COL AND ITTK KANPUR OFFER MOOC ON MOBILE LEARNING

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have caught the attention of leaders in education, as well as the media, business and the public.

MOOCs offered by advanced research universities such as MIT (edX) and Stanford (Coursera) are well publicised. The UK Open University leads the Future-Learn project, which is the only MOOC initiative led by a single-mode open and distance learning institution anywhere.

The Commonwealth of Learning, keen to explore the relevance of MOOCs in learning for development, partnered with the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT Kanpur) – a well-known research university that has pioneered applications of mobile technologies in rural development. COL and IIT Kanpur launched a six-week MOOC on Mobiles for Development (M4D) in early October.

COL emphasises the importance of separating MOOC brands from the technology platforms; the latter can be used by teaching organisations, as COL and IIT Kanpur have done, while the former usually come with restrictions that protect and identify the brand.

M4D was a wholly online course that was free and open to any learner anywhere. It was offered in English and did not have any prerequisites. Participants used the Internet to read text documents, view presentation slides and watch videos.

This course attracted 2,255 registrants from 115 countries. Of these, about 25 per cent were women. Grenada, India, Mauritius, Nepal and South Africa were the top five sources of participants, with Ghana, Nigeria and Tanzania coming next. Other Commonwealth countries – including Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK – accounted for another 500.

About two-thirds of the participants were regularly visiting the online classes, and intensive peer-to-peer and peer-mentor discussions online showed a good level of commitment.

Participants also developed innovative ideas for enhanced functionalities in mobile communication for learning, such as basic “missed call” notifications.

Learners were expected to invest about four to five hours per week over the six-week period. Those

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ALAN TAIT TO DELIVER ASA BRIGGS LECTURE AT PCF7

Professor Alan Tait will deliver PCF7’s Asa Briggs lecture. The Asa Briggs lecture, a feature at PCFs, honours COL’s founding Chairman, Lord Asa Briggs of Lewes.

Alan Tait, Editor-in-Chief of COL’s new Journal of Learning for Development, is Professor of Distance Education and Development at the Open University, UK, and has a long record of practice, publication and the support of professional development in distance and eLearning.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2
SECRETARY-GENERAL VISITS COL

Commonwealth Secretary-General His Excellency Mr. Kamalesh Sharma visited COL’s Vancouver offices in September for strategic discussions. During his visit, Mr. Sharma helped COL to launch Aptus – a device configuration designed by COL that allows educators and learners to connect to digital learning platforms and content without the need for grid electricity or Internet access.

Aptus is mobile, lightweight and packs into a small box, but it carries massive potential. The small setup can host up to 32GB of educational content and facilitate interactive, virtual learning anywhere – whether in a remote rural village or on a vast university campus. The result is a “Classroom Without Walls” that can be set up within minutes and accessed by any learner with a laptop, tablet or mobile device.

Aptus is quickly attracting the attention of educators, institutions and governments who are committed to expanding the reach of modern education but lack the resources and connectivity to do so effectively.

This simple and compact solution is also low cost – all components can be sourced for under US $80 – and built on open-source platforms, making it adaptable and customisable to any learning context.

www.col.org/progServ/ClassroomWithoutWalls

ALAN TAIT TO DELIVER ASA BRIGGS LECTURE AT PCF7

Continued from cover

He was Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) at the Open University from 2007 to 2012, and was formerly Dean of the Faculty of Education and Language Studies.

Professor Tait has worked widely in developing countries, and for international organisations such as UNESCO, the European Commission, the Commonwealth of Learning and the International Extension College.

He is Visiting Professor at Aarhus University, Denmark, a senior member of St. Edmunds College, University of Cambridge, and a Visiting Fellow of the Centre for Distance Education at the University of London.

PCF7 will be held in Abuja, Nigeria, from 2–6 December 2013, in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Education and the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). The Forum will address “Open Learning for Development: Towards Empowerment and Transformation” through five themes: “Girls’ and Women’s Education”, “Skills Development”, “Promoting Open Educational Resources (OER)”, “Innovation and Technology” and “Institutional Development”.

Major sponsors:

Several organisations have supported PCF7, enabling subsidies for delegates who would otherwise be unable to attend.

www.col.org/PCF7

COL AND IITK KANPUR OFFER MOOC ON MOBILE LEARNING

Continued from cover

visiting and viewing at least 80 per cent of all core material received participation certificates, jointly signed by IIT Kanpur and COL. Those who fulfilled participation requirements and passed an online examination at the end received competence certificates.

IIT Kanpur managed the course and the online classes using Sakai, an open-source application, and several faculty members were invited speakers.

COL sourced the content for mLearning and the use of mobiles in rural credit and financial inclusion. IIT Kanpur covered mobiles in agriculture. All of the learning materials have now been released online as open educational resources (OER).

The course was led by Professor T. V. Prabhakar of IIT Kanpur and a COL team that included Dr. V. Balaji, Dr. Abdurrahman Umar, Dr. K. Balasubramanian and Mr. Ricky Cheng.

http://m4d.colfinder.org
OPEN SCHOOLING IN THE PACIFIC AND CARIBBEAN

NOW AVAILABLE IN BELIZE

The Gwen Lizarraga Open School was launched on 23 August in Belize. Planning for the school was assisted by a COL-brokered twinning between the University of Belize and the Fraser Valley Distance Education School (British Columbia, Canada). Notesmaster Caribbean also supported intensive training in online content development. The school will provide online learning in at least five subjects, starting in January 2014.

The Honourable Patrick Faber, Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, speaking at the launch, said, “the concept of the Open School is really to tear down the walls, the physical structure of the schools – it’s putting everything online and using the technology. So in effect we’re hoping that students across the nation, or people who are not students who need a good quality education or need that kind of support, will be able to access quality available resources on this website and through this initiative.”

NOW AVAILABLE IN VANUATU

Vanuatu established its open school in July. Also in July, COL conducted a Learner Support for Tutors in Learning Centres workshop in Port Villa. A final reflection by participants on tutoring in open schooling showed a significant shift in the concept of how students learn and in the role of the tutor. In a response to the question, “What does tutoring involve?”, one of the participants answered, “It involves planning, organising and creating/designing activities that will help promote students’ understanding of the content of the subject.”

COSTS AND FINANCING

Open schooling is not only a vital response to the rapidly increasing demand for secondary education; it also holds enormous promise for developing countries to achieve greater cost efficiency. This, however, presents a challenge to many institutions and governments because while there are several differences between the economics of distance and conventional education, these are not always taken into consideration when planning for open schools.

COL’s Open Schooling initiative endeavours to develop and promote models that are sustainable and that include costs and financing matters. COL has held regional workshops on the topic for open-school management and ministry of education officials in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and, most recently, the Caribbean. Most Commonwealth Caribbean countries were represented at the meeting in Barbados.
In August, the University of the West Indies’ School of Business and Applied Studies Limited (ROYTEC) signed a memorandum of understanding for a partnership with the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). In doing so, ROYTEC has agreed to embrace OER as an operating strategy.

COL has facilitated training workshops on the open-source Moodle Learning Management System, including how to employ the system for content deployment, course design and delivery. Other training sessions have introduced the benefits of OER and guidance and of developing an OER policy.

ROYTEC’s first VUSSC offering will be a locally adapted version of the Bachelor in Business and Entrepreneurship.

www.vussc.net

There is a disparity between the rates at which males and females participate in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in most Commonwealth countries. Finding effective strategies to increase female participation is an enduring challenge. Through INVEST (Innovation in Vocational Education and Skills Training) Africa, COL has been working with 13 institutional partners to take active steps to bring more girls into TVET and to support them in male-dominated vocational areas. Institutions have been establishing Women in Technical Education (WITED) chapters and encouraging more girls to enrol for TVET. At Mbeya University of Science and Technology (MUST), in Tanzania, the access programme has recruited 185 girls to study a special bridging course and be rewarded with a place on the diploma programme if they are successful.

INVEST Africa aims to increase access to skills training for disadvantaged learners – especially people working in the informal sector. Several INVEST Africa partners have expanded their flexible course offerings. Following successful informal sector training earlier this year, where most of the graduates found employment or started self-employment, Thika Technical Training Institute, in Kenya, will continue to offer the programme. In total, 133 young people have received training in biogas production, generator operation, hospitality, customer relations and sales, and basic ICT skills.

There was an overwhelming response to the invitation to informal sector skills training at Koforidua Polytechnic, in Ghana. The 300 participants included food vendors, drivers, mechanics, hairdressers and seamstresses.

Auchi Polytechnic, in Nigeria, has 90 students enrolled in three new courses.

www.col.org/tvsd
Ms. Anita Kumbhar hails from a severely drought-prone area of Western India, Mhaswad. For the last 15 years, her family has struggled with infertile land coupled with inadequate rain. Their survival often depended on the small pottery operation her husband ran. Their dream of education for their children was put on hold. Anita wasn’t keen to join their traditional occupation, as she knew this would limit the scope for additional income for the family. She found answers through COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative.

She came across the Mann Deshi Foundation’s L3F-supported community radio learning programme (CRLP) accidentally. But then she became a regular listener and enrolled in a goat-rearing programme under the L3F initiative.

She loved when questions were asked on what they had learned from the previous sessions. She then enrolled in the financial literacy CRLP. This helped her increase her savings from INR 20 to INR 50 a day. Then she took out a loan to buy two goats and continued to develop her entrepreneurial skills through further CRLPs.

Apart from selling the milk, Anita also started breeding goats and selling the kids – earning INR 40,000 annually.

The success made her ambitious and she contacted the CRLP team for further help.

Anita asked, “How do we use our degraded land?” Mann Deshi’s L3F team suggested that she share her question on community radio and seek help. Agriculture experts from nearby areas came forward and guided Anita.

Last year, Mhaswad had one of the worst summers in years, but Anita decided to grow white millet. She harvested two tonnes of crop and earned INR 20,000 from green fodder.

Anita completed Enterprise Management through CRLP and assisted her husband to manage and grow his business as well. Their income has doubled to INR 60,000 annually. Anita is a trusted peer in Mhaswad. Her seven neighbours have joined the L3F programme. She continues to inspire many women from her community and she helps form learner groups.

Her biggest satisfaction? Her children are now pursuing higher education. Anita says, “We don’t need more, as long as my sons and daughter can get the education they want.”

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS), at the University of Nairobi, along with COL organised a workshop in Nairobi in July and presented their findings from an evaluation study on COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative activities in Kenya and Uganda.

Stakeholders representing agriculture, community development, gender issues, youth and rural development, drawn from the government, the private sector, non-governmental organisations and international development agencies, participated in the workshop.

Ms. Anne Onyango, Agriculture Secretary at Kenya’s Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, said she welcomed “innovations such as the L3F which will enable farmers to access information and farm more sustainably using the available resources as well as enable them to handle the effects of climate change.”

IDS Director, Professor Winnie Mitullah, said that the L3F approach, which focuses on the use of open and distance learning supported by ICT, shows that technology can be used effectively to reach a large number of poor and marginalised people, especially women.

Professor Asha Kanwar, COL’s President and CEO, was also at the workshop, noting that COL uses various technologies to accelerate progress towards achieving development goals.

The results of the evaluation survey were presented by Professor Rosemary Atieno. The study found that the L3F initiative had effective impacts and outcomes in improving livelihoods through economic diversification, nutrition and food security among the L3F communities. It also established that there was greater social empowerment, in the form of social capital, networking and social mobility among the L3F participants compared to the non-participants.
OECs OKAYS OPEN TEXTBOOKS

At their 23rd Annual Meeting on 15 October, ministers of education of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECs) endorsed the COL/UNESCO regional open textbooks initiative, which includes the development of a prototype for one subject area in the secondary school curriculum to determine the feasibility of the process, and the eventual scaling up to the entire secondary school curriculum.

The development of an open textbooks prototype came out of regional policy workshops held jointly by COL and UNESCO in 2012 and 2013. Other recommendations included the establishment of national policies on openly licensed educational materials and a regional open educational resources (OER) repository.

The goal of this open textbook prototype is to demonstrate that OER can be cost-effectively harnessed to create comprehensive, integrated multimedia packages of content that can replace conventional textbooks. If the prototype is successful and able to be scaled up and implemented across the curriculum, the aim would be to improve student performance in the Caribbean Senior Certificate and free up finances for investment in more locally relevant content.

With this OECs endorsement, COL will continue to collaborate with the OECs to complete the prototype and prepare a fully costed proposal for implementing it across the curriculum. This work will be done in partnership with teachers and students in the Caribbean to ensure local relevance of the final product. The exercise will also function as a widespread capacity-building initiative for teachers.

INDIA’S NEW NATIONAL OER REPOSITORY

Excerpts from an address by the Honourable Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Minister of State for Human Resource Development, at the launch of India’s National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER), held during the National Conference on ICT in School Education, New Delhi, 13 August 2013

I have been a staunch supporter of open educational resources as a significant part of the response to the challenges that are faced by the education sector in our country, and the launch of the NROER is a significant step in this direction. Reaching the unreached, including the excluded,
The 25th World Conference of the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) was held in Tianjin, China, in October. The theme of the conference was “New Strategies for Global Open, Flexible and Distance Learning”. There were over 700 conference participants from 40 countries.

In her conference-opening keynote speech, “Quality vs. Quantity: Can Technology Help?”, COL President, Professor Asha Kanwar, pointed to an example: Quality assurance is not restricted to well-endowed institutions alone. Kyambogo Teacher Training College in Uganda complements its distance education provision through face-to-face tutorials on weekends. If a student does not come for two consecutive sessions, the tutor gets on his/her bicycle and travels miles to the student’s house to find out what is the problem. This culture of care is synonymous with the culture of quality in the institution.

Professor Kanwar concluded her presentation by noting:

Technology by itself is not a silver bullet that will transform the quality of education. What is needed is a combination of technology and ideology to help shift the paradigm of how we do things today. The ideology we speak of is where a learner is not a mere student but a partner in learning, where a teacher is not an instructor but a facilitator and where each learner is a lifelong learner.

So how will the shift take place? One, when we are more flexible and open enough to embrace new provisions; two, when we move beyond a purely institutional approach to include stakeholders’ views as well and three, when we encourage institutions to be relevant to the needs of the 21st century.

Two Prizes for Lifelong Contribution to the ODL field were presented to former COL President, Tan Sri Dato’ Emeritus Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, Chairman of the Board of Governors and former CEO and Vice Chancellor of Wawasan Open University, Malaysia, and to Professor Yılmaz Büyükersen, Lord Mayor of the city of Eskişehir and former Rector of Anadolu University, Turkey.

Nine Prizes for Innovation and Best Practice were also awarded.

The ICDE World Conference is the world’s largest and most diverse ODL forum. It is held every two years, hosted by an ICDE member institution – this year by Tianjin Open University, China.

www.icde.org
www.col.org/speeches

Through a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, 11 October is now recognised as the International Day of the Girl Child. This important day reminds the world of the inequality faced by girls globally because of the fact that they are girls. Despite progress made in improving girls’ access to education over the last two decades, there is much more work to be done. Millions of girls around the world are still deprived of the right to education because of sociocultural, economic and infrastructural barriers, as well as security and safety concerns.

The International Day of the Girl Child is a day for COL and its partners to reaffirm their commitment to supporting girls’ right to education. This year’s theme is “Innovating for Girls’ Education” and focuses on the importance of new technology and innovation to move girls’ education forward. This theme is closely relevant to the strategic thrust of COL’s Three-Year Plan of harnessing open and distance learning and technologies to achieve development goals.

COL is playing a key role in enhancing access to education for girls through open and distance learning. Through the Open School Initiative, COL is working with the Bangladesh Open University (BOU) to implement the “Innovation in Girls’ Education Project”. This project aims to provide poor, vulnerable and marginalised girls who have previously dropped out of school with a second chance in education. Drawing from the findings of a baseline study, BOU will design a localised curriculum focused on skills and vocational training in areas identified by the girls themselves. Through open schooling, they will gain needed skills and knowledge to secure livelihoods and a better quality of life.

This is an example of learning for development where access to relevant learning opportunities increases the potential of girls to make more informed choices and influence the direction of their lives.

COL will continue to work collaboratively with partner institutions to increase access to affordable education for girls and to promote girls’ right to education. By educating a girl, one is empowering a community, because she will improve her own well-being and the well-being of her family, and contribute to the social and economic development of her community.
Affordable, appropriate communication channels – including digital audio, radio and mobile devices – enable access to learning for large numbers of citizens at low cost. Participatory approaches and quality content ensure relevance and results.

There is a desperate need in many communities of the developing world for opportunities to learn about basic health and development issues – opportunities that conventional approaches will not meet at the scale, quality or cost required. Open and distance learning (ODL) methods offer three major advantages in health education and training: large scale, high quality and low cost.

COL’s Healthy Communities initiative helps local development and communication organisations to create non-formal educational programmes about community health and development. Working with partners, COL has developed a model for local, low-cost, participatory communication programmes that address critical unmet community health and development needs. Currently, 85 local organisations in more than 50 communities in 16 countries in three Commonwealth regions are engaged in developing community learning programmes (CLPs) about health and development priorities.

**PHUKUSI LA MOYO, MALAWI**

COL’s flagship community health learning programme is *Phukusi la Moyo* (Bag of Life), which is active in a district in Malawi with extremely high rates of maternal and child mortality. Partners include a local health NGO, the district hospital, a local radio station and a network of 15,000 women. Each week, about 3,300 women participate directly in radio listening and discussion groups. Cost is low and learning is very evident.

Initiated in 2009, *Phukusi la Moyo* is produced with roughly US $1,000/month of in-kind support from local partners, including the MaiMwana Trust, Mchinji District Hospital, Mudzi Wathu Community Radio and the District Assembly, as well as $500 in funding from the Wellcome Trust (via MaiMwana). The cost per active learner is approximately $1.35.

The Bag of Life centres on 30 minutes of weekly audio content that combines the “right” information about maternal and child health (i.e., information vetted by doc-

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**YOU ARE LISTENING TO MUDZI WATHU COMMUNITY RADIO STATION**

Hilda and 12 other women are sitting around the radio under a baobab tree. They are listening together to a radio programme on maternal health.

Two years ago, Hilda’s sister died while giving birth, because she had no professional support and did not make it to the hospital in time. Hilda got together a group of women who wanted to do something about the high level of maternal mortality in that area of Malawi. They go door to door to inform women on issues related to pregnancy and delivery. The radio programme provides them with the relevant information. Today, the programme is talking about healthy food for a pregnant woman and the need for rest.

Hilda smiles when, in the middle of the programme, songs on pregnancy and childbirth are aired. Hilda’s group wrote and performed these songs – they are listening to their own voices, their own stories and ideas (van Kampen, 2012).
PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION

 tors and nurses) with the voices of local women sharing real-life stories, illustrating the benefits and consequences of positive and negative behaviour related to pregnancy and motherhood in rural Malawi.

COL’s evaluation shows that two-thirds of active participants have learned the importance of simple key messages – e.g., to deliver babies in a hospital or clinic. Another important indicator of the value of the Bag of Life is that over 2,000 women, contributing their own money to keep this programme going.

Through FM radio, Phukui la Moyo has the potential to reach 125,000 pregnant women and mothers of children under the age of five.

TRAINING eFACILITATORS

Nominated by COL Healthy Communities partners in 11 countries across three regions, 19 communication and development workers (11 women, eight men) completed a five-week online workshop in eFacilitation Skills, offered by DynaMind eLearning. The training is part of COL’s strategy to stimulate wider take-up of the CLP model by moving training and mentoring online, simultaneously improving quality and increasing access by prospective programme developers in more communities in more countries.

CLP DEVELOPER’S CERTIFICATE

Over 60 individuals from media, health and development groups in 17 countries in all four major regions of the Commonwealth took part in a distance training and mentoring course offered by COL and its partners in October/November. Communication for Development: Why. How. Now. introduces the principles and practices of Communication for Development (C4D) and its potential to address health and development issues, foster learning and bring about positive social change.

C4D: Why. How. Now. is the first course in the CLP Developer’s Certificate and is offered by COL and the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) of the University of the West Indies (UWI), in conjunction with Transformative Communication Partners (Caribbean), the Media & Training Centre for Health (South Africa), the East African Community Media Network and Maraa (India).

A second offering of the online course, together with the first offerings of the other courses making up the CLP Developer’s Certificate, starts in February 2014. Registration is free and open to all, but space is limited.

Participants will develop the skills and know-how to plan, design and deliver effective, low-cost participatory communication programmes that focus on local community health and development priorities – and they will create new or improved community learning programmes in the process.

Certification is awarded by COL and UWI.

www.col.org/clp

“YOUT RUN TINGS” AND “YAAD BOSS”

The programme series, launched in October, is called “Yout Run Tings”.

Kingston-based community radio station Roots FM will air and web-stream the programme weekly. The student group has also set up an online radio channel, Youths JA FM, on spreaker.com.

SUCCESS FACTORS IN ODL FOR HEALTH

1. Use appropriate technologies that maximise reach and minimise costs per learner
2. Focus on local priorities to ensure relevance and buy-in
3. Ensure full participation by target audience, from programme design to evaluation
4. Engender collaboration among all partners: target audience, health experts and officials, policy representatives and media workers
5. Use engaging formats, including storytelling and experience sharing, folk culture, drama, music and quizzes
6. Provide blended approaches that combine media content with face-to-face interaction – e.g., discussion groups – as well as mobile telephones and other new media
7. Employ low-cost approaches that maximise voluntary inputs and local ownership
8. Engage local resources, financial and otherwise, as the best guarantors of sustainability

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10
The second CLP launched in Jamaica in September is “Yaad Boss”. Spearheaded by the Jamaica Constabulary Force, “Yaad Boss” is a live one-hour programme, also airing on Roots FM, about domestic violence, targeted to men. This 12-part series features real-life stories from reformed abusers, perspectives from counselors and advice from the police.

The Jamaica Constabulary also started up a third CLP, focusing on domestic violence but targeting women as learners, in November 2013. It is carried on SunCity FM in Saint Catherine, just outside Kingston.

All three programmes were developed through a blended training and mentoring programme led by Transformative Communication Partners (Caribbean) and offered through the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) of the University of the West Indies, made possible by COL’s Healthy Communities initiative. All these CLPs feature a participatory approach.

NEW APPROACHES TO HEALTH COMMUNICATION:
RADIO APAC, UGANDA
In September, long-time COL partner Radio Apac launched a groundbreaking new health communication initiative in Apac District in the Northern Region of Uganda. Radio Apac, a community station founded with COL’s support in 1999, together with district authorities, local health services and civil society groups, is putting citizens’ health and the district’s health services on the local agenda. Some 100 village health workers have been trained to encourage participation from male and female citizens as well as healthcare stakeholders at all levels.

The aim is to raise the level of dialogue about health problems and solutions, responsibility and accountability, using local community debates, on-air reports, interviews and talk shows. “What’s perhaps most promising about this new initiative is the combination of face-to-face dialogue rooted in specific communities and contexts with a broader, mediated conversation that takes place across the whole district on the radio. It will bring health into the public sphere in Apac in a unique and, I hope, powerful way,” said Mr. Ian Pringle, COL’s Education Specialist for Media and Healthy Communities.

CLP FOR COMMUNITY RADIO IN SOUTH AFRICA
The Media & Training Centre for Health (MTC) in Cape Town, South Africa, is introducing a new CLP initiative with support from the Open Society Foundation – South Africa (OSF-SA) and the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) of South Africa.

This initiative will target 10 sites in the Eastern, Northern and Western Cape provinces. “It is a scale-up of the CLP initiatives that MTC has offered since 2009, in partnership with COL, and will be a blended approach of face-to-face engagement together with online mentorship and support,” said MTC Executive Director, Ms. Gail White. “The goal is to ensure that the majority of community radio stations in South Africa’s Cape provinces receive exposure to the CLP approach along with support and guidance throughout implementation.”

In the past year, MTC has delivered over 100 hours of CLP content to 11,300 identified users and a total estimated listenership of 54,300.
TRAINING TRAINERS IN MOZAMBIQUE

As part of efforts to introduce the CLP model in Mozambique, COL and the Media & Training Centre for Health (South Africa) have been working with Mozambique’s Forum of Community Radios (FORCOM) to train trainers. In July, MTC conducted three-day local CLP development workshops in Chimoio and Macequeque. Representatives of local radio groups and health/development stakeholders participated.

WOMEN BROADCASTERS
TAKE UP CLP IN INDIA

Following six months of distance training and mentoring, conducted in large part using mobile phones, audio clips and email, Maraa, a media and arts collective based in Bangalore, India, ran a programme design training/mentoring workshop for 17 representatives (70 per cent women) from eight communication/development organisations. Four of the groups are expected to start delivery of community learning programmes by the end of 2013. Training and mentoring of women broadcasters will continue as a joint COL/CEMCA (Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia) activity in 2014.

IMPACT

Research shows that participatory open and distance learning programmes result in individual and collective learning, which in turn contribute to behavioural and social change. Evaluation of results and research into programme outcomes and, specifically, increases in subject-related knowledge and positive changes in health/development-seeking behaviour, is on-going.

Initial findings from in-depth research (on-going from May 2013) on the community learning approach in Malawi, involving 240 pre- and post-test interviews and 2,600 questionnaires, indicate that the Phukusi la Moyo programme enjoys widespread support from community members and has generally boosted positive practices relating to maternal health. Preliminary findings (from a September 2013 interim report on research findings, authored by the research team leader, Patrick Mangochi) also indicate that respondents identify themselves with programme content, and the approach has greatly contributed to changes in overall health and health-seeking behaviour in the district. These findings reinforce those of an evaluation conducted in 2011, by Cathryn Wood, showing a high-quality learning programme with more than 3,000 active users.

In a powerful illustration of local ownership, 66 per cent of women’s groups surveyed were prepared to contribute a median value of $1.20 per month to the ongoing sustenance of the programme (Wood, 2011). Although this amount would only represent 5–10 per cent of the total cost of Phukusi la Moyo, it shows a clear demand for the programme and an equally strong leverage for buy-in from other stakeholders.

Research by Farm Radio International about participatory radio campaigns in the African Farm Radio Research Initiative clearly shows an increase in knowledge and resulting behavioural change. A randomly selected group of 4,800 farmers in 90 different communities across five participating countries were surveyed about campaigns designed to promote take-up of farming improvements. Over 80 per cent of respondents who listened to 100 per cent of the campaign demonstrated detailed knowledge of the improvements, another 17 per cent had good knowledge, and none had little or no knowledge. Fifty per cent of respondents who had listened to 100 per cent of the participatory radio campaign episodes started practicing the featured improvements after the campaign began. By comparison, only nine per cent of those who had not listened to any of the campaign adopted the practice (Perkins & Leclair, 2012).

In South Africa, where CLPs were operational in six communities in the first half of 2013, representing a degree of up-scaling based on the success of pilots conducted in 2009–2012, identified programme users numbered 11,000 among an estimated audience of 100,000, based on Nielsen broadcast industry statistics.

COL’s Healthy Communities initiative is led by Education Specialist, Mr. Ian Pringle. www.col.org/HealthyCommunities

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SCIENCE FOR WOMEN’S HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Sharmila’s day begins at 3:00 am, when she and her husband prepare and bake the breads, buns and cakes that they supply to local bakeries. By the time she gets her children ready for school and cooks for the day, it is nearly noon. Invariably, she would end up skipping breakfast.

But that was before Thayum Seyum (Mother and Child) went on air at Sivanthi Community Radio, as part of the Science for Women’s Health and Nutrition series, developed by COL’s regional agency, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA).

After listening to the programme series by Dr. Rajini, Sharmila is now particular about eating three meals a day. She understands the need for a balanced diet, both for herself and for her children. She participated in the camp on anaemia and is able to identify its symptoms.

Sharmila is now better informed with regard to childcare issues: she understands the importance of spending time with children for emotional bonding and of sending children to school regularly – something that her parents and in-laws do not understand but which she came to appreciate through the radio drama on school dropouts.
The 27th Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) took place in early October, hosted by the Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

The conference theme – Leveraging the Power of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) for Building a Divergent Asia: Today’s Solutions and Tomorrow’s Vision – set the tone for several keynote speakers.

As part of the pre-conference proceedings, Dr. Sanjaya Mishra, Director of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), and Professor Paul Kawachi facilitated a workshop on OER and quality guidelines.

Two Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) events took place recently in the Indian Ocean – in Mauritius and Seychelles, where initiative activities are getting underway.

In Mauritius in September, COL’s Vice President, Mr. Vis Naidoo, was on hand for the launch of the farmers kiosks that support learning. The Mauritius Food and Agricultural Research Council (FARC) and the affiliated Agricultural Research and Extension Unit (AREU) have been working with COL to support the new L3F learning opportunities for farmers in Mauritius. Mr. Naidoo was invited to officially launch the new information kiosks at a meeting with agriculture extension officers. The kiosks use multimedia to display information on good agricultural practices.

In Seychelles, on World Food Day, 16 October 2013, telecommunication company Airtel and the Seychelles Agricultural Agency (SAA) signed a memorandum of understanding to bring technology to the farming community through COL’s L3F initiative. Airtel will facilitate communication of important messages to farmers, especially those who are remotely scattered, through SMS phone text messages.

Immediately after the agreement for the programme was formalised with Airtel, farmers present at the event, held at the Anse Boileau Agricultural Research Station, received their first text message.

The Open Day at the Research Station also included an exhibition showcasing the work of the different units within the SAA, the Health Ministry’s nutrition unit, the Seychelles Agricultural and Horticultural Training Centre (SAHTC) and the farmers in the district.

Visitors were also able to sample and buy fruits, vegetables and baking from the farmers, as well as saplings from the Research Station.

Seychelles is the second country, after India, where Airtel has partnered with the farming community and COL’s L3F initiative to improve communication between farmers and their extension officers.

www.col.org/L3F
WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Asha Kanwar, Frances Ferreira and Colin Latchem, Eds.

With a Foreword by The Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar, SC, MP, Prime Minister of Trinidad & Tobago, the first female Prime Minister of the Caribbean country.

Women’s empowerment and gender equality are central to COL’s agenda of “Learning for Development”. Women and Leadership in Open and Distance Learning and Development, an addition to COL’s Perspectives on Open and Distance Learning series, clearly and eloquently demonstrates that women’s leadership is a critical step in promoting gender equality.

Enabling girls and women to overcome cultural barriers and thereby access educational opportunities whilst fulfilling other responsibilities calls for radical solutions; these include the pioneering of open and distance learning policies, organisational processes and programmes to promote gender equality.

Women and Leadership provides a unique set of insights into the aspirations, visions, setbacks, disappointments, breakthroughs and successes of 12 remarkable women who are, or have been, engaged in open and distance education and in helping other women to become leaders. This book is not weighed down with academic jargon. Rather, it lets us hear the voices of women who have led, or aspire to lead, open and distance innovations in a variety of socio-economic contexts. Readers learn how, in so doing, these women have broken the mould of what was expected and allowed within their particular societies.

Their articulate, instructive accounts will inspire many other women to find their own pathways to leadership.

Available in PDF and ePub format (CC BY-SA)
www.col.org/psWomenLeadership

OPEN SCHOOLING WITH OER: OPENING DOORS, CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

Frances Ferreira and Cindy Gauthier, Eds.

How do we manage the costs of educating populations in large, developing countries, where many people live far from urban centres and far from traditional schools and post-secondary centres?

Open educational resources (OER) offer a cost-effective solution to the costs and logistics of educating outlying populations. Not being subject to traditional licensing restrictions, OER can be used, reused and adapted to suit the needs of a wide variety of learners. First, though, the OER have to be developed.

This book contains first-hand accounts of the Commonwealth of Learning’s Open Educational Resources for Open Schools (OER4OS) project. Six countries – Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Seychelles, Trinidad & Tobago and Zambia – participated in this ambitious, groundbreaking project to create a bank of OER that could be used in both traditional and open schools by school-age children and adult learners. Each country based its OER on its country curricula, but built in enough cultural and pedagogical flexibility to allow the OER to be used and adapted by other countries.

The project presented many challenges – technical, personal and logistical – for the participants, and these are discussed openly and honestly in the country reports.

Available in PDF and ePub format (CC BY-SA)
www.col.org/psOER

CREATING, USING AND SHARING OER

by Rory McGreal

COL’s Knowledge Series is a topical, start-up guide to distance education practice and delivery. Adding to COL’s extensive publications and resources on open educational resources (OER) is a new Knowledge Series title on Creating, Using and Sharing OER.

OER can be openly licensed or in the public domain, and can be used or reused for free. They can exist in many formats: text (either print or digital); audio, video, multimedia or hypermedia; or various combinations of these. They can be based on a single learning point, a lesson, a series of lessons (a module), a whole course or even an entire programme of study. They can support a specific learning methodology or approach – whether that be behaviourist, constructivist, connectivist, etc. – or any combination of methodologies or approaches. Although they may differ in format, structure or approach, they share a common characteristic: their openness.

Additional contributors: Susan D’Antoni, Wayne Mackintosh and Cable Green

www.col.org/knowledge
COMMUNITY RADIO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TOOLKIT

by Vinod Pavarala, Kanchan K. Malik, Vasuki Belavadi, Aditya Deshbandhu and Preeti Raghunath

Published by the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia to help community radio stations assess themselves on their performance, this toolkit provides indicators of performance along nine broad parameters: content generation and programming; policies and guidelines; volunteers; technology – access and management; on-air standards of broadcast; governance; feedback and grievances; content sharing and networking; revenue generation and financial accountability.

Themes such as participation, inclusion, gender and capacity building have been treated as core principles that cut across all nine parameters.

www.cemca.org

REPORT ON THE ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION OF LEARNERS USING OER

by Dianne Conrad, Wayne Mackintosh, Rory McGreal, Angela Murphy and Gabi Witthaus

This COL consultant report shares the findings and lessons learned from an investigation into the economics of disaggregated models for assessing and accrediting informal learners, with particular attention to the OER University (OERu) consortium. It also relies on data from a small-scale survey conducted by two of the authors on perceptions, practices and policies relating to openness in assessment and accreditation in post-secondary institutions (Murphy & Witthaus, 2012). These investigations include the perceptions of stakeholders in post-secondary education about the OERu concept, combined with a look at economic models for universities to consider in implementing OER assessment and accreditation policies.

www.col.org/consultancies

UNIVERSITIES FOR A NEW WORLD

MAKING A GLOBAL NETWORK IN INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION, 1913–2013

Deryck M. Schreuder, Ed.

Universities for a New World takes the centenary of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) as its point of departure in exploring what a 2009 UNESCO report has evocatively termed an “academic revolution” in modern higher education.

The book explores the rise of the ACU as the world’s oldest network of universities, before focusing primarily on that protean “revolution” in higher education provision – with a particular sampling of the diverse Commonwealth experiences across the globe. Gains as well as losses are analysed through critical and interrelated essays.

Transformation may have been inevitable, but progress towards greater participation rates has not always been manifested through quality provision for students or societies at large. Measuring those changes to universities is inherently challenging as transformations are still proceeding apace. The book also includes informed perspectives on the potential future(s) of universities in the 21st century and concludes that, paradoxically, further change is now the only constant for higher education in an era of globalisation.

Contributors include COL’s current President and immediate Past President.

Available from SAGE Publications Ltd., www.sagepublications.com

OPENING UP EDUCATION IN EUROPE

The European Commission launched Open Education Europa in September 2013 as part of its “Opening Up Education” initiative to provide a single gateway to European OER. Open Education Europa is a dynamic platform built with the latest cutting-edge open-source technology, offering tools for communicating, sharing and discussing. Opening Up Education calls for EU-level co-operation to push reforms towards the adoption of open learning environments as drivers to enhance digital skills for both pupils and teachers.

www.openeducationeurp.eu
COMPUTING CURRICULA

The Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) and the IEEE Computer Society have jointly sponsored the development of Computer Science Curricula volumes that have helped to set international guidelines for undergraduate programmes for decades. The 2013 volume (CS2013) provides major updates to the models.

http://tinyurl.com/ComputerCurricula

HOW DO YOU CROWDFUND A MINI PC?

We have heard of crowdsourcing for information and fundraising. Wikipedia is an excellent example. What about crowdfunding for hardware? Imagine you want to build a customised tablet or a mini PC for learners in your ODL institution. Generally, this would prove to be cost-prohibitive.

Gumstix, a U.S.-based technology company, has found a way to help you build highly customised mini PCs or tablets in an affordable way. You don’t have to buy thousands of pieces to get a cost advantage – just 50 will do.

Gumstix uses an online platform called Geppetto to let you design your own computer circuit board. You can then publish it online and seek interested community members to help you improve upon the design. At some point, when you are satisfied with the design, you can buy 50 pieces, or you can ask online communities to come forward to help you with 50 sign-ups so that you can place an order. The cost of a single mini PC or tablet using this crowdfunding route is estimated at US $50. You can load an open-source operating system, such as Android, onto it and distribute it among learners.

www.gumstix.com

STAFF NEWS

When I joined COL in January 2009, the office next to my room was silent. My colleague, Ms. Carol Walker, took me to that room and introduced me to a smiling gentleman from Nigeria – Dr. Abdurrahman Umar, COL’s Education Specialist for Teacher Education. He spoke little and smiled a lot. A polite gentleman but very reserved, I thought.

However, I soon discovered that he actually has an outgoing personality and is friendly and warm with everybody. He actively participated in office meetings and discussions. Our interaction grew through debates on the role of education and learning in development. I found it difficult to refute his views, which were blended with strong multidisciplinary theoretical perspectives and field reality.

Such dialogues and discourses helped COL to evolve fresh perspectives on open educational resources, gender and andragogy, and heutagogy for lifelong learning, and facilitated its partners in evolving strategies for strengthening open and distance learning (ODL) for teachers. As an Education Specialist, he has guided COL to make teacher education through ODL a major agenda in many Commonwealth countries.

Dr. Abdurrahman Umar will be leaving COL in early December after five years of dedicated work.

“One of the memorable things about COL is the teamwork and team spirit that permeates all its work,” Abdurrahman says. “In spite of challenges, it is being strengthened every day. Similarly, access to COL’s vast network of partners and collaborators is priceless! It is this network that has ensured COL’s enduring success and leadership in the use of technology and ODL to promote access and quality. Last but by no means least is COL’s strong sense of focus, the quest for results and hard evidence on impact and, above all, the strong sense of vision. These are positive attributes that one would take away and promote in new contexts!”

While COL will miss him (including his boisterous laughter), we are sure that he will spread the ideals and values of COL in his new position.

K. Balasubramanian

Dr. Ankuran Dutta joined COL’s staff this month as Programme Officer, Livelihoods & Health, at COL’s regional agency, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA).

Based at CEMCA’s headquarters in New Delhi, Dr. Dutta will plan, organise, and implement regional activities in the areas of technical/vocational skills development and community media/radio.

Previously, Dr. Dutta was Deputy Director (Multimedia) and Assistant Professor in Mass Communication at K. K. Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU) in Guwahati, Assam, India. He was also at the Department of Communications Studies at York University, Canada, during 2010–2011, having been selected, through the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, for the Government of Canada’s Faculty Enrichment Programme.

Dr. Dutta succeeds Ms. Rukmini Vemraju, who left CEMCA at the end of September, after 10 years of valued service.

www.col.org/aumar
www.col.org/adutta
There continues to be increasing interest in the use of mobile devices in education. In practice, education administrators and teachers are interested in using mobile phones as well as tablet computers as support tools and devices. In most developed countries, Apple products such as iPhones and iPads are used in education, whereas in the developing world, most initiatives tend to use mobile devices, especially Android-based phones and tablets.

What is Android? Android is a computer operating system. It is based on Linux, which is open-source, employing a “kernel”, or core functionalities, that help in using built-in devices such as WiFi, Bluetooth or a camera. There are then other layers built over this kernel that provide functionality for applications such as contacts, Web browser, email, etc.

Android is also open-source, enabling developers of applications (apps) to work without constraints. An estimated one million apps are currently available for Android.

About 900 million devices worldwide use Android, and about one million new Android devices are activated daily.

Google Inc. releases Android versions. These carry version numbers but are also named alphabetically after desserts, such as Cupcake (v1.5), Gingerbread (v2.3), Ice Cream Sandwich (v4.0), Jelly Bean (v4.1–4.3) and KitKat (v4.4., release date yet to be announced).

Manufacturers of devices (such as Samsung, HTC and LG) add their own device-specific updates.

Android applications from developers are generally accessed from app stores, such as Google Play (about 50 billion downloads to date), Amazon’s Appstore and Android Pit.

Android smartphones and tablets can also connect to mobile phone and Internet service providers and to “cloud services”, which let users access external applications such as email, social networks or online repositories of learning materials. Through WiFi connectivity, COL’s Aptus device can be used to provide access to digital learning materials where Internet connectivity is not available.

A word about phablets. We can imagine a continuum: basic mobile phone, smartphone, phablet and tablet. The last three are distinguished from one another by size (up to 4” diagonal for smartphones, 5–7” for phablets and 7–11” for tablets) and by weight (smartphones and phablets: 100–170 grams; tablets: 500–700 grams). Phablets and smartphones have voice telephony functionality, whereas tablets generally do not. All have WiFi capability.