



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

COUNTRY REPORT
2021-2023 | **AFRICA**



South Africa

Helping Commonwealth Member States and institutions use distance learning and technologies for expanding access to education and training.

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is focused on adding value to African member countries' efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG4. It's supporting the governments and institutions of Africa in the use of appropriate, affordable technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development.

During its current plan (2021-2027), COL will:

- i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;
- ii) invest in innovations and research;
- iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;
- iv) promote gender equality; and
- v) implement a rigorous monitoring and evaluation plan.

COL's work is organised into two sectors — Education and Skills — with Gender Equality and Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) as cross-cutting initiatives.

The Education sector supports formal education from secondary to tertiary levels across the Commonwealth, particularly in the small states in Africa (Botswana, The Gambia, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia and Seychelles) and has four initiatives: Open Schooling; Teacher Education; Higher Education and the Virtual University for Small States of The Commonwealth (VUSSC).

The Skills sector supports formal, non-formal and informal education and training to equip learners for livelihoods and has three initiatives: Skills for Work; Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) and GIRLS Inspire.

The work in these sectors complements the three pathways of change COL is focusing on in achieving impact for each African member country. These are:

1. Building National Resilience
2. Strengthening Institutions
3. Improving Lives and Livelihoods.

INTRODUCTION

South Africa is located in the southernmost tip of Africa and has a population of almost 60 million ([World Bank](#), 2022). As a major donor, South Africa holds a seat on COL's Board of Governors.

COL's work in South Africa is in the areas of higher education, teacher education, and technology-enabled learning (TEL) and benefits from programmes offered by the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE), COL's regional centre. Learners from South Africa are also participating in COL's free, open online courses and accessing other available resources.

PARTNERS

COL's partners in South Africa include:

- Department of Higher Education and Training
- SchoolNet South Africa
- Siyafunda Community Technology Centre
- University of Cape Town
- University of Fort Hare
- University of Pretoria
- University of South Africa

KEY CONTACTS

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Vacant

COL FOCAL POINT

Ms Trudi van Wyk

Chief Director: Social Inclusion, Equity, Access and Quality, Department of Higher Education and Training

NOTABLE MENTION

The late **Professor Narend Baijnath**,
Chair, COL Board of Governors (2020-2022)

The late **Professor Daniel Kgwadi**,
Member of COL Board of Governors (2020-2023)

COL ACTIVITIES BETWEEN JULY 2021 - MAY 2023

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Honourable Kgwaridi Buti Manamela, Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, gave the keynote address on inclusivity at PCF10.
- Professor Geesje van den Berg, University of South Africa, appointed [COL Chair](#) for the period 2023 to 2026.

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

COL is working with governments to use gender-responsive ODL policies and strategies for increasing equitable access to quality learning.

The Department of Higher Education & Training (DHET), in collaboration with COL, has developed the **Social Inclusion Review and Improvement Model (SI-RIM)**, which is a strategy to support the implementation of the Policy Framework for the Realisation of Social Inclusion in the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) System (2016). As part of the development of SI-RIM, all the social inclusion policy frameworks were analysed, and interviews with internal and external stakeholders were conducted. A diverse group of stakeholders, including officials and interviewees, participated in a consultative workshop to consolidate inputs and finalise the SI-RIM. [Apr 2022]

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

COL is supporting partner institutions to strengthen its ODL systems and capacities for providing quality education and training.

COL's Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) programme has emerged as a front-runner in creating digital education leaders at scale in schools, colleges and communities. COL continues to work with Ministries of education, educational institutions and civil society organisations to spread the reach of this free course to support lifelong learning. COL is collaborating with SchoolNet SA in helping learners develop digital education skills while fostering a deeper understanding of digital identity and footprints and establishing personal learning networks. To date, they have completed seven months of C-DELTA trainings in nine provinces throughout South Africa. A total of 1,230 teachers and 1,123 students (64% female) participated in face-to-face or virtual workshops. COL's C-DELTA platform received the Brandon Hall Gold Excellence in Learning Award 2021.

COL's Teacher Education initiative organised a hybrid pre-PCF10 workshop that introduced participants to concepts and models for teacher training at scale, including COL strategies and models using open, distance and technology-enabled learning. The event was attended by 19 participants representing 12 different institutions, including The Gambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and South Africa. Discussions focused on a range of innovations for teacher development in low-income and other disadvantaged communities. These included the use of massive open online courses (MOOCs), radio and podcasts to reach more teachers, and having the assistance of language translators and assistive technologies and other offline resources to improve the quality of learning resources. Teachers from South Africa have participated in the COL MOOC on cybersecurity training for teachers (November 2022).

South Africa is one of 10 countries highlighted in the COL/UNESCO publication "Smart Education Strategies for Teaching and Learning: Critical Analytical Framework and Case Studies", published in September 2022.

REGIONAL CENTRE: SADC-CDE

26 senior officials comprising representatives from Universities participated in the high-level workshop on developing effective OER policies for the SADC region from 20-21 June 2022 in Gaborone.

In February 2022, a seminar was organised on "The Future of open and distance e-learning (ODEL) in higher education institutions in the 21st Century: Challenges and opportunities" to sensitise the institution staff at 16 SADC member states (including 11 Commonwealth countries).

IMPROVING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

COL continues to provide learners, especially from disadvantaged groups, access to learning and resources for improved livelihoods.

COL is working with SchoolNet South Africa to build the capacity of 1,000 out-of-school women and girls between the ages of 15 and 24 in digital literacy to be critical digital knowledge creators and increase their opportunities for employment and entrepreneurial income avenues through digital means. 270 women from nine provinces enrolled for training in the first cohort. A needs analysis to guide their selection of participants for the second cohort has been conducted. [Apr2023]

SPECIAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

At the 21st Conference of Commonwealth Ministers of Education (21CCEM) in Kenya held in April 2022, the ministerial roundtable on "Lessons Learned from Covid-19 Mitigation and Recovery Strategies" conceptualised by COL was chaired by the Minister of Basic Education, South Africa, the Honourable Angie Motshekga.

COL's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning is held triennially and is co-hosted with different partners in different regions of the Commonwealth. 23 delegates from South Africa registered for the **Tenth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF10)**, the first-ever hybrid Forum held in Calgary, Canada from 14-16 September 2022. **Four were sponsored by COL. The Honourable Kgwaridi Buti Manamela, Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, gave the keynote address and spoke about his country's successes in increasing access to education in an address promoting equity and inclusion.** Other delegates included:

1. Ramneek Ahluwalia, Higher Health
2. Morakinyo Akintolu, University of South Africa
3. Folake Aluko, University of Pretoria
4. Randall Faulmann, Department of Higher Education and Training
5. Mashadi Hafane, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation
6. Yolande Heymans, North-West University
7. Shafika Isaacs, University of Johannesburg
8. Jan H. Kroeze, University of South Africa
9. Anthony Lelliott, Saide

10. Moeketsi Letseka, UNISA
11. Motshedisi Letuka, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation
12. Johannes Manyane Makua, Mangosuthu University of Technology
13. Brenda Mallinson, Consultant & Rhodes University
14. Motlalepule Ruth Mampane, University Of Pretoria
15. Florence Masebe, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation
16. Ephraim Mhlanga Saide
17. Israel Lindokuhle Mkhuma University of South Africa
18. Inderasan Naidoo, University of South Africa
19. Margaret Funke Omidire, University of Pretoria
20. Mary Ooko, University of Pretoria
21. Paul Prinsloo, University of South Africa (Unisa)
22. Kelly Shiohira, JET Education Services

The **Regional Focal Points Meeting for Africa and Europe** was held in Seychelles from 20-21 February 2023. Official representatives from 20 Commonwealth countries in the region participated in the two-day meeting, including Ms Trudi van Wyk and Ms Gina Umeh.

PUBLICATIONS OF RELEVANCE

Smart Education Strategies for Teaching and Learning: Critical Analytical Framework and Case Studies (Russia, China, Egypt, India, Mauritius, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, United Kingdom, United States of America) <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4464>

The Influence of Covid-19 on Students' Learning: Access and Participation in Higher Education in Southern Africa (Botswana, South Africa, Zambia) <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3988>

Postgraduate Students' Perception of the Use of E-portfolios as a Teaching Tool to Support their Learning in an Open and Distance Education Institution <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3897>

Developing Partnerships to Acquire Impact: The Role of Three Regional Centres' Capacity Building Efforts for ODL Adoption in the Emerging World (United Kingdom, South Africa, Nigeria, Botswana, Fiji, Malta) <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3901>

Report on the Regional Focal Points Meeting - Africa and Europe
<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5316>



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