Twenty-five years ago, Commonwealth Heads of Government met in Vancouver and decided to establish an organisation that would use distance learning and technologies to promote education and training in Member States and to strengthen Commonwealth co-operation. Today, we can say that COL has fulfilled that vision and become a well-respected organisation helping governments and institutions to expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning that leads to development.

COL is what it is today because of the tireless efforts of many from around the Commonwealth and the strong, stable foundations they have laid. If COL is well regarded today, that is due largely to the outstanding guidance of its distinguished Board of Governors, the valuable legacy of its former Presidents and the dedication and commitment of its staff, a group of world-class professionals. COL is also very grateful to its host country, Canada, and to the several governments around the Commonwealth that have the confidence to invest in COL.

Former Canadian Board member Ms. Denise Chong, O.C., recalls: “I have a gift from COL to mark my tenure: a small Inuit carving of a bird. I keep it on a mantle of the fireplace in our kitchen, so that it is a part of my everyday life. It’s small and simple, but it has strong lines: its back perfectly aligned with its head and beak, as if size mattered not for its confidence and sense of purpose in this world. Every day I look at it, and it reminds me of COL. I look back and see that we, the Board, asked a small organisation to think big, to turn its smallness into an asset.”

Though COL is small, it is an important organisation that thinks big and has activities in 47 of the 54 Member States of the Commonwealth. Sir John Daniel, COL’s President from 2004 to 2012, says that “one of COL’s great strengths, and the reason that it has an impact out of all proportion to its size, is the longevity of its engagement in its areas of focus. Compared to most international agencies,
which tend to abandon their short projects just as they might begin to bear fruit, COL sticks with its partners and its programmes until they can fly with their own wings.” He gives two examples: COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers programme and the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, which both took several years to gain traction.

Many in the small states share Sir John’s enthusiasm for the virtual university. Dr. Emma Kruse Va’ai, Deputy Vice Chancellor of the National University of Samoa, sent greetings from the Pacific, saying, “This is really our celebration also, because we feel we have been very much a part of COL. Through the many COL initiatives and in its effective role as facilitator for the small states, we continue to work towards achieving our common goals.”

Ms. Jenny Glennie, a former Board member from South Africa, fondly remembers how some years ago, after an intensive COL Executive Committee meeting on a cold February evening at a small hotel in London, “[Asha Kanwar and I] sat down to refine COL’s Performance Indicators. I cherish the memory for two reasons: as an instance of Board-Management collaboration and as an example of the improvised road taken when instituting a new practice, that is, Results-Based Management (RBM).”

It took several years for RBM to become embedded in COL’s psychology, and this continues to be a work in progress, even though Mr. Vijay Krishnarayan, Director of the Commonwealth Foundation, says, “Over a short time, COL has established a reputation for expertise and partnerships. This has been through a disciplined and focused approach, enabled by the early adoption of RBM. We at the Foundation have recently started on a similar path, and in doing so we acknowledge [COL’s] leadership in this field.”

COL has changed constantly to stay relevant to the needs of its stakeholders. Former President Tan Sri Dato’ Raj Dhanarajan recalls that “as an agent of change, the Commonwealth of Learning seems to have performed well to the expectations of its stakeholders, despite the uncertainties of the early years. As a catalyst and network builder, it brought together educational innovators of the Commonwealth for the common good of its peoples.”

These messages from six very distinguished men and women from around the Commonwealth provide a snapshot of what COL does.

“It is a different world today from when COL was first established,” says COL’s President, Professor Asha Kanwar, “but as we go forward, we will build on our strengths and continue with our ‘three-R’ strategy: relevance, responsiveness and results. As we do so, we will continue to look forward to support from all corners of the Commonwealth.”

Excerpted and adapted from an address by COL President and C.E.O., Professor Asha Kanwar, to a 25th anniversary reception held in Vancouver in June in conjunction with the 30th meeting of COL’s Board of Governors. www.col.org/speeches

See “In Focus: COL Through the Years”, page 8.

The new Charter of the Commonwealth recognises “the importance of information and communication technologies as powerful instruments of development; delivering savings, efficiencies and growth in our economies, as well as promoting education, learning and the sharing of culture.”

COL’s work at the cutting edge – finding innovative ways for ICT to be used by Commonwealth citizens to access open and distance learning as a tool for promoting Commonwealth values of democracy, development and respect for diversity – is a towering Commonwealth achievement.

The Government of Canada is proud to recognise the important role the Commonwealth of Learning has played over the past 25 years. Moving individuals from poverty to prosperity requires education and training. We are honoured to partner with the Commonwealth of Learning in innovative ways to give people the training and knowledge needed to become leaders in their countries and address the challenges that they and their communities face. (June 2013)
L3F WINS “MAKING A DIFFERENCE” AWARD

At a gala event held in London at the end of June – far away from the developing rural communities it serves – COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers programme, and specifically its work with learning through mobile phones, won a 2013 Nexus Commonwealth Award for “Making a Difference, for a project that has delivered particular impact over the past year, and has the potential to be replicated across the Commonwealth”.

More than 500 million farm families across the Commonwealth’s developing countries suffer due to inadequate human resource development. Declining resources for agricultural extension, didactic modes of training and gender bias have prevented farm families from acquiring the skills and knowledge to face globalisation, new technologies and challenges. COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative focuses on strengthening the self-directed learning process among women, using information and communication technology and open and distance learning. In this paradigm shift, the farmer is not seen merely as a passive recipient of information, but as an active partner in knowledge management.

There are over 60 accredited Commonwealth organisations working in developing countries to engage individual and organisational stakeholders of all types – from young people through to women entrepreneurs, universities and government officials – and deliver projects in every conceivable area of development, diversity and democracy. While resource limitations usually restrict the scope and reach of these projects, many of them could be replicated across other countries and groups, if there was sufficient awareness of them. The Nexus “Making a Difference” Award recognises efforts to change the lives of Commonwealth citizens, transform communities or strengthen institutions.

Dr. K. Balasubramanian thanks partners and farmers, and especially the women, who helped COL to learn about lifelong learning and who showed that such learning can have impact on income, food security and empowerment.

www.nexuscommonwealthawards.org
www.col.org/L3F

PCF7 UPDATE CONTINUED FROM COVER

PCF7 will be a dynamic event with a variety of formats to enable participation, knowledge sharing, learning and networking. Apart from paper presentations there will also be a variety of activities that address the interests and expectations of different participants. The idea is to promote dialogue, sharing, networking and collaboration among all participants. There will be plenary and parallel sessions, panel discussions, training workshops, open networking streams, social networking and online media, roundtables, a marketplace and “show-and-tell”.

Keynote speakers will include:
- Ms. Jenny Glennie, OER advocate and Founding Director of the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE)
- Professor Olu Jegede, Secretary of the Kogi State Government, Nigeria, former Secretary-General, Association of African Universities, and former Vice Chancellor, National Open University of Nigeria
- Professor Asha Kanwar, President and C.E.O., Commonwealth of Learning (Conference Co-chair)
- The Honourable Albert Nsengiyumva, Minister of State for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Rwanda
- Professor Peter Okebukola, Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, Osun State University, Nigeria, President of the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI-Africa) and former Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission
- Professor Julius Okojie, Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission, Nigeria
- Professor Vincent Tenebe, Vice Chancellor, National University of Nigeria (Conference Co-chair)
- Professor Tim Unwin, Secretary General of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation and UNESCO Chair in Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D)
- Ms. Sakena Yacoobi, Executive Director of the Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL), a women-led non-governmental organisation that provides teacher training to women, supports education for girls and boys and offers health education to women and children in Afghanistan and Pakistan

www.col.org/PCF7
www.pcf7.net

CANADA SUPPORTS COL’S L3F PROGRAMME

The Honourable Julian Fantino, then Minister of International Development, Canada, visited COL’s Vancouver headquarters in April. Minister Fantino reaffirmed long-term institutional support for COL from the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (formerly the Canadian International Development Agency) and announced an additional contribution for “Scaling up Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) in Sub-Saharan Africa”. This will help COL to reach out further to smallholder farmers, particularly women in Ghana and Tanzania, and build their capacity to move from poverty to prosperity. It supports Canada’s goal of increasing access to quality education and vocational training opportunities, particularly for women and girls.

The Minister said, “Our government is a strong supporter of the Commonwealth and is proud to be the largest contributor to the Commonwealth of Learning.”

www.col.org/PCF7
www.pcf7.net
INVESTING IN TVET IN AFRICA

COL’s INVEST Africa partners have been expanding their skills training offerings to provide flexible courses targeting people working in the informal sector.

Thika Technical Training Institute, in Kenya, has launched three courses in Biogas Production, Food Preparation and Hospitality. In Ghana, 300 learners at Koforidua Polytechnic have started five courses to improve the livelihoods of roadside mechanics, food vendors, drivers, hairdressers and seamstresses.

Teachers at Mombasa Technical Training Institute have participated in a COL workshop to develop five new courses for the informal sector. The institution has invested in a new multimedia unit that will give access to video recording and editing equipment to produce new learning materials.

The INVEST Africa consultancy team has been busy making institutional visits. Over 120 teachers at Auchi Polytechnic in Nigeria have benefited from eLearning sessions with Professor Alex Romiszowski, and 120 teachers at Mbeya University of Science and Technology in Tanzania have worked with Canadian consultant Mr. David Walker on plans for a girls’ outreach programme and radio for teaching and learning. Dr. Delvaline Möwes, from the Polytechnic of Namibia, has been supporting Zambia’s Institute of Business and its Technical and Vocational Teachers College with workshops on distance learning systems and processes.

Institutional policy to facilitate new flexible and distance learning approaches is an important aim of COL partners. Four institutions are currently refining their open and distance learning policies through a workgroup based on the INVEST Africa Community Learning Network.

www.col.org/tvsd

EIGHT NEW COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMMES IN THE CARIBBEAN

Eight new community learning programmes in three countries – Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Trinidad & Tobago – were designed as part of a six-month distance training and mentoring initiative jointly developed and offered by the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication at the University of the West Indies, the Commonwealth of Learning and Transformative Communication Partners – Caribbean.

The programmes feature a strong focus on youth, sexuality and employment, as well as anger management for boys within the correctional system in Trinidad & Tobago. Others focus on drought management for farming communities, diabetes, hypertension and disability, as well as two programmes on domestic violence, one each for men and women.

Programme planning is based on formative research informing participatory learning and change design, conducted through a combination of distance courses and face-to-face workshops.

MOBILES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

In May, COL and the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK) hosted a two-day workshop in Kalyanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India, on “Mobiles for Development” in the Indian context. IITK is a leader in this sector, with unique mobile-phone technology used for farm extension.

Workshop participants represented a variety of stakeholders, including education, open schooling, agriculture, rural livelihoods and the corporate sector.

As part of the process of designing and implementing a Diploma in English Language Teaching (ELT) programme, COL and Gauhati University, in Assam, India, hosted an instructional design workshop in May. The workshop succeeded in laying the foundation for developing the materials for the Diploma in ELT programme. It gave the participants hands-on training on the content, language, style, formatting and criteria for designing effective self-learning materials for distance programmes. With the help of the template created during the workshop, the participants will now finalise the content.

TRAINING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

In collaboration with the Open University Malaysia (OUM), COL initiated the three-year Master Tutors training programme, a step toward the goal of training 4,500 university tutors in eTutoring and ICT-based learner support. Thirty Master Tutors received intensive training during a four-day workshop in June in Kuala Lumpur and have been given the initial target of training 25 tutors each in their respective regions. Two more cycles of training for trainers are planned over the next two years to build a sizeable pool of Master Tutors, who will then take on the responsibility of training OUM’s entire tutor cadre.

TRAINING MASTER TUTORS
AFRICAN WOMEN’S DECADE IN MAURITIUS

The Mauritius Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, in partnership with COL, has launched an open and distance learning programme to build the capacity of the country’s women using COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers model.

This programme demonstrates a response to the African Women’s Decade (2010–2020) and the African Union’s call for all Member States to accelerate actions using a bottom-up approach for women’s empowerment to attain gender equality. The programme addresses the African Women’s Decade themes such as “Fighting Poverty and Promoting Economic Empowerment of Women and Entrepreneurship”, “Agriculture”, “Finance” and “Environment/Sustainable Development.”

As a part of the programme, the Ministry has produced an interactive resource DVD in Creole for women, entitled Egalité ant zom ek fam.

At an International Women’s Day event in March, The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of Mauritius, pointed out that various amendments have been brought to the legal system to empower women – and Minister for Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, The Honourable Mireille Martin, urged young women to break their shackles and barriers and enter the mainstream.

L3F NOW IN SEYCHELLES

The Seychelles Agricultural Agency (SAA) are adopting COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) approach to address the issues of agricultural extension in this Indian Ocean island country. To start the process, in April, COL facilitated a capacity-building process for SAA officers, with the support of Dr. Moses Tenywa and Mr. Daniel Ninsiima from L3F in Uganda.

Mr. Marc Naiken, SAA’s Chief Executive Officer, noted that L3F’s open and distance learning model marks a “radical transformation” of the extension system, using information and communication technology to improve the effectiveness of knowledge dissemination to rural farmers and backyard gardeners.

The Honourable Mr. Peter Sinon, Seychelles Minister of Natural Resources and Industry, thanked COL for support in launching the L3F mobile learning programme, paving the way for a “perfect marriage between the Seychelles Farmers’ Association and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Industry”. He agreed that linking the farmers’ association with financial capital and mobile phone-based learning would strengthen the agricultural sector in Seychelles.

The SAA has identified 11 types of farmers’ groups for developing appropriate content.

COL AND USP TO OPEN PACIFIC REGIONAL CENTRE

COL and the University of the South Pacific (USP) have agreed to establish a new Pacific regional centre to raise the profile of and support collaboration in open and distance learning.

Stakeholders from nine Pacific countries came together in Vanuatu in June to discuss the role and activities of the new centre, which will be hosted by USP at its Regional Centre for Continuing and Community Education.

The new centre will be a network of networks to facilitate flexible and open learning for sustainable development in the Pacific through advocacy, communication, innovation and research.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AT AIOU, PAKISTAN

Vice Chancellor, Professor Nazir Ahmed Sangi, with COL President, Professor Asha Kanwar, signing a COL–Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), in Pakistan this April. The MoU promotes technology-based quality education through the implementation of COL’s Review and Improvement Model (COL RIM). COL will provide guidance and academic support to the rapidly growing AIOU, which has declared 2013 its year of quality assurance. This is one of five COL RIM implementations at Commonwealth institutions this year.
The Report of the High-Level Panel of “eminent persons from around the world” on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (released in New York on 30 May 2013), entitled “A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development”, will frame the discussions and agreements as we consider new global social and economic targets. COL welcomes this report and its focus on eradicating poverty, transforming economies and fostering sustainable development.

As with any such reports and as a concerned stakeholder, we have identified shortcomings and value-additions that require a response.

The vision captured in the report focuses on creating global partnerships between all key actors in the development arena: governments, civil society organisations (CSOs), businesses, local and global institutions, development agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This vision of a “people-centred and planet-sensitive agenda” is indeed critical, as it places both people and the earth at the centre of the development agenda. The report further notes that economic transformation is a critical feature of development, and that this needs to encompass social inclusion, respect for the environment and ways that businesses can support sustainable development.

Five transformative shifts are identified:
1. Leave no one behind,
2. Put sustainable development at the core,
3. Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth,
4. Build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all and
5. Forge a new global partnership which recognises that there cannot be a “business as usual” approach and that new thinking and actions are required. There is a need for increased political, economic and social will if these transformative shifts are to be realised.

Having 12 goals and 54 illustrative targets listed has also addressed the criticism raised of the MDGs – that it is difficult to measure some of the targets. The report reiterates on a number of occasions the need for country and local ownership of the goals and targets. This approach enables countries to determine their targets, which will facilitate greater ownership and integration into national plans and ensure that governments, CSOs, businesses and all other parties are working towards a common set of goals and targets.

So what do we see as the report’s shortcomings?

- The report notes that the suggested targets, like the MDGs, will also not be binding. This was seen as a flaw in the MDGs, and it will probably be a flaw in any post-2015 set of development goals. In fairness to the High-Level Panel, they have suggested a Global Partnership on Development Data that will fill critical gaps with respect to data collection, develop a baseline and ensure stronger data collection methods and analysis. They also note that all parties should respect the need to be accountable and trust that the partners will fulfill their commitments. This approach, however, is not sufficient to drive real accountability. While the report calls for a change from the “business as usual” approach, this has not translated into holding countries accountable for the achievement of their targets.
- The report correctly points to the role of working together to identify so

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The National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM), India, and COL jointly organised a workshop in Hyderabad in May to explore the progress and expected outcomes of a large Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) project to digitise 450 undergraduate courses and publish them as open educational resources (OER). Several senior experts from NAARM participated, along with representatives from 14 agriculture universities and research centres, and the National Co-ordinator of India’s National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL).

Many veterinary courses are already online (at www.clearmvet.net), and home science, fisheries, horticulture and dairy courses will be available soon. NPTEL’s own project has placed 250 full courses online as OER.
OER: “THE PANACEA FOR EDUCATION FOR ALL IN KENYA”?

With funding support from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and in collaboration with the Kenyan Ministry of Education, in June, COL convened a national and regional symposium on open education, held in Nairobi. Forty participants representing both secondary and post-secondary systems from ten Commonwealth Member States (Bangladesh, Botswana, Canada, India, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, New Zealand, Tanzania and Zambia) discussed open policy development and adoption by open schools in Africa and South Asia.

One of the participants, Kenyan PhD student Ms. Judith Pete, writes about her impression of the symposium and her enthusiasm for open educational resources (OER), which she describes as “the Panacea for Education for All in Kenya”:

“The National Symposium on OER brought together educational leaders, policy makers, curricular developers and researchers, among others, to consider the strategic opportunities for OER in Kenya and in the region, and to explore policy enablers and practices for harnessing the potential of open education approaches for the benefit of the formal education sector in Kenya and the region as a whole. It is fantastic and very promising that after the symposium, many educational professionals are now enlightened about OER, and there is more interest in open learning as the future of institutional-based learning. Through this symposium, the perpetually unanswered questions that have been barriers to OER in Kenya were tackled. As a Kenyan, and with my vast interest in OER, my appreciation goes to Dr. Wayne Mackintosh, the founding director of the OER Foundation; Ms. Frances Ferreira, Education Specialist, Open Schooling, at COL, Professor Asha Kanwar, the President of COL, and other presenters for shedding light on OER and copyright myths that have been ongoing frustrations for me as a PhD student in OER.

It is now my pleasure to assure the organisers and other stakeholders that Kenya is going to be a role model in spearheading OER in the region. The Ministry of Education has taken the challenge and great initiatives are already emerging. I have been receiving phone calls and emails asking for collaboration, especially regarding the new laptops to be issued to pupils; the issue now is how to incorporate select, quality OER materials into these laptops so that the idea of OER can be instilled and appreciated in these early stages.

As a PhD student in OER, and the first one in the region(!), I offer a big thank you to the COL and UNESCO teams for remembering Kenya in this timely endeavour. Change is a process, and lobbying and advocacy is now our main job. As we strive to meet the millennium goals in education and to achieve Kenya Vision 2030, we need the courage to make an impact and open others’ eyes. I believe that only through OER will the nomadic communities and the rural-based, poverty-ridden counties of Kenya benefit from courses as pathways for these groups of learners to achieve credible credentials and improved lifestyles.

http://wikieducator.org/Kenya_national_symposium_on_open_education

BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES THROUGH MULTIMEDIA OER

In 2011, COL’s Open Schooling initiative supported Tanzania’s Institute of Adult Education (IAE) in building the capacity of its faculty members to develop video and radio lessons in English, Mathematics, History, Geography and Biology. This was the first project for developing open educational resources (OER) as stand-alone videos that can be used in both conventional and open schooling environments.

In 2012, COL then replicated this model for conventional schools in rural Namibia, with local development of video lessons for grade 6 English and Mathematics. This initiative started with capacity building in scriptwriting, and during a recent workshop, teachers from six primary schools were trained in recording their lessons. During the same workshop they were supported by a faculty member from the IAE in Tanzania and a consultant, Ms. Linette Smit from Namibia, to record their well-scripted lessons. Results showed not only the value of integrating open schooling methodologies into the conventional classroom to enhance the learning experience, but also the successful collaboration between two countries in model building through OER.

Mr. Bellingtone Mariki from IAE, who as Director has supported this team through his participation in all online discussions on scriptwriting since 2012, said, “I had nearly all the lessons in my mind but was trying to imagine how it would be in an actual shooting. I watched very closely each moment during the shooting, trying to relate what was being recorded versus what was on the script. This was very tedious, and I can now tell how serious it is to make one educational multimedia video programme.”

The inclusion of the learner recordings added a very interesting dimension to these video lessons. They were involved in most scenes, such as soccer, classroom sessions and home set-up, and through this unique exercise they captured the learner’s context and experience, which added further value to the learning resource.

www.col.org/CourseMaterials
www.col.org/OpenSchooling

http://wikieducator.org/Kenya_national_symposium_on_open_education
Selected Highlights of COL’s 25 Years

**Teacher Education**
350,000 teachers and teacher educators trained in 24 countries

**Higher Education**
Since it launched in 2002, the Commonwealth Executive MBA/MPA programme has enrolled more than 25,000 managers/administrators and awarded nearly 10,000 Executive MBAs and MPAs.

**OER 4 Open Schools**
Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Seychelles, Trinidad & Tobago and Zambia
Since 2007, COL has helped launch open schools in Ghana, Kiribati, Tonga, Trinidad & Tobago and, most recently, in Pakistan.

**Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)**

**Selected Stories from the Field**
- **OER 4 Open Schools**
  - Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Seychelles, Trinidad & Tobago and Zambia
  - Since 2007, COL has helped launch open schools in Ghana, Kiribati, Tonga, Trinidad & Tobago and, most recently, in Pakistan.

**eLearning for International Organisations**
Since 2000, COL eLIO has trained 8,488 learners in 44 countries, 60% women and 40% men, in effective communication, debt management, data management and youth development.
Basic Trades Courses in Vanuatu and Nauru

Over 200 young people trained in literacy and concrete skills in 2011

167 young people with concrete skills building their communities from the ground up

Lifelong Learning for Farmers

“The Lifelong Learning initiative of COL has [...] enhanced the self-confidence and learning abilities of illiterate women, which have improved their economic conditions.”

– Dinamalar, Tamil newspaper in Tamil Nadu, India

Maternal & Child Health in Malawi

Over 3,000 women from over 250 village-based groups actively involved in maternal and child health programmes

The Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA) is launched

Col Launches Lifelong Learning for Farmers

Col’s Poverty Reduction Outcomes Through Education Innovations and Networks

Third Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning Held in Dunedin

Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL) opens

Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration (CCTI) is launched

Caribbean Regional Association for Distance and Open Learning (CARADOL) is launched

Col Launches WIKIEDUCATOR

Col Review and Improvement Model (COL RIM) introduced

Fourth Chair

Lewis Perinbam, O.C.

Third President

Sir John Daniel

Fourth President

Prof. Asha Kanwar

Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration (CCTI) is launched

Seventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Abuja

More online: www.col.org/25years
FAIR COMMENT

THE PROMISE OF OER FULFILLED IN POST-SECONDARY COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Sally M. Johnstone, Western Governors University

Over a decade ago, UNESCO hosted a gathering that launched the creation of an important worldwide movement within education: open educational resources (OER). OER are possible because learning resources are now readily shareable electronically. They are also possible because a group of foresighted educators actually began sharing what typically stayed on a campus. These people had a vision that we could share knowledge for the benefit of humankind.

The early sharing took the form of chapters of books, course materials, lectures and syllabi in mostly technical and quantitative fields (MIT OpenCourseWare, Connexions and the like). Soon, whole courses became open and shared. Some medical journal publishers opened electronic versions to low-income countries. OER Africa, China Open Resources for Education and many other regionally specific projects launched. While all this was emerging, Creative Commons offered clear licensing options that allowed authors to share knowledge products and learning resources without entirely giving up control over their creations. National governments and philanthropic organisations began funding the development of educational products and stipulated they would be OER. So many OER were coming on the scene that OER Commons was created to help educators and learners find what they needed.

Now we have Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), the Kahn Academy and many other well-publicised educational opportunities and tools available on the Web. These are being used by a wide variety of individuals around the world, but rarely are they adopted by formal post-secondary educational institutions. While there can be connectivity issues, when I have asked professors why they do not use OER, most respond that the OER do not fit into the curriculum at their college or university.

No one questions faculty control of the curriculum at their institution, but it may be time to think about what curriculum means. They are looking for good learning resources that may not be created by faculty within their own institution. This is where open educational resources (OER, commercial products, etc.), and because they understand the learning objectives they can determine what learning gaps may be present in a particular learning resource. At Western Governors University (WGU), our faculty prepare materials to supplement the externally produced learning resources and cover the gaps in our curriculum. These may be web-based lectures, written materials or short video demonstrations. The students can use these resources whenever they need them.

In building a CBE programme, faculty act as subject-matter experts and agree to competencies for the programme, learning objectives of the courses and assessments. The faculty also select learning resources (OER, commercial products, etc.), and because they must plan for a different learning environment. At Western Governors University (WGU), our faculty prepare materials to supplement the externally produced learning resources and cover the gaps in our curriculum. These may be web-based lectures, written materials or short video demonstrations. The students can use these resources whenever they need them.

At WGU, we are currently working with a dozen U.S. colleges as they develop CBE programmes. Their faculty are taking on new roles. They are exploring ways to incorporate learning resources for students that are not too expensive but meet the students’ learning needs. They are looking for good learning resources that may not be created by faculty within their own institution. This is where CBE opens up new avenues for the use of OER without taking away the faculty’s control of their curriculum.

Sally M. Johnstone is Vice President for Academic Advancement at Western Governors University. She also spent almost two decades as the executive director of WCET at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. Dr. Johnstone serves on the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO and the editorial boards for Change magazine and the Journal of Open Learning.

In April, COL Education Specialist, Open Schooling, Ms. Frances Ferreira was in Jessore District, Bangladesh, where in collaboration with Bangladesh Open University’s Open School, an initiative is being introduced to enhance girls’ access to secondary education. In addition to the girls, target groups include their parents and guardians, as well as local community leaders.
Technical and vocational education and skills training (TVET) has long been a challenge for island nations in the Pacific, where young people and adults have few opportunities to acquire skills through formal or non-formal programmes. Hence, the importance of skills for employment, self-employment and income generation creates a key objective for TVET systems in the region to broaden coverage and expand the quantitative and qualitative output of skills to meet economic requirements.

In April, 26 participants from eight Pacific countries met in Tonga with development partners to consider their priorities and how open, distance and flexible learning approaches could add value to skills development and livelihoods. Tonga’s Minister for Education and Training, The Honourable Dr. 'Ana Maui Taufe’ulungaki, opened the forum.

The forum resulted in eight agreements, which included the realisation that Pacific countries need a new TVET paradigm because the traditional methods have not made it possible to reach everyone who wants skills training. Participants agreed that open educational resources (OER) and new technologies offer new possibilities for extending the reach of TVET institutions in the region.

In May, five of COL’s Healthy Communities initiative partners came together to plan a series of distance training and mentoring courses in participatory communication programming that will launch across the Commonwealth in January 2014.

Representatives of the Centre for Development Communication (Malawi), Maraa Media Collective (India), Media and Training Centre for Health (South Africa), Transformative Communication Partners – Caribbean (Jamaica) and UNESCO Kingston participated in the eight-day workshop in Jamaica.

The courses – to be offered through the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) of the University of the West Indies – include An Introduction to Communication for Development, Research for Planning, Communication Channels and Participatory Learning Design.

The programme will guide participants through the key steps involved in designing quality communication programmes about local health and development issues, e.g., youth and maternal health, parenting, domestic violence and non-communicable diseases. Most importantly, participants will plan and design programmes for delivery.

“Now I know that it is feasible to deliver TVET to outer islands using simple and cost-effective ways. It is encouraging to learn that this programme is working very well in many countries, both developed and developing,” said Elaine Iuta Bwebwe of Kiribati’s Ministry of Labour.

Target participants include community radio broadcasters, media producers, health/development workers and communication and development students. www.col.org/HealthyCommunities
UPCOMING EVENTS

OCL4Ed 2013.09
4–18 September 2013; online
Open and free registration
Open content licensing for educators (OCL4Ed) is a free micro Open Online Course (mOOC) designed for educators and students who want to learn more about open educational resources, copyright and Creative Commons licences. The course will be facilitated by the UNESCO and COL OER Chair Network, in collaboration with the OER Foundation and COL.
http://wikieducator.org/Open_content_licensing_for_educators

27th Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU)
1–3 October 2013; Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan
Theme: Leveraging the Power of Open and Distance Education for Building a Divergent Asia: Today’s Solutions and Tomorrow’s Vision
www.aaou2013.com

Mobiles for Development (M4D) – A MOOC
From 2 October 2013 for six weeks; four hours per week, with online mentoring
Open and free registration; with institutional certification
Topics will include technology developments, with case studies in education, banking and agriculture.
The course is offered by the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur in partnership with COL.
www.iitk.ac.in

25th World Conference of the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE)
16–18 October 2013; hosted by Tianjin Open University, Tianjin, China
Theme: New Strategies for Global Open, Flexible and Distance Learning
www.tjrtvu.edu.cn/icde

Seventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF7)
2–6 December 2013; co-hosted by COL and the Federal Ministry of Education, with the National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria
Theme: Open Learning for Development: Towards Empowerment and Transformation
Deadline for early-bird discounted registration: 30 September 2013
www.col.org/pcf7

“SNOWBALL EFFECT” OF VUSSC IN THE TROPICS

Ms. Marcia Mugrove, who was a teacher and “Magnet Marine Science Programme Coordinator” at C.V. Bethel Senior High School in Nassau, The Bahamas, writes to thank COL for what she has gained through her involvement with the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC):

Being a participant and team leader at VUSSC 5 (March 2008) has not only helped me to grow in personal ways, but has also spawned a series of opportunities to aid my professional development.

First, it helped me get over my fear of long flights and build confidence in my ability to network and make a positive contribution to a project with collaborators from across the globe, not just in my country/region.

Then, by being an active participant in this collaborative and creative process, I gained additional skills, information and insights that I was able to incorporate in the curriculum and instructional programme at C.V. Bethel Senior High School, where I taught Marine Science and Biology until August 2012.

Third, my VUSSC training and collaboration on an international project contributed in part to my becoming National Teacher of the Year in 2010 and also receiving the “Professional Development” and “Contributions to Education” awards at that ceremony.

I was invited to London in July 2008 to share perspectives on VUSSC, helped to coordinate VUSSC 6 in The Bahamas in the fall of 2008 and completed the first VUSSC/UWI Open Campus course, Managing and Facilitating Online Instruction, in December 2008.

After successfully completing that online course, I gained the experience and confidence I needed to enrol in and successfully complete an online master’s degree programme in Curriculum, Instruction and Technology.

Since that time, I have willingly responded to requests from colleagues/partner organisations in education to consult/advise/provide training (not for profit) on projects/activities related to capacity building for educators and the integration of technology in instruction. I take every opportunity I can to promote OER.

My new post as Outreach Manager at Bahamas Reef Environment Educational Foundation (BREEF) has allowed me to have a wider national impact as I now collaborate with schools and partners across the country in matters related to marine conservation, including fisheries management and capacity building. At my suggestion, our organisation has embraced a mid-term goal of creating an open repository of resource information for educators, and I hope to use the VUSSC model to produce some of those resources.

In March 2013, at the request of Bahamas VUSSC Interlocutor Dr. Leon Higgs, I participated in a UNESCO Latin America and the Caribbean regional consultation meeting on Open Access to Scientific Information and Research and will be involved in ongoing national discussion to move the open access agenda forward.

I think of it as “The VUSSC Snowball Effect” … in the tropics. I remain grateful.

CARIBBEAN MINISTERS OK ODL POLICY

At a Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARI-COM) meeting held in Guyana in May, Caribbean Ministers of Education endorsed a draft regional open and distance learning policy framework for the Caribbean “to make education at all levels accessible and available to their citizens”.

The draft framework, prepared with COL’s assistance, has now been circulated to over 70 stakeholders so that input from a wider consultation can be incorporated and the framework finalised.
**CHAHAT CHOWK**

*Chahat Chowk* (Crossroads of Desire), a new community learning programme about women’s sexual and reproductive health, was launched in Gurgaon in India’s National Capital Region this month with financial and technical support from COL.

Led by *Gurgaon ki Awaaz* (Voice of Gurgaon), a community radio station serving the Gurgaon area since 2009, the programme brings together local stakeholder groups to focus on the health concerns of women in a non-formal urban settlement. Mullahera is home to 90,000 people, including both local residents and migrants; however, the settlement has only one public health centre.

The programme, planned through participatory research and design in Mullahera, addresses chronic sexual and reproductive health issues faced by local women.

Programme development was facilitated by COL’s partner, Maraa, a media collective that works with the emerging community radio sector in India. Research into learning, including social and behavioural change outcomes, is being led by Ideosync Media Combine.

**USQ PARTNERS WITH COL ON OER IN ASIA-PACIFIC**

The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) sponsored and hosted a COL-USQ symposium on “Connecting Australia and the Asia-Pacific” at USQ’s Toowoomba campus in May. Participants included USQ staff and several of COL’s associates and partners from Australia and the region. The purpose was to discuss further collaboration in higher education, involving USQ and COL’s regional partners. Three open educational resources (OER) initiatives were identified and plans for taking them forward were developed:

- adapting existing OER to develop capacity in OER management, teaching-learning and assessment
- piloting the use of OER in providing a 90-day micro-credentialed course in a range of institutions and disciplines
- researching costs, barriers and outcomes in using OER to develop capacity in open educational practices

USQ Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Jan Thomas, noted that she was pleased with the outcomes and looks forward to a closer collaboration with COL.

**IMPROVED ACCESS TO HIGHER ED IN THE CARIBBEAN**

The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development and the University of the West Indies Open Campus have announced a partnership to help increase access to post-secondary education for remote and underserved communities at up to 42 learning sites across the Caribbean, using distance education technologies. The ultimate aim of the Strengthening Distance Education in the Caribbean project is to increase employment opportunities for Caribbean citizens and generate economic prosperity.

The University of the West Indies serves 16 Caribbean countries and territories.

**ANTIGUA & BARBUDA ADOPTS ICT IN EDUCATION/OER POLICY**

The Antigua & Barbuda cabinet has approved a new ICT in Education policy developed with assistance from COL and UNESCO.

The Acting Minister of Education, Sports, Youth and Gender Affairs, The Honourable Winston Williams, made the announcement at the opening of a regional Open Textbooks Workshop that took place in this Caribbean nation on June 19.

The Open Textbooks Workshop was organised by COL and brought together representatives from seven eastern Caribbean countries as well as the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States to explore options for regional collaboration in developing open textbooks for the school curriculum.

www.col.org/speeches
eLEARNING COLLABORATION TECHNOLOGY IN NAMIBIA

The Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) has launched Notesmaster Namibia, a freely accessible eLearning platform, designed specially to facilitate the development of a global education network for secondary school-level learners.

Notesmaster enables learners and educators from different countries to learn and share material, using familiar syllabus frameworks that reflect their own curriculum.

Notesmaster was designed in 2011 as a learning portal for the Caribbean education sector in partnership with the Caribbean Examination Council to provide a tailored eLearning platform for over 600,000 teachers and students.

“In October 2011, the Commonwealth of Learning saw the potential of the platform and that it could be used as an online mechanism to distribute content for open schools in Africa. In further discussions with NAMCOL, it became evident that it is directly in line with NAMCOL’s multimedia strategy and Namibia’s Vision 2030,” said NAMCOL’s director, Mr. Heroldt Murangi.

www.notesmaster.com
http://allafrica.com/stories/201305171194.html

COL’S VP FEATURED AT CDB BANK ANNUAL MEETING

The 43rd Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) was held in Saint Lucia in May. COL was invited to participate in the panel discussion on “Financing Tertiary Education in the Caribbean”.

The Annual Meeting was officially opened with a welcome by Her Excellency Dame Pearlette Louisy, Governor General of Saint Lucia. The Chairman of the Board of Governors of CDB and Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, The Honourable Dr. Kenny Anthony, noted the importance of the Caribbean family of states and why it is critical to address the economic challenges of the region. He called for a review of the “collective

that constitutes the Caribbean”. The President of the CDB, Dr. Warren Smith, took this theme further and focused on two key challenges experienced by the region:

• the environment and climate change
• the economy

Sharing the stage with COL Vice President, Mr. Vis Naidoo, at the “Financing Tertiary Education in the Caribbean” session was Professor D. Bruce Johnstone, Professor of Higher and Comparative Education Emeritus, State University of New York at Buffalo, and Professor Andrew Downes, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Planning and Development, University of the West Indies. It was agreed that while funding is a challenge, technology will be an important enabler as tertiary education progresses in the region.

www.col.org/speeches

TVET BY ODL IN JAMAICA

“Developments in new learning technologies provide opportunities for tertiary institutions to meet the education and training needs of the Caribbean region,” says Ms. Anita Thomas-James, Coordinator of Continuing and Distance Education in the Faculty of Education and Liberal Studies at the University of Technology (UTech), Jamaica. UTech Jamaica has articulated a vision of providing high-quality technical and vocational teacher education courses of study using a blended approach that includes an online learning management system (Moodle) and face-to-face classes. COL is supporting UTech in actively pursuing excellence in online learning through continuing professional development of teaching staff and reviews of new online course offerings.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES: INNOVATION, RESEARCH AND PRACTICE


“Everyone has the right to education.”

UNESCO Paris Declaration on OER, 2012

Open educational resources (OER) – that is, teaching, learning and research materials that their owners make free for others to use, revise and share – offer a powerful means of expanding the reach and effectiveness of worldwide education. Those resources can be full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, software and other materials and techniques used to promote and support universal access to knowledge.

This book, initiated by the UNESCO/Col Chair in OER, is one in a series of publications by COL examining OER. It describes the movement in detail, providing readers with insight into OER’s significant benefits, its theory and practice, and its achievements and challenges. The 16 chapters, written by some of the leading international experts on the subject, are organised into four parts by theme:

• OER in Academia – describes how OER are widening the international community of scholars, following MIT’s lead in sharing its resources and looking to the model set by the OpenCourseWare Consortium
• OER in Practice – presents case studies and descriptions of OER initiatives underway on three continents
• Diffusion of OER – discusses various approaches to releasing and “opening” content, from building communities of users that support lifelong learning to harnessing new mobile technologies that enhance OER access on the Internet
• Producing, Sharing and Using OER – examines the pedagogical, organisational, personal and technical issues that producing organisations and institutions need to address in designing, sharing and using OER

Instructional designers, curriculum developers, educational technologists, teachers, researchers, students, others involved in creating, studying or using OER: all will find this timely resource informative and inspiring.

Available in PDF and ePUB format (CC-BY-SA)
www.col.org/psoerirp
WEB RADIO: A MANUAL FOR STREAMING AUDIO ON THE WEB

By Zahir Koradia

COL’s new online Journal of Learning for Development will provide a forum for the publication of research with a focus on innovation in learning and its contribution to development. Content will include interventions that change social and/or economic relations, especially in terms of improving equity.

With a view to showcasing practical application to development contexts, the new e-journal will publish empirical research and case studies from researchers, scholars and practitioners and will seek to engage a broad audience across that spectrum. It aims to encourage contributors starting their careers, as well as to publish the work of established and senior scholars from the Commonwealth and beyond.

The Journal of Learning for Development is seeking submissions for its inaugural issue. The editors would also like to hear from keen and avid readers who would be interested in being one of the journal’s book reviewers.

More information is available at www.col.org/II4D.
LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS CONTINUE TO EVOLVE

There has been much coverage in the North American media of massive open online courses (MOOCs) and their impact on higher education. edX is now a well-known platform for MOOCs, used by a number of research universities in Australia, Canada, China and Hong Kong, the European Union, Japan and the USA. Last month, the edX software code was made available through the open source software distribution website GitHub.

edX has a very large number of features and functionalities, including a built-in learning management system (LMS), and is meant to be highly scalable. Unlike widely used LMSs, such as the commercial platform Blackboard or the open source Moodle, edX’s LMS has a much simpler interface. A number of processes associated with classroom-based learning are avoided, thus reducing complexity. It has a robust identity management system, which would be important for many distance learning institutions. It also incorporates functionalities to support the “flipped classroom” processes that are now considered integral to any MOOC offering.

edX offers great promise as a new platform, but a fair amount of testing for specific open and distance learning purposes would be necessary before one could judge whether edX as a whole, or its major components, will be a major advance.

Meanwhile, Moodle’s new version 2.5 is a substantial upgrade from Moodle 1.9 and a significant improvement over previous Moodle 2.x versions. Moodle 2.5 contains a number of noteworthy features not available in the previous versions. One is “Shoelace”, which, in simple terms, allows Moodle pages to have mobile-compatible displays. This is a very important feature, since a number of learners have started to use mobile devices such as tablets to view and work with learning material.

Another important feature in Moodle 2.5 is the ability to issue “badges” for certification support. Following the lead of Open Badges, from the Mozilla Foundation, the Moodle community has incorporated this useful functionality, which creates and displays internal badges. These can also be pushed to an e-portfolio platform such as Mahara. Blackboard, a widely used commercial LMS, also now supports Open Badges.

COl’s “Classroom Without Walls” system, which takes advantage of low-cost tablets, was profiled in the March edition of EdTechNews. As noted in that issue, tablets containing low-cost dual- and quad-core processors with 2GB of RAM — similar in power to what most average desktops had just four years ago in many developing countries — are readily available from “unbranded” or non-global companies. The real advantage is in the price, which continues to drop. Also now available, at a very low cost, are new “mini PC” Android computers with no integrated display screens.

COl took advantage of this in further improving the power and affordability of its “Classroom Without Walls” prototype. The current prototype has only two components. One is the (no display) mini PC; the other is a Wi-Fi router with its own battery pack, which also serves as the power source for the mini PC. For COl’s system the latest version of Ubuntu is used as the operating system (replacing the standard Android 4.x in the mini PC).

Together this set-up can host an LMS and/or content management systems, such as Drupal or WordPress, and it is entirely possible to connect up to 20 users.

COl’s “Classroom Without Walls” has drawn much interest throughout the Commonwealth and beyond, and at conferences such as eLearning Africa.

NEW “CLASSROOM WITHOUT WALLS”

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www.col.org/ClassroomWithoutWalls

COl’s online OER directory service is built on DSpace and has been expanded from a focus on higher education to also cover teacher education, open schooling and skills development. There are now 2,535 full-course OER catalogued. Developing countries of the Commonwealth continue to lead developed countries in placing OER on the Web.

http://dspace.col.org