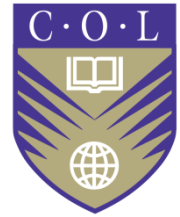


Learning for Development: COL's Plan for 2006-09



16th Conference of Commonwealth Ministers of Education

Cape Town, South Africa

14 December 2006

Presentation to Ministers

Sir John Daniel (President), Professor Asha Kanwar (Vice-President)

Commonwealth of Learning

Honourable Ministers:

Two days ago I made a very brief presentation on COL's work over the last three years in which I presented our set of country reports COL in the Commonwealth 2003-06 and gave a few examples of our work. Thank you for the many expressions of support that you made at that session.

Today I shall present, formally but briefly, the guts of our Plan for 2006-09. Its preparation has been thorough and highly consultative and I was particularly pleased by your appreciative comments about our planning process.

I am presenting our overall Plan for the Commonwealth. What matters most to you is how it is made operational in your countries. I thank you also for helping us, during this conference, to translate our proposals for actions in your countries into agreed Country Action Plans.

The overall plan is called simply Learning for Development. We align ourselves with others at this conference in adopting Amartya Sen's definition of development as freedom, noting his point that greater freedom is both the primary measure and the principal means of development.

That is because it is free people that make development happen. In practical terms COL helps you to enhance freedoms in your countries within a framework that combines the Millennium Development Goals, the Dakar Goals and the basic Commonwealth values.

We believe that more and better learning is a primary route to all these goals but that conventional instructional methods are not up to the scope and scale of the learning challenge. COL's contribution is to achieve scope and scale by harnessing appropriate technologies.

The Plan divides our work into three sectors: Education, Learning for Livelihoods and Human Environment. The outcomes that we seek to help you to achieve are good policy, stronger systems, transferable models for the use of technology, and quality learning materials. We have invested particular effort in expressing the outputs, outcomes and impacts of our work in measurable terms. You can find these on the pull-out section at pages 30 & 31 of the Plan, along with the Performance Indicators that we are geared up to measure.

In each programme sector we have five initiatives and I shall flag one in each sector by way of illustration.

In the Education Sector I mention particularly assistance in Open and Alternative Schooling because of the rather depressing talk that Professor Lewin gave yesterday. Two neighbouring countries, Botswana and Namibia, have successful examples of alternative approaches to secondary schooling that can get costs down and quality up. India offers open schooling at scale. Helping you to extend open schooling will be a major task for COL in the coming years.

Amongst the five activities in Learning for Livelihoods I draw attention to the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth and hope that Minister Wurie will notice a new flag in this slide. At the recent Planning Session in Jamaica the participants mapped out a series of Boot Camps to tackle the subject areas identified by you.

They will follow the successful model we developed in Mauritius. The next ones are scheduled for Singapore and Trinidad and Tobago in 2006-07 and in Samoa and Botswana in 2007-08. We are open to bids for the Boot Camps in 2008-09.

In the final sector, Human Environment, I mention our capacity to help you exploit opportunities that may occur in your countries to use mass media and ICTs for educational purpose. We are there to give you impartial advice and assistance, so that you may avoid the dangers of hasty and inappropriate uses of technology-mediated learning that were flagged in the report from the stakeholders' group yesterday.

Because of COL's success in serving your needs the budget has risen slowly but steadily in recent years. The Plan calls for this increase to continue at the same rate, as indicated by the arrow.

COL's budget is made up of voluntary contributions from your governments and extrabudgetary funds such as those from the Hewlett Foundation and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation, notably for the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. I thank the 33 states that contributed to our budget in 2003-06 and express particular gratitude to the six additional countries that have started contributing in 2006-09 already. Note that the UK's offer to fund 30% of these contributions will only yield new money if the overall level of contributions increases. If applied today it would actually reduce the total budget.

Finally then I present to you the recommendations of COL's Board which are:

- That you endorse COL's 3-year Plan
- That you note the progress on the VUSSC
- That you agree the projected budget target of \$ Can 12 million

Thank you.