connectivity.** Several initiatives are addressing the fact that Africa has long been disadvantaged by the lack of fast and affordable connectivity with the rest of the globe. The Eastern Africa Submarine Cable System (EASSy) project is focussed on developing an undersea fibre optic cable that will link the countries of East Africa with the rest of the world.
- **Rapid growth of wireless networks.** Wireless networks, which facilitate access to mobile phone technology and broadband networks, are developing at a rapid rate in most countries.

STILL "TOO LITTLE, TOO EXPENSIVE AND POORLY MANAGED"

The 2006 World Bank Institute survey, "African Tertiary Institution Connectivity Survey" described access to ICT infrastructure at African universities as "too little, too expensive and poorly managed." This report confirms

this statement for all parts of educational systems. However, this situation is likely to change due to factors such as the emergence of policy frameworks, the evolution of networks and, perhaps most importantly, the growing commitment to ICT in education on the part of government leaders. The shift from "projects to policies" and the systematic development that this implies would not be possible without the growing commitment to ICT in education on the part of government leaders across the continent.

THE WAY FORWARD

This survey demonstrates that progress in the adoption and diffusion of ICT in education throughout Africa in the early years of the 21st century is remarkable. However, in terms of broad impact on learners, the process is just beginning. The survey provides seven suggestions for moving forward on implementation of ICT in education:

- Monitoring how policies are implemented in selected countries to evaluate processes and learn from their experience.
- Accompany investment in ICT with investment in education and health.
- Develop "total cost of ownership" models backed by good financing models.
- Improve access to ICT infrastructure, affordable connectivity with sufficient bandwidth and a reliable supply of electricity.
- Expand teacher professional development to include computer literacy, adapting learning materials, managing information and awareness of the ethics and dangers inherent in ICT use.
- Encourage Pan-African collaboration in developing digital learning materials to improve quality, relevance and cost-effectiveness.
- Build African leadership capacity in ICT for education.

The Survey of ICT and Education in Africa and individual country reports can be freely accessed and downloaded online through COL and *infoDev* websites.

www.col.org/consultancies



ICT TRANSFORMS KENYAN SCHOOL

Isiolo Girls Secondary School is a boarding school with an enrolment of about 200 students located in a rural area of Kenya. In September 2005, Isiolo became the launch school in Kenya for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) e-Schools Initiative. This demonstration project is equipping six schools in 16 African countries with state-of-the-art information and communication technology (ICT) including satellite dishes, Internet connectivity and even electricity sources where necessary. Teachers are trained in the use of ICT, and the schools receive learning materials.

Isiolo got a new computer lab with 24 desktops networked with a server, plus computers in the Principal's office and staff room. All have Internet access. A new media room has a computer with Internet access and a TV with satellite dish that can access channels such as Mindset and Discovery. A VCR can record programmes.

Isiolo's teachers, most of whom had little or no experience with computers, received a week of training, followed by shorter sessions. The teachers continue to develop their skills through peer training.

The impact of ICT on this school has been dramatic. Enrolment immediately rose significantly. The school's image has greatly improved, thanks to achievements such as taking first place at a provincial congress on science and technology. ICT have been incorporated into the teaching of most subjects. There is widespread enthusiasm and pride in their school among teachers, students and the broader community. Isiolo is starting to realise its vision of being "an oasis of excellence", according to Principal Florence Achacha.

The challenges faced by Isiolo are common to most schools in Africa. The supply of electricity is erratic, Internet access is spotty because of poor telecom infrastructure and there is a lack of technical maintenance support when computers malfunction.

COL and *infoDev* led monitoring and evaluation of the e-Schools demonstration project and published a report on the progress to date in September 2007. The report is available on COL's website.

www.eafricancommission.org/nepad_eschool_initiative.html

www.col.org/consultancies



M.C. PANT, CHAIRMAN OF NIOS

TRAINING FOR LEARNER SUPPORT

A Learner Support Training package developed jointly by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and COL was released at a special function in New Delhi on 1 December 2007. The package contains six open and distance learning modules for training different personnel involved in learner support at NIOS. It will be used to train academic counsellors, co-ordinators and academic facilitators in over 3,000 accredited institutions in India and abroad, said Mr. M.C. Pant, Chairman of NIOS.

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY IN THE CARIBBEAN

Forty students have begun the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes at the University College of the Caribbean. The CEMBA/CEMPA classes, which are being held at three locations in Jamaica, will be completed in 18 months of part-time study.

The CEMBA/CEMPA programmes are designed to help developing nations meet the need for professionals who can contribute to economic growth and good governance. Degrees and diplomas are granted by licensee partner universities in Bangladesh, the Caribbean, Ghana, Guyana, India, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka. The programmes were developed under COL's leadership and launched in 2002.

www.col.org/cebma



QA TOOLKIT FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

In association with COL, India's National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has released a toolkit aimed at enhancing quality in teacher education. The toolkit, which is available to ministries of education and teacher education institutions in the Commonwealth, includes three elements:

- an introduction to quality assurance in higher education,
- quality indicators for teachers' education, and

- an anthology of best practices in the field.

The toolkit was developed with the involvement of over 300 teacher educators and administrators from 20 countries in the Commonwealth. It was released at the NAAC-COL Joint Forum on "Quality Assurance for Teacher Education" in Bangalore, India in December 2007.

TRAINING IN LEGISLATIVE DRAFTING

Legislative drafting is one of the most demanding areas in law. COL's Legislative Drafting programme was developed in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat and introduced in 1992 to help address the shortage of expertise in legislative drafting in many Commonwealth countries. The distance education course serves as both an introduction to drafting and as an upgrade for practicing professionals.

The programme is now offered by Athabasca University in Canada, the National Open University of Nigeria and the University of the South Pacific (USP). More than 230 people have graduated with their Professional Diploma in Legislative Drafting from USP. Graduates of the programme have held a wide variety of legal and government positions, including crown counsel, legal officers, magistrates, police officers, academics, solicitors and members of parliament.

Mr. Krishn Shah is a barrister and solicitor with the High Court of Fiji who completed the PDL in 2007. He



KRISHN SHAH

says the course is helping him contribute to the reform of the country's laws, many of which need updating.

"Sector reforms require programme and legislative reviews, drafting of new laws or the redrafting of existing laws," he explained. "As a lawyer, I am now better qualified to contribute to these reforms. The PDL is benefiting both me and the region."

Educational institutions that are interested in offering the Professional Diploma in Legislative Drafting are asked to contact Ms. Ruvani Ameresekere, COL Programme Assistant, at rameresekere@col.org.

www.col.org/LegislativeDrafting



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA BEGINS DISTANCE EDUCATION

More than 1,000 students have been admitted into the University of Ghana, Legon's first Distance Learning programme in Bachelor of Arts and Science degrees. The programme, which is run by the university's Institute of Adult Education, costs about half of what on-campus students pay. Students can attend tutorials and interact with lecturers from time to time at study centres across the country.

For the first year, the university is offering Faculty of Arts and Social Studies courses with initial programmes in geography, resource development, economics, sociology, psychology and linguistics. The plan is to develop and add more courses in coming years.

www.ug.edu.gh



FREE ONLINE LEARNING FROM U.K. OPEN UNIVERSITY

OpenLearn is an online learning environment that uses materials taken from U.K. Open University courses. The courses are available for free to anyone, anywhere in the world. Learners can choose from more than 5,000 hours of learning content in subject areas including art, business, education, science and technology. Using materials designed especially for distance learning, learners can also participate in online discussions and video conferences. Educators are also invited to reuse and remix open educational resources.

Launched in October 2006, OpenLearn is a pilot project funded by a grant from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

www.open.ac.uk/openlearn



REBECCA NDIRUKU / © COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

COMMONWEALTH
SECRETARY-GENERAL
DON MCKINNON
WITH YOUNG
LEARNERS AT
A SOLAR-POWERED
COMPUTER STATION
IN UGANDA

COMMONWEALTH CONNECTS LAUNCHES "HOLE-IN-THE-WALL" IN UGANDA

A new community-based computer learning station has been introduced to provide Internet access to a community in Kampala, Uganda. The \$US 100,000 "Hole-in-the-Wall" project launched in conjunction with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in November 2007 by Commonwealth Connects in collaboration with the Government of India is aimed at enhancing access to information and communication technology (ICT) through solar-powered computer terminals.

The Hole-in-the-Wall project, which features four computer terminals installed at a solar-powered learning station in the community at Kiswa, located just east of Kampala, is designed to address the development needs of the young people. The original Hole-in-the-Wall was developed by Dr. Sugata Mitra who placed a computer in a slum near his office in India and monitored how it was used. Dr. Mitra was a keynote speaker at COL's Fourth

Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in 2006. The goal is to provide young people with access to the Internet for information-gathering, knowledge acquisition and skills development, which will enable them to compete on a level playing field in the face of globalisation.

In launching the Hole-in-the-Wall project in Kampala, Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon said ICT access is critical in changing the lives of young people.

"If kids do not participate in ICT, they're marginalised," said Mr McKinnon. "If millions of kids lose out on ICT, we'll pay for it in the end as these children will be left out of the opportunities that ICT can bring to them. Hopefully we can see this project multiplied many times all over the developing world because we must make available this kind of information to kids by educating them through technology."

www.commonwealthconnects.org

MOBILE PHONES FOR AFRICA

A United Nations programme that is combating poverty in rural Africa is putting mobile phones in the hands of nearly half a million people by hooking up 79 villages in 10 African countries to cellular networks.

The UN Millennium Villages programme, a collaboration between the Earth Institute at Columbia University in New York and the UN, aims to improve healthcare, education and local economies by providing access to mobile phones. An increase of 10 mobile phones per 100 people could increase GDP growth by 0.6 percent, according to a 2005 study.

The infrastructure, as well as solar chargers for phones, are provided free of charge by mobile firm Ericsson. Services are run and charged for by local operators. In most countries, Ericsson

will install a "2G network" (second generation technology) that can handle voice calls as well as data downloads of around 200 kilobits per second (ps). The first village to receive the telecom services was Mayange, Rwanda in October 2007.

The Millennium Villages are located in hunger "hotspots" characterised by chronic hunger, a high prevalence of disease, limited medical care and a severe lack of infrastructure. By extending the mobile network to people who would not normally be a priority for mobile phone firms, this project has the potential to empower marginalised populations. The arrival of mobile phones can also stimulate entrepreneurship as people discover how the new technology can lead to new services and solutions.

www.unmillenniumproject.org

AFRICA: BUILDING CAPACITY FOR MATERIALS DESIGN AND PRODUCTION



Educators from eight nations took part in a learning materials development workshop hosted by Mindset Network in Randburg, South Africa in September. COL sponsored the workshop, which brought together education specialists from Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Tanzania and Zambia.

Over 10 days, participants designed a package of video, print and computer-based learning material. They then took the materials through the various stages of production in Mindset's television studios, graphic design department and edit suites. The workshop was designed to be interactive and "hands on", giving delegates the opportunity to tailor the materials for their particular needs

and learning environment. Many participants were used to working in print only, and the exposure to the other media was exciting and opened up new possibilities for them. At the conclusion of the workshop, each country's products were displayed and constructively reviewed by the group. Each participant went home with a CD of their video, print materials and interactive lesson.

Mindset Network is a non-profit, South African organisation that supports the personal, social and economic development of all people in Africa by creating quality educational resources for primary and secondary schools, healthcare, technical/vocational education and under-resourced communities.

AFRICA: OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO TVET

In support of its efforts to promote Learning for Livelihoods, COL participated in an African Development Bank workshop that focussed on "the intermediate level skills gap". The meeting in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso explored how to use technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to stimulate economic growth.

Obstacles to effective TVET in Africa include inadequate quantity and quality of teaching staff, obsolete infrastructure and teaching aids, and lack of links with the job market. This workshop provided an avenue for sharing African and international experiences on TVET and identifying best African practices. COL Education Specialist Mr. Joshua Mallet spoke about "Transnational Practices in TVET". COL and the African Development Bank are exploring opportunities to collaborate on TVET in Africa.

DELEGATES AT THE
INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON
ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION IN
INDIA



ASIA: EDUCATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

"Environment education towards a sustainable future" was the theme of the 4th International Conference on Environmental Education (ICEE) in November 2007 in Ahmedabad, India. More than 1,000 educators, scientists and environmentalists from about 100 countries attended the conference, which was hosted by the Government of India and sponsored by UNESCO, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Government of India.

The 4th ICEE offered a global platform for delegates to share practices, ideas and initiatives in environmental education. Group discussions and working sessions were conducted on various themes, including the role of open and distance learning in environmental education.

"Education for sustainable development must reach the masses," said COL President

Sir John Daniel in an address to the conference. This means focussing on those who can multiply the message, cultivating lifelong environmental learning and using mass media and other technologies, he explained.

Sir John also introduced the online version of the *Green Teacher* programme. Developed by COL and India's Centre for Environmental Education, *Green Teacher* is a one-year Diploma in Environmental Education for teachers and educators. Introduced in 2005 as a distance education programme, *Green Teacher* has been digitised, which allows both online and blended learning. This will extend the reach of a programme that is changing how teachers, their pupils and the wider community are thinking about the environment and sustainable development.

TOWARDS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF NC LICENSES

By Virginia Rutledge, Vice President and General Counsel, Creative Commons

Education is one of the most important contexts in which Creative Commons licenses can enable greater sharing and reuse of materials. CC's recently launched educational division, ccLearn, is dedicated to realising the full potential of the Internet to support open learning and open educational resources (OERs). Helping to make CC licenses work better for educational purposes is a key part of ccLearn's mission.

As CC licenses have been adopted around the globe, it has become apparent that there is great interest in the availability of the "non-commercial" or "NC" license term. At the same time, there is great confusion regarding the application of this term to some uses. As part of our ongoing efforts to provide free (including lawyer-free) licenses that clearly communicate what licensors intend, CC is undertaking a major study of the meaning of "non-commercial". Our aim is to collect empirical research on how different communities understand and use this term. This information and related analysis will be released to the public early in 2009.

The results of the study will certainly guide future work on CC's license suite. In the shorter term, we will continue working to clarify the NC term through our discussion groups and via the materials available on our website.

Answering the question "Is it non-commercial?" can be difficult, both because the law is not completely settled, and because there are differences in its interpretation, especially across jurisdictions. For example, a recurrent question in the educational context, and one of the most debated, is whether the NC restriction allows a user to charge for copying and distributing the licensed material and for associated overhead expenses including salaries, irrespective of the user's business status (non-profit, for-profit, government). Some believe that the for-profit status of the business itself should preclude this; others disagree.

CC considers intent to be the primary test of whether a use is noncommercial. If the intent of a particular use is to generate profit, that use is commercial. Under this reasoning, cost recovery per se is not a commercial use.

A "status" rule would resolve many of the current questions, simply by providing certainty. But such a rule would also foreclose some important uses. The best solution is not obvious at the moment, at least not to CC. What is obvious is that a solution is needed. We invite the spectrum of the educational communities to weigh in. Meanwhile, of course, another option is always to seriously consider whether the NC term is really necessary.

www.creativecommons.org



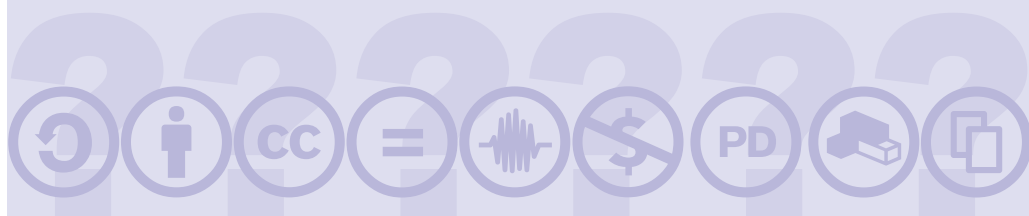
OERs WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS IN GHANA

AFRICA: OERs FOR LIVELIHOODS

Educators from 11 West African countries took part in a training workshop on open educational resources (OERs) in Ghana in August 2007. The workshop, which was supported by UNESCO and COL, was hosted by the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. It was held at the Winneba Open Digital Village, an information and communication technology (ICT) project supported by COL's Poverty Reduction Outcomes Through Education and Information Networks (COL-PROTEIN) programme.

The OERs workshop brought together people from the Commonwealth and la Francophonie. The focus was on building the capacity of participants to develop learning content using free and open source software technologies. Each person produced learning materials in their area of expertise, and learned how to enhance the content with illustrations, images and animation.

Representatives from the four French-speaking countries also decided to launch a French chapter of Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education (FLOSS4Edu). An initiative of WikiEducator, the FLOSS4Edu project is building a thriving community of teachers sharing knowledge to widen access to quality learning opportunities.



UPCOMING EVENTS

<p>WORLD INDIGENOUS TELEVISION BROADCASTING CONFERENCE</p> <p>26-28 March 2008 Auckland, New Zealand www.witbc.org</p>	<p>eLEARNING AFRICA</p> <p>3RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON ICT FOR DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING</p> <p>28-30 May 2008 Accra, Ghana www.elearning-africa.com</p>	<p>FIFTH PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING</p> <p>13-17 July 2008, University of London "Access to Learning for Development" www.col.org/pcf5</p>
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OPEN SCHOOLING FOR SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION: COST AND EFFECTIVENESS IN INDIA AND NAMIBIA

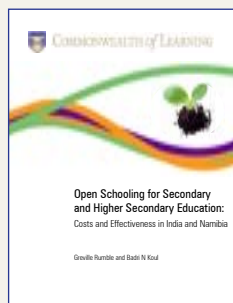
By Greville Rumble and Badri N. Koul

“Open Schooling for Secondary and Higher Education” explores the provision of secondary level Open Schooling in India and Namibia, which are significantly different in their basic characteristics. The study examines the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) in India and the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL). The focus is on issues such as cost-benefit of the open school model, student profiles, how open schools complement the formal system, learner success, course development, open school

management and quality assurance.

The study was carried out by two experts in the field, Professor Badri N. Koul, who researched NIOS, and Professor Greville Rumble, who researched NAMCOL, and is available on COL’s website.

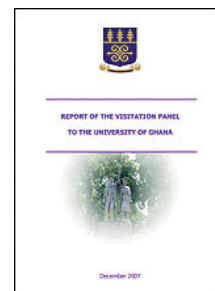
www.col.org/consultancies



REPORT OF THE VISITATION PANEL TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

The University of Ghana invited a panel of international scholars and experts, chaired by COL President Sir John Daniel, to review its activities and recommend steps that would enhance its role as Ghana’s premier university and research institution and enable it to become a leader in global higher education. The Visitation Panel conducted two week-long visits in April and August 2007. Their findings and recommendations for action are laid out in this report.

www.col.org/GhanaVisitation



TOWARDS A COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING: TWENTY YEARS OF PROGRESS

Report of the Commonwealth of Learning to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), Kampala, Uganda, November 2007

This report shows how COL has expanded learning in support of the goals and aspirations expressed by Heads of Governments at their meetings over the past 20 years.

www.col.org/reporting

INSTITUTIONAL TRIAL QUALITY AUDIT FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

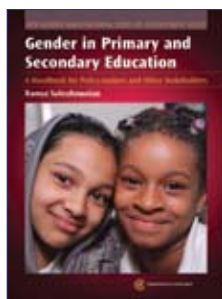
In preparation for a Quality Assurance audit by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the South African Council on Higher Education, the University of South Africa (Unisa) invited COL to undertake a trial audit. COL established a panel of distance learning specialists to undertake this audit in June 2007. The Trial Audit Panel’s report includes an overview of Quality Assurance management at Unisa, comments and suggestions for Unisa to consider, and Commendations and Recommendations based on the audit criteria set by the HEQC.

www.col.org/UnisaTrialAudit

GENDER IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION: A HANDBOOK FOR POLICY-MAKERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

By Ramya Subrahmanian, 2007

A new title in the Commonwealth Secretariat’s New Gender Mainstreaming Series on Development Issues, this book has



been written in the context of rapidly expanding education systems worldwide, and particularly the rising enrolment of girls in schools. The author argues that now the challenge of gender mainstreaming goes beyond building schools and ensuring access to sustaining these gains to secure the future of education for girls. Thus gender mainstreaming in education needs to address the more strategic questions of the relationship between education and wider development and change, and of the relationships between men and women in a rapidly changing world. The handbook is essential reading for civil servants involved in education sector management, policy planners, education policy analysts and professionals, civil society organisers and academics.

www.thecommonwealth.org/publications

A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE OPEN UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA

By T. Rajagopalan

This report examines the growth of State Open Universities in India, starting with the launch of the first state open university in 1982. It explores issues such as cost, course offerings, student support and quality assurance. The report also looks at the role of Indira Gandhi National Open University’s Distance Education Council in training and funding of state open universities.

FLEXIBLE HIGHER EDUCATION: REFLECTIONS FROM EXPERT EXPERIENCE

Edited by Elizabeth Burge

This book analyses the work of over 40 pioneers who helped drive recent changes in higher education via distance education. It examines issues such as coping with traditional resistance, developing new teaching and learning models, and use of technology. One of the chapters is authored by COL’s President, Sir John Daniel.

“Flexible Higher Education” will be of interest to post-secondary educators who are interested in learning and teaching design, quality assurance, learner access and inclusion, innovation in higher education and respect for reflective wisdom. It is available for £29.99 from Open University Press. Sir John’s Chapter, “Reflections on a Career in Distance Education” (January 2007), is available at no charge on COL’s website.

<http://mcgraw-hill.co.uk/html/0335217761>

www.col.org/speeches07

BOARD NEWS

The Acting Chair of COL's Board of Governors, His Excellency, the Honourable Burchell Whiteman, O.J., is pleased to announce three new appointments for three-year terms:

Mr. R.P. Agarwal has been appointed to the Board as the representative for India. The Secretary to the Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Human Resources, he is responsible for the development of higher education, particularly the issues of access, equity and quality. Shri Agarwal has held a variety of government posts, including Deputy Chief of Mission for the Embassy of India in Belgium and Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. He was also responsible for industrial and commercial development in the State of Andhra Pradesh. Mr. Agarwal is a regular faculty member at several public administration and staff colleges in India.



The Honourable Dr. Dame Carol Kidu is the Board's new Pacific representative. As Minister for Community Development,

Women, Religion and Sports in Papua New Guinea, Dame Kidu has spearheaded major initiatives related to poverty reduction, access to learning for all, development strategies for the informal sector and human rights, particularly the rights of women, children and indigenous people. She has served on the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarian Committee, the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Advisory Panel on Poverty and Social Development and the UNDP Advisory Panel on HIV/AIDS. The first female cabinet minister in her country's history, Dame Kidu was awarded the Imperial Award of Dame of the British Empire in 2005.



Dr. Linda Sissons, CEO of the Wellington Institute of Technology, has been appointed to the Board as the representative for New Zealand. Her experience includes working in management roles at post-secondary institutions. Dr. Sissons is on the Board of the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand and is Vice President of the Wellington Chamber of Commerce. She has been a member of a number of Government commissions including Tertiary Education Advisory Commission, a commission into the Learning for Life reforms and a Committee of Enquiry into Industrial Democracy. A Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (CNZM), Dr. Sissons holds a PhD from London University and is a graduate of the Harvard Business School Advanced Management Programme.



The Board offers its thanks to **Mr. Sudeep K. Banerjee**, who served as the Government of India's representative on the Board and has now retired from government service, and to Kiribati Vice-President, **the Honourable Teima Onorio**, and **Dr. Penina Mlana** who completed their terms on the Board at the end of 2007. Professor Mlana has joined CAMFED Tanzania as Executive Director. CAMFED is an international organisation dedicated to eradicating poverty in Africa through the education of girls and the empowerment of young women. A champion of education for girls and women, Professor Mlana was previously Executive Director of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE).

STAFF NEWS

Mr. Ian Pringle has joined COL as Education Specialist, Media. He has worked with community and public media for the past 20 years, in Canada, where he was born and raised, and later in South Asia and internationally. Mr. Pringle's experience includes working in Nepal for the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation as an advisor to Radio Sagarmatha, South Asia's first independent radio broadcaster. In 2002, he joined UNESCO's Regional Bureau for Communication and Information in New Delhi, managing programmes in community media and new information and communication technology (ICT). In 2006, he began an assignment at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris to co-ordinate the organisation's community multimedia initiatives, with a focus on scaling-up community media centres in Africa.



A skilled and experienced media specialist with broad international experience and strong interests in innovation, social change and policy environments, Mr. Pringle will manage and direct a portfolio of interventions around the Commonwealth in the use of mass media for health and community development.

Mr. Pringle takes over from **Mr. David Walker**, who made a tremendous contribution across the Commonwealth by facilitating the use of mass media for development purposes, especially in health and agriculture. Mr. Walker led numerous initiatives that empowered people in developing countries to use community radio and video to address challenges such as HIV/AIDS prevention, agriculture, skills development, teacher education, poverty alleviation and food security.



Former COL Education Specialist, **Ms. Patricia McWilliams**, passed away in November 2007 while in Bangladesh working on an ADB-funded teacher education project. Ms. McWilliams was on COL's staff as Education Specialist, Training, from 1993 to 2000. Upon her departure, she relocated to Southern Africa and became a consultant. Prior to joining COL, she was Co-ordinator, Distance Education with the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST, Canada). She leaves her daughter, Heather, and her son, Ian.



Connections

FEBRUARY 2008 | VOLUME 13, 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.

Acting Chair:

His Excellency, the Honourable Burchell Whiteman, o.j.
President & CEO: Sir John Daniel

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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 | WEB: www.col.org

Editor-in-chief: Dave Wilson

Managing editor: Karen Speirs

Contributing writer: Grace Chin

Layout: Alex Hennig



BUILD YOUR OWN NEWS FEED

News feeds, also known as news aggregators or RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds, reduce the effort required to check websites for updates. The drawback of these feeds is that the volume of articles can be overwhelming, especially if you like to have feeds from general news sites such as the BBC but are only interested in one topic.

A new free tool from Yahoo called Yahoo Pipes allows users to build their own news feed. Multiple news feeds from different sites can be combined but with one big improvement: filtering.

This allows for a news feed to be built that is more useful and relevant. For example, a feed that COL has built for copyright issues contains RSS feeds from 33 different sites. Without the ability to filter some general sites like the BBC, the

Globe and Mail, Reuters or even dedicated sites like IP-Watch, the number of articles returned would be well over 800 on most days. With the filtering (which can include descriptors such as the age of the article and keywords), the number of articles is reduced to a much more manageable 40 to 50 items.

To date, COL has built a number of news pipes for subjects such as Copyright, Open Educational Resources, Governance, Gender, and Open and Distance Learning issues. You can either visit www.col.org when you want to check news and just click on the relevant link. The news is automatically updated each time the link is clicked. Or you can subscribe to the feed or receive email alerts daily or as changes are made.

www.col.org/newsfeeds



ALTERNATIVES TO MICROSOFT OFFICE

Desktop computers use productivity suites to offer tools for reading, writing and many other applications. While Microsoft dominates the market, your needs may be met by other alternatives ranging from free programmes to full suites.



LOW-COST ICT USER DEVICES

infoDev has developed an inventory of low-cost computing devices and initiatives for the developing world. The products range from small research projects at universities to commercial products in various stages of development. The list includes a number of inexpensive computers, including One Laptop Per Child, the most recognised, if not the most widespread, of low-cost computing initiatives.

infoDev is a partnership of international development agencies, co-ordinated and served by an expert Secretariat housed in the Global ICT Department of the World Bank, one of its key donors and founders.

www.infodev.org/devices-list

Making the right choice is all about matching your needs to what is offered. Here are some features worth noting:

- Corel WordPerfect Office X3 offers simple PDF, HTML and XML publishing.
- StarOffice 8 features basic productivity tools plus extras such as a drawing program.
- OpenOffice 2 is Sun's version of StarOffice...for free.
- IBM is offering a free test version of its Lotus Symphony suite, which is compatible with Windows and Linux.
- Online Web 2.0 services include Google Docs & Spreadsheets and ThinkFree (a blend of desktop and Web tools).
- Zoho is a browser-based service that plugs directly into Microsoft Office to store work on your hard drive and Zoho's servers.
- While Microsoft Office 2007 doesn't support the Open Document Format favoured by the free content community, Sun offers a free plug-in that enables you to save ODF files in Microsoft Office.

For a detailed comparison of many of the popular software choices, go to http://reviews.cnet.com/4520-3524_7-5140428-2.html.

PORTABLE APPLICATIONS

Increasingly, computer users are carrying their own programmes, settings and data on pocket hard drives, or memory sticks. A number of software publishers are releasing portable versions of their products.

A popular one-stop source is PortableApps, a suite of completely free, open-source mini-apps for flash drives. These miniature - but full-featured - Windows applications run entirely from your USB flash drive, without installing anything on the host computer.

The DataTraveler II Plus USB flash drive allows you to work on multiple PCs in different locations, using your own desktop's Microsoft Outlook email contents, Microsoft Internet Explorer settings, favourites, cookies and history, plus your files, folders and icons.

Ceedo Personal and MojoPac let you carry your programmes and data on any portable storage gadget, including a thumb drive, iPod or memory stick.

Most products are under \$US 50; PortableApps is free.

www.portableapps.com
www.kingston.com/Migo
www.ceedo.com/
www.mojopac.com