

Collaboration for the Common Good



Launch of the UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (ICT CFT) (Partnership: UNESCO/COL Joint Work Plan)

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Transcript

Director-General, Ms Irina Bokova; Assistant Directors-General Mr. Janis Karklins and Dr. Qian Tang; Mr. Paul Hengeveld; Monsieur François Ledoux; Excellencies; Ladies and Gentlemen:

Having served as UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Education from 2001 to 2004 it is a pleasure to experience once again the excitement of a General Conference and to celebrate with you UNESCO's achievements in integrating ICTs in Education.

Today we launch the ICT Competency Framework for Teachers. My colleagues have already put this important development in context and described to you the considerable success of the partnership that has emerged for the purpose.

The Commonwealth of Learning is delighted to be part of this enterprise. In the next few minutes I simply want to situate our involvement in the ICT Competency Framework for Teachers programme in the wider context of COL's ongoing collaboration with UNESCO.

First, what is COL – the Commonwealth of Learning? We are one of three intergovernmental agencies of the 54-member Commonwealth, the others being the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation, both based in London. COL is based in Vancouver and has a small, but very dynamic unit in New Delhi called the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia.

Our total staff in both locations numbers only 40 but our impact is much greater than this might imply. This impact is achieved through our extensive network of partner institutions and organizations and our focal points in each Commonwealth country.

We are also fortunate to have a tightly focused mission. Commonwealth Heads of Government created COL in 1987 because, even back then, there was talk of a ‘communications revolution’. Commonwealth leaders believed that the mass media and ICTs had much to contribute to education and training. Some countries were already using open and distance learning at scale and Heads of Government thought it would be helpful to establish a small unit to help all Commonwealth countries use educational technology effectively.

Our mission is to help Commonwealth countries develop and implement technology-mediated learning in pursuit of their national priorities. COL’s current three-year plan is called: *Learning for Development*. We interpret ‘development’ to mean a blend of the Millennium Development Goals, the Dakar Goals of Education for All and the Commonwealth values of democracy, equality, good government and the rule of law.

In its early days COL put most emphasis on higher education but today our work is broader, aimed at expanding and improving both formal and informal learning. In formal education we have initiatives in open schooling, higher education and teacher education. We also facilitate, on behalf of 32 governments, the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. In the informal sector we focus on livelihoods and health by helping rural people, in particular, to learn and earn their way to better lives.

UNESCO and COL are rather different organisations, but for that very reason they complement each other well, which makes for productive collaboration. While UNESCO and COL both pursue a range of objectives, it is generally true that where UNESCO emphasises policy frameworks, COL focuses more on grassroots interventions. Our joint work on the implementation of the ICT Competency Framework for Teachers in a number of Caribbean countries is a nice example of each organisation playing to its strengths within a common project. I am proud of the contribution that my colleague Trudi van Wyk is making to that work.

However, our collaboration goes wider than this. Since 1994 UNESCO and COL have had a joint work plan agreement that has been renewed regularly. The current version covering the period 2009-2011, which I signed with the ADG for Education, Mr. Qian Tang, two years ago, focuses on areas of work where UNESCO’s Main Lines of Action and COL’s initiatives coincide. This puts emphasis on teacher education, quality assurance in higher education, TVET, the use of media for sustainable development, and the use of learning technologies generally.

In 2009 UNESCO’s World Conference on Higher Education highlighted the potential of Open Educational Resources – or OER – to expand and improve education. Later that year the General Conference returned to the same theme. Since then UNESCO and COL have worked together closely on the OER agenda. Tomorrow evening will hear about UNESCO’s Open Educational Resources Platform and the Guidelines for OER in Higher Education that we have developed jointly.

A happy consequence of the way that our joint work has evolved is that COL now works closely with both the Education and the Communications/Information Sectors. So in closing, Director-General, I pay tribute to the work of COL’s Focal Points here at UNESCO. Before she retired in August, Ms. Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić did a first-rate job liaising between COL and all sectors of UNESCO. I am pleased to say

that she is now a consultant to COL as we cultivate support for OER among governments in the run-up to UNESCO's World Congress on OER next June.

Meanwhile the ADGs who are with us this evening have appointed Focal Points for COL in each of their sectors. We are very pleased to work with Mr. Edem Adubra in Education and Ms. Zeynep Varoglu in Communications/Information in these roles.

Director-General, Assistant Directors-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen I thank you warmly for the opportunity to join you for these launches and celebrations.