Report on the Regional Focal Points Meeting PACIFIC

MARCH 23-24, 2023
FIJI
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Overview

The Pacific Regional Focal Point meeting was held in Lautoka, Fiji, 23-24 March 2023. The two-day meeting was chaired by Professor Asha Kanwar, President and CEO, Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and co-facilitated by Dr Venkataraman Balaji, Vice President COL, Dr Betty Ogan – Education Specialist: Teacher Education COL and Dr Tony Mays – Education Specialist: Open Schooling COL. Representatives from eight out of nine Pacific Commonwealth countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu) participated in the meeting. The list of participants and agenda of the meeting are included as Annex 1 and 2, respectively.

Objectives

The objectives of the two-day Regional Focal Points Meeting were to:

1. Share the key elements of the COL Strategic Plan 2021-2027 and discuss how the outcomes and impact will be evaluated.
2. Identify three to five national priorities in education and skills development and discuss how COL can address these.
3. Share a report on COL activities in each country.
4. Discuss the key elements of a Green Learning Agenda and the role of the education sector.
5. Highlight the role of Focal Points and how COL can strengthen the network.

**Expected Outcomes**

1. Identification of specific national and regional priorities that can be implemented within the context of COL’S Strategic Plan 2021-2027. This would include an action plan for adopting OER and a Green Learning Agenda.
2. Concrete collaborations between different stakeholders established.
3. Focal Point network strengthened.

**Proceedings of the Meeting**

**Day 1: 23 March 2023**

**Inaugural Session and Welcome Address**

Dr Balaji, Vice President COL, formally welcomed the participants which was followed by self-introduction of the participants.

Professor Asha Kanwar, COL’s President and CEO welcomed the Focal Points and representatives of the Governments and informed them that COL usually organises in-person Focal Point meetings every two to three years. However, due to the pandemic, such face-to-face meetings became untenable. With Covid-19 restrictions lifted, it became possible to resume these meetings. The first was held in New Delhi for Asian Focal Points at the end of 2022 and was followed by regional meetings for the Caribbean and Africa/Europe. The current meeting was the last of the current series and came at a time when COL’s investment in the region had been significantly enhanced through the Partnership for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning (ODFL) in the Pacific initiative, which was to be discussed in a separate meeting on 25 March 2023.

Elaborating the objectives of the present meeting, Professor Kanwar stated that the priorities related to education and skills sectors in the member countries of the Pacific would facilitate the development of country-specific concrete action plans in-line with COL’s Strategic Plan 2021-27. She highlighted that COL, as an inter-governmental organisation, works with Governments and organisations to strengthen social inclusion, economic growth and environmental conservation to promote learning for sustainable development.

In her welcome address, Professor Kanwar focused on four paradigm shifts led by COL and illustrated them with examples from COL initiatives. These are:
• **If the child cannot go to school, the school comes to the child:** Cost of open schooling in India as compared to Kendriya Vidyalaya (Central School) is 1:12, and in Namibia, the cost is approximately 1:4 for formal secondary school and the Namibian College of Open Learning.

• **Technology-enabled learning can break open the ivory towers of tertiary education:** There are now 33 open universities in the commonwealth catering to over 4 million learners.

• **Open Education Resources (OER) are the answer to closed and costly textbooks:** Studies in Bangladesh and Malaysia show that students do not buy textbooks due to heavy cost, and OER can mitigate this challenge.

• **The digital divide can be transformed into digital dividend:** COL has developed AptusPi, which was distributed in many nations around the Commonwealth, including Fiji, to help store OER content for offline access by learners and teachers.

Professor Kanwar also shared highlights, priority areas and key trends which had arisen from the previous three Focal Point meetings.

She concluded her address by emphasising the role of COL in three bullet points that COL:

• Promotes ‘learning for sustainable development’
• Supports innovations for affordable and accessible technologies
• Serves the last person in the queue.

After the opening address, Dr Balaji called for the formal adoption of the meeting agenda, which was approved.
Session 1: Covid-19 Shaping Education for Future

Professor Kanwar described the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had had on education systems worldwide and shared how emergency remote learning during Covid-19 impacted educational institutions, students, teachers and society. While educational institutions were closed, they faced severe financial crises due to low revenue generation. Many of them lacked the technological infrastructure to offer online learning, and this unforeseen and unplanned transition affected them severely. The teachers, too, had a difficult time adjusting to both synchronous and asynchronous modes of learning through technology. Most of them lacked the capability to use digital technologies and digital platforms for the new ways of adopting teaching-learning. The students suffered the most due to heavy workloads, and many of them reported a decline in performance. They also suffered from lack of access to Internet and bandwidth. The ‘digital divide’ further aggravated access to quality education, as online learning was determined by access to appropriate devices and connectivity. The pandemic also affected learners’ psycho-emotional well-being. At the societal level, Covid-19 exacerbated existing inequalities, especially gender-based inequalities, and indirect learning loss due to illiteracy or low educational attainments of parents.

Though there were challenges, the pandemic had had an unseen benefit, emphasised Professor Kanwar. It brought into prominence blended and online learning. It affirmed that online learning is not just an option, but a great opportunity. Hence, technological infrastructure improvement is a priority for educational institutions. She also referred to other emerging trends noticed in the educational ecosystem because of the pandemic, such as:

- Blurring of boundaries between campus and open institutions, with more institutions offering online learning.
- Priority accorded to mental health and well-being of staff and students.
- Increased focus on regulatory frameworks to maintain quality of education.
- Mainstreaming micro-credentials and short courses for employability.
- Capacity building of teachers in using digital technology and digital platforms.
- Focus on OER, and growth of self-directed learning.
- Increased use of massive open and online course (MOOC) platforms, but low completion rates. In this context, Professor Kanwar referred to how COL addressed it through the help desk, counselling and blended learning support to reach the unreached.

The President posited how COL is preparing for education in the post Covid-19 world with increased focus on addressing the challenges of inequality, access, quality and inclusion. The following are some of the measures adopted by COL:

- Use of targeted approaches and principles of universal design for learning.
- Supporting teachers through capacity building.
- Promoting innovative approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment.
- Harnessing appropriate technologies.
- Curricula review to adapt to online learning.
- Promoting collaboration between education stakeholders.
• Advocating for increased fund allocation for education.

In the context of education in the coming years, Professor Kanwar emphasised that blended learning is the future. She also shared other emerging technology trends and practices that would determine and dominate future education, such as artificial intelligence (AI) supported, blended and hybrid course models; learning analytics; and micro-credentials. Education should be inclusive to cater to the needs of persons with disabilities, women, and disadvantaged/marginalised groups. It should promote life-long learning by creating an ecosystem around it.

Another area that Professor Kanwar highlighted in her presentation was employability – education and qualification should equip people for employability. To achieve it, she suggested:

• Need for a balance between theory and practice – learners should be taught a combination of hard and soft skills to prepare them for employment.
• Encouragement for industry to provide internships and apprenticeships.
• Career support for learners.
• Focusing on measuring capability rather than number of years spent in educational institutions.

Professor Kanwar concluded the session by stating that, in a nutshell, *Education for the Future* should:

• be affordable and accessible to all
• use forms of blended learning should be used in a form appropriate for context, and
• promote models for sustainable behaviours for the people and the planet.

In the discussion that followed, delegates affirmed the need for increased focus on social inclusion and well-being; the need for key data to be backed up locally; offshore and in the Cloud; challenges for schools reliant on student fees when campuses need to close; increasing need for support to parents for home-based learning; improved cyber-security; improved and affordable connectivity; capacity-building for learners, teachers, managers and parents/care-givers; and the need to digitize the curriculum with OER.

The President also suggested the need for a research project on technology innovation in the Pacific so that countries could learn from one another’s experiences, including efforts at deployment of technology for post-Covid-19 teaching and learning.

**Session 2: Role of Focal Points**

In this session, Dr Balaji provided the Focal Points with an opportunity to consolidate their understanding of COL and to help the Focal Points understand their role. Dr Balaji started with a quiz and then summarised the key roles of Focal Points -- all based on content readily available on COL’s website. It was noted that Focal Points play a key mediating role between keeping COL informed of changing country priorities and keeping ministers informed about COL’s activities in each country.
In a subsequent discussion on challenges and mitigation factors, it was noted that there is often a high turnover in Ministries due to elections and other reasons, so there is a frequent need for Focal Points to brief new staff on COL and the motivation for making voluntary contributions to the organisation.

It was noted that during the Covid-19 pandemic, there was increased interest among Ministry staff and teachers in the possibilities of ODL. However, as institutions have re-opened, there has been a tendency to return to business as usual.

There is a need for regular updates from COL for Focal Points on the activities happening in a particular country even if the Ministry is not directly involved. It is important to note that Ministries work with many different partners. As a result, opportunities to improve impacts through collaborations between partners can only be leveraged if there is clarity on who is doing what, where and when.

**Session 3: Country Reports from Focal Points – Sharing of the priorities and findings**

Dr Betty Ogange presented the summary of country reports received from the Focal Points of all nine Pacific Island Country members as detailed below. The country report for New Zealand arrived late and was therefore not included in the presentation.

**Status of ODL and technology infrastructure**

- **Fiji** is working on integrating technology into the classroom. The country is working towards adopting open and distance learning (ODL).
• **In Kiribati**, the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for ODL, and the country is working towards a blended approach to teaching.
• **Nauru** has limited ODL options, but the government is working to establish a policy.
• **Papua New Guinea** has seen a significant increase in demand for open schooling and is actively working on online learning solutions.
• **Samoa** has taken a multimodal approach to ODL during the pandemic, including upgrading infrastructure and implementing ICT policies.
• **Solomon Islands** is also working on expanding ODL options to areas without Internet connectivity.
• **Tonga** is working on increasing Internet access and seeking support to develop an ODL policy.
• **Tuvalu** currently relies on the University of the South Pacific for online learning and is exploring options for providing more resources for TVET.
• **Vanuatu** has a draft ODL policy but is facing challenges in implementing it due to lack of resources and training.

**Commonalities**

- All countries are embracing technology in education delivery and recognise the importance of ODL and blended learning.
- Teacher training and upskilling is a priority across all countries.
- Technical and vocational education and skills development is an area of focus for all countries.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for remote learning solutions and has accelerated the adoption of technology in education.

**Covid-19 educational disruption: key actions towards recovery**

- **Fiji**: Learning recovery programs and partnerships with community organisations are being implemented.
- **Kiribati**: The Ministry of Education is seeking support to improve the capacity of teachers to develop and implement remote learning and teaching.
- **Nauru**: Extra school days were added to the academic calendar, and a focus on ODL is seen as a crucial option for future disruptions.
- **Samoa**: Has implemented several initiatives, including the Samoa Knowledge Society Initiative, Skills for Work Project and a National University Covid recovery Moodle workplan.
- **Solomon Islands**: The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development has launched its National Education Action Plan.
- **Tonga** implemented an emergency approach to learning delivery and extended the school year.
- **Tuvalu** trained teachers on online learning.
- **Vanuatu** developed Covid-19 contingency plans and safe school reopening guidelines.

**Technology and Internet for equity and inclusion**

- In **Fiji**, the government has provided funding for technology infrastructure and Internet connectivity in schools, with over 90% of primary and secondary schools connected.
• **Kiribati** has implemented a trial program providing tablets preloaded with resources and materials, with plans to expand and include more subjects, and is working to improve ICT capacity for female teachers.

• In **Papua New Guinea**, the use of all available resources and technologies, such as tablet PCs and Internet-based learning, is seen as essential for ensuring equitable access to education.

• In **Samoa**, access to educational technology remains a challenge, but recent projects have aimed to improve Internet connectivity and provide devices, such as tablets and laptops, for students and staff.

• The **Solomon Islands** and **Vanuatu** still face challenges in developing technology infrastructure for schools, with some schools lacking computer labs or experiencing network issues.

• In **Nauru**, the University of the South Pacific (USP) campus and the Nauru TVET Institution provide ODL facilities with free Internet connectivity for students.

**Inclusion and wellbeing**

• In **Fiji**, special and inclusive education policies guide all schools to provide additional support to students with disabilities.

• There are 18 special schools and 122 mainstream inclusive schools. Reasonable accommodation is provided during exams, and special grants are given to support assistive devices, transportation and additional services for students with disabilities.

• The Ministry of Education also employs classroom assistants and provides training to improve accessibility in schools.

• In countries such as **Kiribati** and **Tonga**, inclusive education is a new initiative that is slowly becoming more important, and policies are being developed to support it.

• **Papua New Guinea** has an ‘open school’ system that accepts students with various capacities.

• **Samoa** is addressing issues related to inclusive education and mental health in the context of Covid-19.

• In **Solomon Islands** and **Vanuatu**, there is still need for more support in this area, and children with disabilities face challenges in accessing education.

**Strengthening teacher development**

• In **Fiji**, teachers have access to various professional development opportunities.

• The Ministry of Education also provides training for teacher induction, child protection and gender-based issues.

• **Kiribati** Teachers College offers both pre-service and in-service training for teachers, including advanced diplomas in teaching and school leadership.

• The college is also developing a graduate certificate program for secondary school teachers without teaching qualifications.

• In **Nauru**, teacher training for entry-level primary and secondary teachers is outsourced to an Australian institution, while the government provides training for ECE teachers.

• In **Papua New Guinea**, teacher development activities are integrated into the academic calendar of the Flexible Open Distance Education (FODE), including national in-service training weeks and MOOC courses.
• **Samoa** provides continuous teacher professional development in all areas of the curriculum through the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC).
• Also partners with the University of the South Pacific to provide accelerated teacher upgrade training.
• The **Solomon Islands** National University provides both pre-service and in-service training for teachers in the Solomon Islands.
• **Tonga's** National University offers various programs in early childhood, primary and secondary education.
• **Vanuatu** Teachers College, which is transitioning to the Vanuatu National University's School of Education, offers various pre-service programs and is developing in-service training opportunities for teachers.

**Curriculum review and pedagogy**

• In **Fiji**, there is a need for continuous research to ensure a well-balanced education system that is sustainable and relevant to global trends.
• **Kiribati** has undergone curriculum reform for primary and junior secondary levels, and teachers are trained to deliver the new curriculum.
• **Nauru** is reviewing curricula, assessments and pedagogy as part of its efforts to improve literacy and numeracy rates.
• **Papua New Guinea** has implemented the Standard Based Curriculum (SBC) for all schools and Vocational Education Training and is increasing staff capacity for flexible open and distance learning.
• **Samoa** and **Solomon Islands** are reviewing their senior secondary curriculum.
• **Tonga** has conducted a review of their assessment policies and procedures, and a separate review of its English, mathematics and science curricula.
• **Tuvalu** is currently reviewing their curriculum under the Tuvalu Learning Project, while Vanuatu is planning to review their curriculum this year.

**Key issues**

**Kiribati**

• Need to improve boys' performance in school.
• Need to enhance capacity of women and girls in using ICT.
• Curriculum reform and teacher training in delivering new curriculum.

**Nauru**

• Need to promote self-sufficient agriculture for food security and livelihoods.
• Increase household engagement with agriculture and livestock.
• Teacher training in digital transformation and teaching resources.

**Papua New Guinea**

• Need for support in addressing gender-related issues.
• Implementation of standard-based curriculum for all schools and vocational education. training.
• Support for teacher upskilling and reskilling and online courses.
• Proposing ‘Floating Classrooms’ for remote areas without road network, access to education and basic services.

**Samoa**
• Need to achieve gender equality in education.
• Address higher dropout rates among boys in secondary education.
• Development of sustainable agriculture and horticulture curricula.
• Support for TVET and skills development.
• Continuous teacher professional development in all areas.

**Solomon Islands**
• Need for support in addressing gender-related issues.
• Review and improvement of senior secondary curriculum.
• Support for rural training centres, NGOs, and teacher professional development.

**Tonga**
• Need to address boys' underachievement in education.
• Expansion and improvement of teacher education and professional development.
• Partnership with COL to explore learning opportunities in agriculture and lifelong learning for farmers (L3F).
• Support for open schooling and skills development.

**Tuvalu**
• Need to address teacher qualification and capacity training.
• Curriculum review and development, especially for agriculture and TVET.
• Capacity building in ICT and online/blended learning.
Priority areas

Agriculture (Lifelong Learning for Farmers – L3F)
• Promoting self-sufficient agriculture and strengthening food security.
• Increasing household engagement with agriculture and livestock.
• Assistance for horticulture and sustainable agriculture curriculum.
• Developing smart apps for farmers.
• Support for rural training centres and non-government organisations.

Gender
• Addressing the issue of boys' underperformance.
• Training for teachers and NGOs on gender-related issues.
• Empowerment of boys and leadership training for women/girls.
• Partnership with NGOs to support / address gender-related issues.

Higher Education
• Developing an ICT infrastructure for delivery of online pre-service and in-service courses.
• Seamless transition from secondary school to local universities.
• Support for Bachelor degrees in Climate Change and Sustainable Agriculture.
• Support for Solomon Islands National University and Tonga National University's School of Agriculture.
• Augmenting ICT infrastructure and improved institutional effectiveness in leveraging ODL.

Secondary Schooling (Open Schooling/VUSSC)
• Professional development for teachers in online learning and ODL, including radio and TV.
• Developing course material for addressing gender violence.
• Supporting vocational training for secondary education.
• Research and policy development in this area.
• Seeking COL's assistance through VUSSC for skills development in the blue economy.

Teacher Education
• Developing capacity in ICT for teacher education.
• Provision of ICT infrastructure to enable access to ODL.
• Professional development for teachers in online learning and ODL, including radio and TV.
• Supporting teacher professional development for inclusive education practices.
• Strengthening institutional systems to use ODL, OER and TEL for expanding teacher development opportunities.

Technical, Vocational Education and Skills Development
• Providing training for agriculture/horticulture and RAC (Refrigeration and Air Conditioning).
• Developing TVETs Management Information System platform.
• Developing instructional design and technical support unit for multimodal, inclusive of TV and radio.
• Developing a TVET toolkit for online competency-based assessments.
• Entrepreneurship and IT training for tutors and capacity building in online/blended learning and course development.

**Other suggestions or comments**

• Kiribati is offering TVET in secondary schools to support students with low academic performance.
• Samoa has national priorities in promoting agriculture and fishing, labour mobility and micro-credentialing.
• Floating classrooms concept proposed for Papua New Guinea's remote areas.

**Session 4: Monitoring and Evaluation for Results**

Dr Tony Mays provided a detailed presentation on COL’s Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) approach to orient the Focal Point to the process and rigour in measuring outputs and outcomes. Given that many Focal Points were new or were being represented by people not necessarily familiar with COL, he started by providing an overview of the Strategic Plan – Theory of Change (ToC).

Speaking on the ToC adopted by COL, Dr Mays stated that it helps in assessing the changes brought about by interventions against the baseline status. The ToC is reflected in the logic model of COL’s various programme areas, which consist of activities and inputs – both financial and expertise, outputs, short term outcomes and long-term outcomes. In this model, the results are dependent on partnerships and collaborations.
The session was structured around a series of questions to try to encourage some engagement:

1. How will we know we have achieved the outputs, outcomes and impacts we have planned?
2. What would be the role of ministries or institutional partners in M&E?
3. Have you used any of these tools before? What are some of the benefits and challenges if using them?

Dr Mays informed delegates that for M&E, COL follows a results-based management (RBM) approach because it is outcomes-focused and results-oriented it involves every stakeholder; and includes cycles of planning, action, evidence gathering, analysing, learning and adapting and finally reporting/sharing. RBM helps in project-based activities; adaptation of existing programmes and designing of new programmes; internal coherence; external stakeholders’ buy-in; advocacy for funding and partnership. The key stakeholders in RBM include the internal team, partners, Senior Management and Board, member countries, donors, and wider interested communities.

The logic model is used for developing annual implementation plans for programme areas. The implementation is followed by M&E, which is conducted either by internal staff or external evaluators. Monitoring continues throughout the implementation period. It helps in understanding whether the process is fine; what can be done to improve it; and what could be changed.

Evaluation provides inputs for the next strategic plan. COL adopts a participatory evaluation process. Impact evaluation is the final step of M&E. It is based on secondary data, monitoring data, institutional data, participant surveys and interviews and observation of activities and events. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are used in impact evaluation. The main requirements for effective M&E are (i) common understanding of indicators, (ii) planning and agile approach to implementation, (iii) collection of data and evidence at regular intervals, (iv) clarity on ToC, and (v) minimising assumptions. Based on regular monitoring COL shares its progress quarterly with all stakeholders.

Dr Mays concluded his presentation by informing the participants that COL offers a course on M&E which is available on the MOOC4D platform.

Session 5: Introduction to ChatGPT

In the last session of the day, Dr Balaji introduced delegates to ChatGPT in an approach suggested by ChatGPT itself.
This involved asking ChatGPT to create texts ranging from a birthday poem to a Minister’s speech to explain the difference between two related but different technical concepts.

It was noted that ChatGPT is more effective and more accurate at some kinds of texts than others, but overall it could be a useful tool for teaching and would, hopefully, occasion the need to move from an assessment based on regurgitating standard answers to more authentic and personalised assessment.

He also demonstrated DALL.E2 -- a system which can create realistic images and art from a description in natural language.

He also mentioned that Google’s Bard platform had recently been launched, but noted that while much faster to operate, it synthesises and summarises existing text rather than creating new text.

Delegates found this session to be both eye-opening and entertaining, and an excellent way to end the first day.

Fiji Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, the Honourable Professor Biman Chand Prasad, welcomed delegates to Fiji during a cocktail function in the evening of the first day.
Day 2: 24 March 2023

The day started with a brief recapitulation of the previous day’s activities by Dr Balaji.

Session 6: Climate Change and Education – What can the Education sector Do?

In this session, Professor Kanwar presented how climate change is affecting the education system in Commonwealth countries and the need for integrating the Green Learning Agenda in education systems. This is a topical issue because the Commonwealth includes many small countries impacted by climate change. She mentioned that both climate change and the education system adversely affect each other. Referring to Bill Gates’ book, ‘How to Avoid a Climate Disaster,’ she stated that making cement, steel and plastic (all used in infrastructural construction) accounts for 31% of carbon emissions, followed by electricity (27%), growing plants and animals (19%), transportation (16%) and temperature regulation (7%).

She reported that COL had adopted the 4R strategies to mitigate carbon emissions:

- **Reduce** carbon emissions through distance learning. In Botswana, research on ODL and carbon emissions has shown that ODL helps in reducing carbon footprints.
- **Raise** awareness. In Dominica, the government is helping to raise awareness in the community on carbon emissions and its harmful impact.
- **Reskilling** for a greener future. COL is supporting educational institutions to develop courses and programmes that will support the blue skills economy. Professor Kanwar mentioned that COL has a MOOC on Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business offered in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius.
- **Resilience** of the education system is key to making progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4). COL is also supporting the resilience of the education sector by developing the skills and capacities of teachers in environmental education. COL supported the National Teachers Institute, Nigeria, which has an annual enrolment of 50,000 trainee teachers, to develop a Green Teacher programme to help teachers to integrate environmental concerns into the classroom from a very early age.

Professor Kanwar presented different models and efforts to mainstream climate change in education. Further, she presented COL’s report on Transforming Education for Climate Action and prepared a high-level panel with inputs from 26 Commonwealth countries. The following are the key recommendations for a Green Learning Agenda:

- Climate resilient infrastructure
- Skills for blue/green economy
• Promote climate justice/equity – especially for climate justice, changing gender discriminating education policies is very important, as women and girls are more vulnerable to climate change.

Professor Kanwar concluded the session by encouraging the Focal Points to play the role of climate change champions in their respective countries.

Session 7: OER: open objects, open courses, open textbooks

Dr Tony Mays and Dr Betty Ogange presented experience from Open Schooling and Teacher Education work in the Pacific and elsewhere while highlighting scenarios from a course that they had co-developed at the outset of Covid-19: “Using Open Educational Resources for Online Learning: An Introduction.”

Delegates who were invited to revisit their understanding of open education, distance education and learning and assessment, tried to find and attribute OER and were introduced to ODL course design and open textbooks. Embedded in the slideshow, which was provided among other resources on a flash drive, were links to several thousand useful OERs.

The session was very well-received by delegates -- several of whom indicated they would use all or parts of the slideshow with their own staff on their return home.

Session 8: Development of Concrete Action Items

After a short break, Dr Tony Mays led a session on the development of concrete action items. This was designed to be a hands-on workshop session for delegates who were given the following brief:

1. Work in two groups each with four countries
2. Choose a note-taker
3. Identify the three key shared activities/priority areas for your group (5 mins)
4. For each of the above, outline what action is needed (+10 mins)
5. Identify the key stakeholders (+5 mins)
6. Suggest COL’s role (+5 mins)
7. Email presentation to tmays@col.org
8. Choose one person to present your ideas (+2 x 10 mins)
9. Discussion (15 to 60 mins)

It should be noted that the idea of working in groups to focus on addressing shared priorities was suggested by the delegates themselves.

The two groups summarised their needs as follows:
### Priority

| 1. Capacity building of teachers on the use of technology | Teacher training on technology | MoE – support, enforce enrolment and participation of teachers School Leaders – support, motivate Teachers – participate and application/implementation | Provide free online courses to teachers and teacher trainers Provide expertise |
| 2. A Unified Technology enabled learning in the Pacific | Policy development and implementation | As above | Support of the expertise provided by COL |
| 3. TVET – Life skills training | Designing of courses ToT - Training on Life skills | Line Ministries | COL expertise design appropriate/contextual courses |
| 4. Capacity building on Monitoring and Evaluation | ToT Training on M&E | Policy, Planning and Research Department Line Departments | Provide assistance and support on M&E to assess the impacts/differences in teaching and learning in the classroom |
**Samoa, Nauru, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Fiji**

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<th>Stakeholders and responsibilities</th>
<th>COL’s role</th>
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<td>1) Capacity building for teachers/trainers in</td>
<td>i) Training workshops for teachers in</td>
<td>• Ministry of education &amp; training</td>
<td>i) Training in ODFL mode</td>
<td>Depends on national competency levels</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Multimodal learning in TEL/ODFL</td>
<td>• PSET providers</td>
<td>ii) Training Materials trainer</td>
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<td>• TVET</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Sustainable Agriculture</td>
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<td>ii) Curriculum development</td>
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<td>2) Support for the establishment of instructional design and technical support unit to support teacher and program development</td>
<td>i) Capacity building in instructional design</td>
<td>• Ministry of Education &amp; Training</td>
<td>Instructional designers TEL experts</td>
<td>Depends on national competencies</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>ii) Adapt content</td>
<td>• PSET providers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>iii) Capacity building for technical support</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Micro-credentialling</td>
<td>i) Establish policy/framework Training in micro-credentialling</td>
<td>• Ministry of education &amp; training</td>
<td>Micro-credentialling expert</td>
<td>Depends on national competency levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii) Training in micro-credentialling</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It will be noted that delegates from Fiji participated in both group discussions and that Fiji will likely wish to participate in all new initiatives. It will also be noted that teacher capacity-building is at the top of the agenda for both groups. It should further be noted that apart from general teacher capacity development in new ways of teaching using ODFL and technology, there is need also for specific support for TVET teachers. There is also an interest in sustainable agriculture and micro-credentials.
Session 9: Focal Point Roundtable to Distil ‘Take Home’ Messages

In the penultimate session, Dr Betty Ogange invited delegates to identify their key take-home message from the two-day meeting, with the following results:

**Kiribati**
As educators, we are also responsible for climate change and other cross-cutting issues which are affecting the learning of children.

**Nauru**
Digital technology in a holistic approach to learning is crucial for a resilient education and training system.

**PNG**
Learned about Green Agenda. We will include it in our curriculum.
COL offers flexible courses to people who are prepared to improve their knowledge and expertise.

**Samoa**
Collaboration, sharing of ideas, innovation, identifying common issues and needs to strengthen sustainable education in the Pacific. COL – the enabler.

**Solomon Islands**
The importance of always staying connected with COL as a focal point in the Solomon Islands.

**Tonga**
We are all ambassadors. We promote and communicate COL as an enabler of learning for sustainable development.

**Tuvalu**
A better understanding of what COL could support member countries with.

**Closing Session – Summary and Wrap Up**

In the closing session, Mr James Bosamata thanked COL for the workshop on behalf of all the delegates present. He announced that this would be his last Focal Point meeting as he was resigning his position in order to contest the elections in the Solomon Islands.

Professor Asha Kanwar then closed the meeting by thanking delegates for their time and effort, USP partners for helping to organise the meeting and COL colleagues for taking on the work to prepare for and facilitate the workshop over and above their regular duties.

She noted that while some clear priorities had emerged, quality assurance of any associated activities is critical, while inclusive and green approaches should underpin all.
## Annex 1: Agenda

**Date:** Thursday March 23, 2023  
**Time:** 09:30-17:00  
*Dinner to follow at 19:00*

| Time   | Session                                                                 | Format                                                | Facilitator/Presenter                          |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|                                                      |                                              |
| 09:30 - 10:00 | Arrival and Registration                                                |                                                        | COL Staff                  |
| 10:00 - 11:00 | Welcome & Opening Session  
Overview of COL: Prof Kanwar, President, COL  
Introduction of Participants and sharing of expectations  
Adoption of Programme |                                                        | Dr Balaji, MC  
Prof Kanwar  
Rapporteur – Dr Mays |
| 11:00 - 11:30 | Focal Points Photo                                                      |                                                        | All                          |
|          | **HEALTH BREAK**                                                        |                                                      |                              |
| 11:30 - 12:15 | SESSION 1  
Covid-19: Shaping Education for the Future | Presentation & Discussion                            | Prof Kanwar  
Rapporteur – Dr Mays |
| 12:15 - 13:00 | SESSION 2  
Role of Focal Points  
How much do you know about COL? | Presentation  
Pair group discussion and Plenary presentation | Dr Balaji  
Rapporteur – Dr Mays |
| 13:00 - 14:00 | **LUNCH**                                                               |                                                      |                              |
| 14:00-15:00 | SESSION 3  
Country Reports from Focal Points  
Sharing of the priorities and findings | Presentation of Reports and Discussion  
Identify commonalities and differences  
Group discussion and presentations | Dr Ogange  
Rapporteur – Dr Mays |
| 15:00-15:30 | **HEALTH BREAK**                                                        |                                                      |                              |
| 15:30 - 16:15 | SESSION 4  
Monitoring and Evaluation for Results | Presentation and Discussion                           | Dr Mays  
Rapporteur – Dr Ogange |
| 16:15 - 17:00 | SESSION 5  
Implications of ChatPGT and similar technology | Presentation and Discussion                           | Dr Balaji  
Rapporteur – Dr Ogange |
### Report on the Regional Focal Points Meeting: PACIFIC

**Date:** Friday, March 24, 2023  
**Time:** 10:00-17:00

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Facilitator/Presenter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 10:00 - 10:15 | Welcome to Day 2  
Recap of the Previous Day                                                   | Plenary                         | Dr Balaji                     |
| 10:15 - 11:00 | **SESSION 6**  
A Green Learning Agenda  
Climate Change and Education  
What can governments do?                                                  | Presentation and Discussion  
Sharing of information by Focal Points                                   | Prof Kanwar  
Rapporteur: Dr Mays                                                      |
| 11:00 - 11:30 | **HEALTH BREAK**                                                      |                                 |                               |
| 11:30 - 12:30 | **SESSION 7**  
OER: open objects, open textbooks, open courses                         | Presentation and Discussion      | Dr Mays & Dr Ogange  
Rapporteur: Dr Mays                                                      |
| 12:30 - 13:30 | **LUNCH**                                                            |                                 |                               |
| 13:30 – 14:30 | **SESSION 8**  
Development of concrete action items                                      | Group work and presentation     | Dr Mays + Prof Kanwar  
Rapporteur – Dr Ogange                                                    |
| 14:30 – 14:50 | **SESSION 9**  
Focal Point Roundtable to Distil  
‘Take Home’ Messages                                                       | Roundtable                      | Dr Ogange  
Rapporteur – Dr Mays                                                      |
| 14:50 – 15:00 | **Closing Session**  
Summary and Wrap-up                                                       |                                 | Dr Balaji  
Rapporteur – Dr Mays                                                      |
| 15:00 +       | **HEALTH BREAK/ FREE TIME FOR NETWORKING**                           |                                 |                               |

### Annex 2: Participant List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name and Address of the Participants</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1      | Fiji    | Dr Rajni Chand  
Director  
PACFOLD                                                                                     | Representative |
| 2      | Fiji    | Ms Sharishna Narayan  
Project Officer  
Centre for Flexible Learning  
Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Education  
University of the South Pacific  
Private Mail Bag  
Suva                                                                                       | Representative |
| 3      | Fiji    | Mr Vilitati Togavou  
Senior Education Officer E-Learning  
Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts                                                     | Representative |
| 4      | Kiribati| Ms Lucy Kum-On  
Principal: Kiribati Teachers College  
Ministry of Education  
Kiribati                                                                                   | Focal Point   |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Role</th>
<th>Location/Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nauru</td>
<td>Mrs Floria Detebene</td>
<td>Director of Nauru TVET</td>
<td>Nauru Department of Education and Training Government Offices Yaren District Nauru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>Mr Andrew Angobe</td>
<td>First Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>Mr Anthony Rayappan</td>
<td>Principal FODE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td>Muagututi’a Dr Ioana Chan Mow</td>
<td>Professor: Computing &amp; Computer Education National University of Samoa</td>
<td>PO Box 1622 Toomatagi Apia Samoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
<td>Mr James Bosamata</td>
<td>Deputy Secretary Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD)</td>
<td>PO Box G28 Honiara Solomon Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tonga</td>
<td>Dr Raelyn Esau</td>
<td>Dean: Faculty of Business &amp; Public Administration Tonga National University Ministry of Education and Training</td>
<td>PO Box 161 Nuku’alofa Kingdom of Tonga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Tuvalu</td>
<td>Mr Neaki Saula</td>
<td>Director of Education Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports</td>
<td>Private Mail Bag, Vaiaku Funafuti Tuvalu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Prof Asha Kanwar, President</td>
<td>COL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Dr Venkataraman Balaji</td>
<td>Vice-President, COL</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Dr Betty Ogange, Education</td>
<td>Specialist, COL</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Dr Tony Mays, Education</td>
<td>Specialist, COL</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Annex 3: Country Priorities and Action Plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current initiatives</th>
<th>Action Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Fiji</strong></td>
<td><strong>1st priority:</strong> Capacity building of teachers on the use of technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji is working on integrating technology into the classroom. The country is working towards adopting open and distance learning (ODL).</td>
<td>Challenge: Most teachers currently in the system were trained for teaching in a face-to-face settings and have limited competence in and access to technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Stakeholders: MoE – support, enforce enrolment and participation of teachers School Leaders – support, motivate Teachers – participate and application/implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Role of COL:</strong> Provide free online courses to teachers and teacher trainers Provide expertise</td>
<td><strong>Role of COL:</strong> Provide expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Kiribati</strong></td>
<td><strong>1st priority:</strong> Capacity building of teachers on the use of technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Kiribati, the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for ODL, and the country is working towards a blended approach to teaching.</td>
<td>Challenge: Most teachers currently in the system were trained for teaching in a face-to-face settings and have limited competence in and access to technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Key Stakeholders:
- **MoE** – support, enforce enrolment and participation of teachers
- **School Leaders** – support, motivate
- **Teachers** – participate and application/implementation

### Key Stakeholders:
- **MoE** – support, enforce enrolment and participation of teachers
- **School Leaders** – support, motivate
- **Teachers** – participate and application/implementation

### Key Stakeholders:
- **Line Ministries**

### Role of COL:
- Provide free online courses to teachers and teacher trainers
- Provide expertise

### Role of COL:
- Provide expertise
- COL expertise design appropriate/contextual courses

### Role of COL:
- Training in ODL mode
- Training Materials trainer

### 3. Nauru

**Nauru** has limited ODL options, but the government is working to establish a policy.

### 1st priority:
- **Capacity building of teachers in multi-modal learning in TEL/ODFL, TVET and Sustainable Agriculture**

### 2nd priority:
- Support for the establishment of instructional design and technical support unit to support teacher and program development

### 3rd priority:
- Micro-credentialing

### Challenge:
- Most teachers currently in the system were trained for teaching in a face-to-face settings and have limited competence in and access to technology

### Challenge:
- Current practice is premised on face-to-face provision. There is need for capacity-building in the following areas:
  - i) Capacity building in instructional design
  - ii) Adapt content
  - iii) Capacity building for technical support

### Challenge:
- Traditional assessment practices emphasise summative assessment and whole qualifications but the changing nature of employment requires more flexible, shorter, just-in-time learning which can be aggregated up.

### Key Stakeholders:
- Ministry of education & training
- PSET providers

### Key Stakeholders:
- Ministry of education & training
- PSET providers

### Key Stakeholders:
- Ministry of education & training
- PSET providers

### Role of COL:
- Instructional designers TEL experts

### Role of COL:
- Micro-credentialing expert
### 4. Papua New Guinea

**Papua New Guinea** has seen a significant increase in demand for open schooling and is actively working on online learning solutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity building of teachers on the use of technology</th>
<th>A Unified Technology enabled learning in the Pacific</th>
<th>TVET – Life skills training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenge:</strong> Most teachers currently in the system were trained for teaching in a face-to-face settings and have limited competence in and access to technology</td>
<td><strong>Challenge:</strong> The current policy and accreditation frameworks are premised on face-to-face provision of education. There is need to develop and implement policies and strategies which support multi-modal learning.</td>
<td><strong>Challenge:</strong> TVET provision has neglected life skills development and focused on face-to-face provision so there is need to offer training and support to develop multi-modal courses in life skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers – participate and application/implementation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Role of COL: COL expertise design appropriate/contextual courses</td>
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### 5. Samoa

**Samoa** has taken a multimodal approach to ODL during the pandemic, including upgrading infrastructure and implementing ICT policies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st priority: Capacity building of teachers in multi-modal learning in TEL/ODFL, TVET and Sustainable Agriculture</th>
<th>2nd priority: Support for the establishment of instructional design and technical support unit to support teacher and program development</th>
<th>3rd priority: Micro-credentialing</th>
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<td><strong>Challenge:</strong> Most teachers currently in the system were trained for teaching in a face-to-face settings and have limited competence in and access to technology</td>
<td><strong>Challenge:</strong> Current practice is premised on face-to-face provision. There is need for capacity-building in the following areas: iv) Capacity building in instructional design</td>
<td><strong>Challenge:</strong> Traditional assessment practices emphasise summative assessment and whole qualifications but the changing nature of employment requires more flexible, shorter, just-in-time learning which can be aggregated up.</td>
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<tr>
<td>iii) Training in ODFL mode</td>
<td>Instructional designers TEL experts</td>
<td>Micro-credentialling expert</td>
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<tr>
<td>iv) Training Materials trainer</td>
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### 6. Solomon Islands

**Solomon Islands** is also working on expanding ODL options to areas without Internet connectivity.

**1st priority:** Capacity building of teachers in multi-modal learning in TEL/ODFL, TVET and Sustainable Agriculture

**2nd priority:** Support for the establishment of instructional design and technical support unit to support teacher and program development

**3rd priority:** Micro-credentialing

**Challenge:**
Most teachers currently in the system were trained for teaching in a face-to-face settings and have limited competence in and access to technology

**Key Stakeholders:**
- Ministry of education & training
- PSET providers

**Role of COL:**
- Training in ODFL mode
- Training Materials trainer

**7. Tonga**

**Tonga** is working on increasing Internet access and seeking support to

**1st priority:** Capacity building of teachers in multi-modal learning in TEL/ODFL, TVET and Sustainable Agriculture

**2nd priority:** Support for the establishment of instructional design and technical support unit to support teacher and program development

**3rd priority:** Micro-credentialing

**Challenge:**
Traditional assessment practices emphasise summative assessment and whole qualifications but the changing nature of employment requires more flexible, shorter, just-in-time learning which can be aggregated up.

**Key Stakeholders:**
- Ministry of education & training
- PSET providers

**Role of COL:**
- Instructional designers TEL experts
- Micro-credentialling expert
develop an ODL policy.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Role of COL:</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>iii) Training Materials trainer</td>
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**Key Stakeholders:**
- Ministry of education & training
- PSET providers

**Key Stakeholders:**
- Ministry of education & training
- PSET providers

**Key Stakeholders:**
- Ministry of education & training
- PSET providers

**8. Tuvalu**

**Tuvalu** currently relies on the University of the South Pacific for online learning and is exploring options for providing more resources for TVET.

**Key Stakeholders:**
- MoE – support, enforce enrolment and participation of teachers
- School Leaders – support, motivate
- Teachers – participate and application/implementation

**Key Stakeholders:**
- MoE – support, enforce enrolment and participation of teachers
- School Leaders – support, motivate
- Teachers – participate and application/implementation

**Key Stakeholders:**
- Line Ministries

**1st priority:**
- Capacity building of teachers on the use of technology

**2nd priority:**
- A Unified Technology enabled learning in the Pacific

**3rd priority:**
- TVET – Life skills training

**Challenge:**
- Most teachers currently in the system were trained for teaching in a face-to-face settings and have limited competence in and access to technology

**Challenge:**
- The current policy and accreditation frameworks are premised on face-to-face provision of education. There is need to develop and implement policies and strategies which support multi-modal learning.

**Challenge:**
- TVET provision has neglected life skills development and focused on face-to-face provision so there is need to offer training and support to develop multi-modal courses in life skills.

**Role of COL:**
- Provide free online courses to teachers and teacher trainers

**Role of COL:**
- Provide expertise

**Role of COL:**
- COL expertise
### 9. Vanuatu

**Vanuatu** has a draft ODL policy but is facing challenges in implementing it due to lack of resources and training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Key Stakeholders</th>
<th>Role of COL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1<sup>st</sup> | Capacity building of teachers on the use of technology                     | Most teachers currently in the system were trained for teaching in a face-to-face settings and have limited competence in and access to technology | MoE – support, enforce enrolment and participation of teachers
School Leaders – support, motivate
Teachers – participate and application/implementation | Provide free online courses to teachers and teacher trainers |
| 2<sup>nd</sup> | A Unified Technology enabled learning in the Pacific                        | The current policy and accreditation frameworks are premised on face-to-face provision of education. There is need to develop and implement policies and strategies which support multi-modal learning. | MoE – support, enforce enrolment and participation of teachers
School Leaders – support, motivate
Teachers – participate and application/implementation | Provide expertise |
| 3<sup>rd</sup> | TVET – Life skills training                                                  | TVET provision has neglected life skills development and focused on face-to-face provision so there is need to offer training and support to develop multi-modal courses in life skills. | Line Ministries                                                                                  | COL expertise
Provide expertise
design appropriate/contextual courses |