

EXCERPTS FROM:

COL in the Commonwealth 2006–2009 Country Reports

FOR: KIRIBATI

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new access
freedom education
impact open and distance learning
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paradigm shift gender equality open schools
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COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

Learning for Development

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FOREWORD

COL in the Commonwealth is a companion text to *Learning for Development*, the Commonwealth of Learning's Three-Year Plan for 2009-2012. This compendium reviews COL's work over the last three years (2006-2009) country by country. Together these two documents are the springboard for the *Country Action Plans* that will guide COL's future activities in each country over the 2009-2012 triennium and ensure that they are consistent with the national priorities of governments.

Ministers were enthusiastic about the previous issue of *COL in the Commonwealth* that was presented to 16CCEM in Cape Town in 2006. That report covered only developing countries whereas this one, at the request of Ministers, covers all members of the Commonwealth, showing also what COL has done in relation to the international development priorities of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. These country reviews are grouped under four regions: Africa (and the Mediterranean), Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

COL tries to create synergy within regions and across the Commonwealth by bringing countries and institutions together in common endeavours. For this reason each grouping of countries begins with a short account of the regional activities which COL has promoted in 2006-2009.

Member States also greatly value COL's Pan-Commonwealth work, which benefits from the unifying characteristics of the Commonwealth such as a common language, similar constitutional and legal frameworks, and a shared commitment to the values of peace, democracy, equality and good government. Some of the Pan-Commonwealth activities and facilities that underpin COL's work in the regions and countries are listed in the next section.

The production of *COL in the Commonwealth 2006-2009* has been an intense collective effort. COL's advanced knowledge management systems have enabled us to exploit fully the information contained in the numerous event reports prepared by staff as they work and travel. I express particular gratitude to Jasmine Lee, for diligently updating the country profiles that provided the raw material for these reviews, and to Judith Mosley, who brought this volume together in an impressively efficient and expeditious manner.



Sir John Daniel
President and Chief Executive Officer
Commonwealth of Learning

PAN-COMMONWEALTH INITIATIVES



BACKGROUND

As a Commonwealth inter-governmental organisation, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has the mandate to operate in all 53 member states. Its work focuses particularly on 46 developing countries across Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific. COL also seeks to align its activities with the education and training priorities and the countries of particular concern for major donor agencies such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID).

COL has developed Action Plans in consultation with Focal Points and country partners in the 46 member states, with activities specific to the individual needs of each country. However, several activities have a regional or pan-Commonwealth nature. This section looks at pan-Commonwealth activities.

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION

COL provides material and capacity building support for assuring quality in higher education and teacher education in the Commonwealth. A toolkit called the *Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit* includes *Quality Indicators for Teacher Education* and *Best Practices in Teacher Education*, was launched in December 2007 to be used by Ministries of Education and teacher education institutions.

COL is also developing a quality assurance toolkit for open schools. As a first step towards this, staff members from 14 countries across all Commonwealth regions have been trained in the Quality Assurance of Open Schools. A Quality Assurance Toolkit for Higher Education is nearing completion.

OPEN SCHOOLS

COL encourages the application of open and distance learning (ODL) to increase access to primary and secondary schooling. In support of this, two publications, *Perspective Series on Open Schools – Open Schools for the 21st*

Century and Handbook for Managers of Open Schools have been completed with contributions from chapter authors across the Commonwealth. Both publications will be distributed as a resource to policymakers. Other resources which have been developed include the *Evaluation Study on Open Schools* and the *Cost and Financing of Open Schools* as well as a *Learner Support Guide for Open Schools*.

In addressing the need for quality educational resources, COL has initiated the development of Open Educational Resources for Open Schools (OER4OS) in 20 subjects involving six countries. The open educational resources (OERs) will be available to all Commonwealth countries.

ELEARNING FOR EDUCATION SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

COL has two major and related pan-Commonwealth initiatives in this area: WikiEducator and Learning4Content (L4C).

COL's WikiEducator (www.col.org/WikiEducator) provides an online service to support online educational communities. Use of WikiEducator has grown rapidly during the past year with the number of registered users passing the 9,020 mark and number of hits per day now exceeding 247,653. A wiki is a website on which any user can edit and update pages. The best known is the Wikipedia, the biggest encyclopaedia ever produced. Wikis are a part of the emerging "Web 2.0" environment that includes user-contributed works such as YouTube and MySpace.

COL's WikiEducator creates online communities whose members participate from remote locations to create educational content collaboratively and to plan conferences and other events. It is one of the tools used by the Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). WikiEducator is reaching 79 % of countries around the world and COL is now supporting the installation of a French language version.

The L4C initiative aims to build capacity among educators in using WikiEducator to develop free content for education. Training is free and educators "pay" for their training by donating time to develop one free content lesson of their choice. L4C workshops have already been held in 28 Commonwealth countries and at least one face-to-face workshop will be held in each member state. In addition, 26 online workshops have been held and others are scheduled. Commonwealth teachers and educators are thus becoming WikiEducators themselves, developing and donating one free content resource back to the WikiEducator community.

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation approved a grant of USD 100,000 to COL over one year as core support for this initiative.

THE VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

VUSSC is a collaborative network of small states that create and share materials for livelihood-related post-secondary programmes. Activities during this planning period have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes has also been an area of focus.

The VUSSC is a creation of the participating countries and their existing tertiary institutions. It is a collective mechanism for people to develop expertise in online collaboration, eLearning and information and communication technologies (ICTs). It also provides an opportunity for them to produce, adapt and deploy courses and learning materials on selected subjects identified by country Interlocutors and stakeholders.

The model that has emerged is a three-week training and course development workshop at which subject specialists from a subset of the participating states strengthen their information technology (IT) skills and begin to develop course material collaboratively online. Six workshops were held during this planning period:

1. Entrepreneurship and Tourism, hosted in Mauritius in August 2006.
2. Professional Development of Educators, in Singapore in March 2007.
3. Life Skills, hosted in Trinidad & Tobago in June 2007.
4. Disaster Management, in November 2007 in Samoa.
5. The Fishing Industry, in Seychelles in March 2008.
6. The Construction Industry, in The Bahamas in November 2008.

Orientations for the selected team leaders in preparation for the workshops took place in Vancouver six weeks before each workshop.

Senior officials from VUSSC countries met in Singapore in February 2008 to consider, refine and agree mechanisms of a transnational qualifications framework (TQF), the first of its kind. This will allow the 30 participating small states to transfer course materials, qualifications and qualified learners between countries. The South African Qualifications Authority, an organisation of the South African Government with more than twelve years experience in establishing frameworks in South and Southern Africa, helped to prepare a concept document and facilitate the proceedings.

The Ministry Interlocutors for VUSSC met in London in July 2008 to discuss the implementation of the TQF, the establishment of a management committee, the logo and branding of VUSSC, monitoring and evaluation, and copyright issues.

TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAMMES

COL designs, develops and delivers distance and technology mediated learning programmes for international organisations with a global workforce. During this planning period, COL has developed and delivered a number of new programmes including: Writing Effectively for the International Labour Organization (ILO); World Bank Writing E-mails, Memos and Letters and World Bank Report Writing; and an Operational Data Management Learning Programme for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). These eLearning courses are designed to enhance the skill of staff working in field offices and in headquarters.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

COL promotes gender equality in all its programmes. Specific gender-related issues are identified during the work-planning process with country stakeholders and addressed through appropriate research, training and materials development.

COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) are working together to develop ODL training materials aimed at promoting good governance and gender equality in the public sector. The work is based on two workshops hosted by ComSec which concluded that there was limited capacity among the majority of policy makers, senior managers and professionals to mainstream gender equality in their daily work. A critical decision was to explore the role of ICTs and ODL in delivering training on a larger scale and to support research on flexible learning opportunities. A status report on what learning materials for gender mainstreaming are currently available to the public service concluded that while there are some materials available online, the current model for accessing the materials is not adequate.

A two-day meeting was convened in July 2008 to deliberate how best COL and ComSec could develop the required content using ODL tools. Invited participants included members of administrative staff colleges and other institutions involved in training public servants such as National Women's Machineries, Commonwealth partner agencies and resource people. The focus for piloting this initiative is Africa in the first instance.

COL-PROTEIN PROGRAMME

The COL Poverty Reduction Outcomes through Education Innovations and Networks (COL-PROTEIN) programme supports innovative uses of ODL to alleviate poverty in rural areas. In particular, COL-PROTEIN supports initiatives that adapt ODL, ICTs and media to build capacities for community development, for example, in areas such as food security, environmental protection, women's empowerment, micro-enterprise and good governance. Several projects across the regions have already been recipients of a COL-PROTEIN Award.

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUMS

More than 500 people from 64 countries and various international organisations gathered in Ocho Rios, Jamaica for COL's Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF4) from 30 October to 3 November 2006. In his closing remarks, Sir John Daniel pointed to three key areas of progress since the Third Pan-Commonwealth Forum in Dunedin, New Zealand in 2004:

1. Better research
2. More participation from developing countries
3. Integration of technology.

COL was grateful to the local hosts of the Forum for ensuring the success of the event, in particular the University of the West Indies' Distance Education Centre, in co-operation with the Caribbean Association for Distance and Open Learning, the Jamaican Association for Distance and Open Learning, the Trinidad & Tobago Distance Learning Association and the Office of Continuing Education and Distance Learning at the University of Technology, Jamaica.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5) took place in London, UK, in July 2008, with the theme "Access to Learning for Development". It was hosted by COL in collaboration with the University of London, as part of the University's celebration to mark the 150th anniversary of the establishment of its External Degrees Programme. PCF5 brought together practitioners, researchers, planners and policy makers in the fields of ODL and development to explore the contribution of ODL to international development goals. Over 700 participants from over 70 countries, the majority from the developing Commonwealth, took advantage of opportunities to share experience and expertise, and to contribute to future policy and provision.

COL NEWS SERVICE & NEWSLETTER

COL customises services provided by Google and Yahoo to provide a news service on ODL and specialised topics. The general news service is available from COL's homepage while the specialised services are available on the appropriate topic pages on the website. The news service is updated approximately every hour.

COL publishes a newsletter, *Connections*, and a companion publication, *EdTech News*, three times per year, designed to provide regular news and information to COL's stakeholders. The publications are distributed in print and electronically directly to 10,000 government officials, ODL and educational technology leaders and practitioners throughout the Commonwealth and beyond. The newsletter offers updates on COL and partner activities; ODL developments, resources and events; and educational technology reviews – all with a “development” focus. It also features an “In Focus” section which highlights a different COL programme in each issue, and periodic editorials as well as “Fair Comment” columns from external sources. It can be found on COL's website at www.col.org/connections.

COPYRIGHT FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

COL has worked extensively in the area of copyright in education. The focus of COL's attention is on providing information on how learning resources may be made available at low or no cost by applying the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS). In early 2009 COL published a book on copyright for educators and administrators titled *Introducing Copyright* which is available on the COL website at no cost.



Pacific

**Fiji Islands | Kiribati | Nauru | Papua New Guinea | Samoa |
Solomon Islands | Tonga | Tuvalu | Vanuatu**



REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

BACKGROUND

The Pacific region is home to 11 Commonwealth member states, including larger countries such as Australia and small island states such as Nauru. This diverse region is divided into three areas, Melanesia (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu), Micronesia (Kiribati and Nauru) and Polynesia (New Zealand and Cook Islands, Samoa and Tonga).

Within the region, there is considerable expertise and leadership in open and distance learning. Australia has a long history of distance education and is the model of best practice in dual-mode provision. Fiji has developed multi-modal distance education through the University of the South Pacific (USP). New Zealand is a leader in how distance education can be used for technical and vocational education and training.

FREE/LIBRE AND OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE FOR EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education (FLOSS4Edu) initiative is promoting the development of free content in education using open source software tools among educators. Following the establishment of the East African Chapter in Kenya and the West African Chapter in Ghana, COL launched the initiative in the Pacific region.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, New Zealand, COL hosted a regional workshop on open educational resources (OERs) in August 2007 in Wellington, New Zealand. Nominated representatives from Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau and Tuvalu attended the workshop. The workshop established a firm foundation for future collaboration in eLearning for the region. The group also successfully launched a Pacific chapter of the FLOSS4Edu initiative called WikiPacifica and have commenced planning for both national and regional activities associated with the development of OERs.

The workshop developed a number of recommendations for the region:

- Establish and promote wiki Ambassadors for each country,
- Conduct workshops on the use of WikiEducator,
- Utilise existing wiki support resources and integrate with locally available resources,
- Re-examine existing and/or develop new policies in the light of the outcomes of this workshop,
- Maintain and promote national and regional networks for OERs,
- Lobby publicly-funded content development projects to release materials under a free content license,

- Develop fundraising strategies,
- Advocate senior-level support and commitment.

LITERACY AND OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING

COL continues to work with the Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET) to develop and offer basic trades courses for young people throughout the region. During this planning period, three courses were made available, in Timber, Concrete and Small Engines.

DISTANCE LEARNING FOR AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

COL and USP Alafua Campus, Samoa, organised a regional strategic workshop on the theme of Delivering Distance Learning Programs for Agriculture and Rural Development in June 2007 in Samoa. The workshop engaged 23 participants in presentations and discussions about strengthening the role of the School of Agriculture and Food Technology, at USP in Samoa, in distance learning for agriculture and rural development across the South Pacific. Participants represented the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu, as well as the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

It was agreed that appropriate distance learning strategies could help address challenges related to agriculture and rural development in the region. Further, the Alafua Campus received specific advice regarding the formal and informal educational programming that would be most useful in this field. Three potential objectives for collaboration were identified:

- Developing Lifelong Learning for Farmers work for uptake at a regional level through USP.
- Collaboration between USP Alafua Campus and COL for non-formal and continuing education at Alafua.
- Collaboration with USP Alafua Campus and other stakeholders in the region, including the National University of Samoa, the FAO and other local and regional agencies, including some units affiliated with the United Nations or the European Union.

The initiative is now with the USP Alafua campus to confirm next steps.

REGIONAL FOCAL POINTS MEETING

The first Regional Focal Points Meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in October 2008. These meetings are planned to take place every three years. At the 2008 meeting, each participant reviewed, on behalf of their country, the progress that had been made so far in COL's current Three-Year Plan 2006-2009, provided feedback on COL's planning process and gave concrete inputs for developing the next Three-Year Plan 2009-2012. The meeting also provided a valuable opportunity for networking, facilitating future inter-country collaboration. As part of the event, the group visited the Open University Malaysia and Universiti Tun Abdul Razak.

REGIONAL BROCHURES

COL has regional brochures which summarise its activities in each of the four regions of the Commonwealth. These can be found on COL's website at: www.col.org/regional.



KIRIBATI

COL Focal Point: Mr. Tebania Tebakabo (2007-2008)
Mrs. Maria-Teretia Kaiboia, Ministry of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

Kiribati is a small state of the Commonwealth made up of an island and atolls spread over an immense expanse of ocean. COL has worked in Kiribati for over a decade and the country became a contributor to COL's budget in 2006.

SUMMARY

COL's work in Kiribati is in all three sectors, Education, Learning for Livelihoods and the Human Environment.

In Education, Kiribati is able to benefit from the regional and pan-Commonwealth activities of COL, providing material and capacity building support to Kiribati for assuring quality in higher education and teacher education programmes and institutions. In the Learning for Livelihoods sector, basic trades courses developed for the South Pacific islands are available for Kiribati. In the Human Environment sector, COL has continued to work with Kiribati Video and has upgraded their technology and training during this period.

EDUCATION

Higher education

COL has provided a scholarship to a student from Kiribati to study for the Postgraduate Diploma in Legislative Drafting at the University of the South Pacific, as part of its programme to provide 15 such scholarships to nationals in the South Pacific.

ELearning for education sector development

A delegate from Kiribati attended the regional open education resources (OERs) workshop in Wellington, New Zealand in August 2007. This workshop was organised by COL and the Ministry of Education, New Zealand.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

The basic trades courses on Timber, Concrete and Small Engines, developed by COL in collaboration with Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET), have been made available to young workers in Kiribati.

National/international community development

Representatives from Kiribati participated in the regional strategic workshop on Delivering Distance Learning Programmes for Agriculture and Rural Development, held in June 2007 in Samoa.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Health, welfare and community development

COL has continued to work with Kiribati Video and utilise its video production capacity to train others in the South Pacific to develop high quality video-based educational programmes for the Pacific region. In December 2006, COL increased the capacity of Kiribati Video to deliver video training on health and environment issues to the remote atolls with upgraded video editing and camera technology.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October 2008, was attended by the COL Focal Point for Kiribati.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, Kiribati will continue to benefit from COL's initiatives in the region. Kiribati has been invited to participate in the activities of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth which could help to strengthen the human resource development process.