

EXCERPTS FROM:

COL in the Commonwealth 2006–2009 Country Reports

FOR: ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES



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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.



Caribbean

**Antigua & Barbuda | The Bahamas | Barbados | Belize | Dominica |
Grenada | Guyana | Jamaica | St. Kitts & Nevis | St. Lucia |
St. Vincent & the Grenadines | Trinidad & Tobago**



REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

BACKGROUND

Ten of the twelve Commonwealth Caribbean countries are island states. Belize and Guyana, located in Central and South America respectively, are the two exceptions. While Jamaica has a population of 2.6 million and Trinidad & Tobago has 1.3 million, all the other countries have a population of less than one million.

In spite of the growing number of tertiary institutions in the region and the growth of distance education, there is a huge unmet demand for tertiary qualifications. This has attracted private and cross-border providers. In order to document this phenomenon, COL, in collaboration with UNESCO and the University of the West Indies, published a book, *Foreign Providers in the Caribbean: Pillagers or Preceptors?*, edited by Stewart Marshall, Ed Brandon, Michael Thomas, Asha Kanwar and Tove Lyngra, in 2008. This can be downloaded from the COL website.

CARIBBEAN CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICERS MEETINGS

The Chief Education Officers (CEOs) of the Caribbean hold annual meetings sponsored by COL. As well as an opportunity for a briefing on COL's activities in the region, the meetings provide the CEOs with a chance to discuss new developments in open and distance learning (ODL) and education technologies, in their countries, both planned and in progress.

In March 2008, the CEO Meeting was held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica. A quality assurance institute was organised and there were discussions on the issue of school children at risk and the underachievement of boys. The meeting identified two critical issues needing immediate attention, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and violence and the underachievement of boys.

In TVET, COL is assisting in the development of ODL material for relevant courses such as autotronics, agro processing, graphic design, entrepreneurship, and the visual and performing arts including training for teachers to develop ODL material for TVET and to deliver ODL programmes effectively.

For violence and underachievement, COL is assisting in documenting good practices, the development of motivational material and the distribution of research findings. Recent reform efforts in the Caribbean were discussed and noted. COL also created a "BaseCamp" to facilitate ongoing dialogue among the CEOs.

REGIONAL FOCAL POINTS MEETING

The first in a series of Regional Focal Points Meetings was held for the Caribbean region, in Ocho Rios in March 2008. These meetings are planned to take place every three years. During the meeting, each participant reviewed, on

behalf of their country, the progress that had been made at the mid-term of COL's current Three-Year Plan 2006-2009. They provided feedback on COL's planning process and concrete inputs for developing the next Three-Year Plan 2009-2012. The meeting was also a valuable opportunity for updating information on the status of ODL in each country and for inter-country networking that will facilitate future collaboration.

The role of the COL Focal Points was discussed and a number of key aspects of this valuable role were agreed. The Focal Points will be a one-stop window in each country for COL, will coordinate with other ministries and stakeholders and will disseminate COL-related information to relevant constituencies. The Focal Points will also meet visiting COL staff and arrange appointments with ministry officials and others as necessary. In particular, they will keep their Minister briefed and will ensure timely payment of contributions to COL. Finally, the Focal Points will be advocates for ODL and for COL in their countries and will provide advice and guidance to COL from time to time.

COL created an online "BaseCamp" for the Caribbean Focal Points to encourage online dialogue and the exchange of ideas and information.

REGIONAL INSTITUTE FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

A regional institute on quality assurance in teacher education was held for policy makers and administrators in education/teacher education in conjunction with the Caribbean CEO Meeting in Jamaica in March 2008. COL's *Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit* was distributed and discussed at the meeting.

TVET DEVELOPMENT

A meeting of Caribbean School Principals was held in Christ Church, Barbados, in November 2008, to discuss and identify projects in skills development in the area of building construction and disaster mitigation and management. The workshop was designed to assess the current state of TVET in the region and to develop a strategy and action plan for the short and long term.

This was a follow-up workshop to the CEO's Meeting that was held in March. At that gathering, the CEOs put TVET at the top of their agenda.

The workshop came up with a long list of areas in which COL could help. They were prioritised into high, medium and low priorities. A log frame and action plan were developed. Twenty one heads of technical institutes, community colleges and vocational training NGOs in the Caribbean attended the workshop.

EDUCATIONAL USE OF MASS MEDIA AND ICTs CAPACITY BUILDING

COL is working throughout the region to develop capacity for the educational use of mass media and information and communication technologies (ICTs). Projects include upgrading media unit facilities and training staff in the development of multimedia materials as well as supporting the set-up of FM radio stations in several countries.

COL held a regional workshop on the use of media for learning in the Caribbean. Held in November 2008 in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, it was attended by representatives from across the region. The focus was on sharing good practices in educational media as well as frameworks and processes for developing new learning programmes for community and public media. By the end of the workshop, the participants were familiar with the programme

development framework and had applied it to a community development priority. Over 60% of the participants indicated that they would use the approach to develop new programmes. Sixteen media workers from across the region participated in the workshop.

COL also held a well-attended regional workshop in Ocho Rios, Jamaica in March 2008 on Media Empowerment for Livelihoods. The workshop was part of COL's support for educational institutions, NGOs and community organisations to produce educational media content and develop non-formal ODL programmes related to livelihoods.

DEVELOPING CAPACITY IN CURRICULUM WRITING

In June 2007, working with the Commonwealth Youth Programme's Caribbean Regional Office, COL jointly facilitated a Curriculum Development Workshop with Jamaica's National Training Agency/HEART Trust. For curriculum writers from across the Caribbean, the workshop focussed on upgrading participants' skills in writing a competency-based curriculum. The training standards qualification framework was developed by the HEART Trust and has been adopted by many other Caribbean countries. The writers were assisting in the development of CYP's diploma programme into a certificate programme that uses the new training standards qualification framework for youth development work.

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.



ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES

COL Focal Point: Mrs. Susan Dougan, Ministry of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

St. Vincent & the Grenadines includes many islands and cays in this small state of the Commonwealth. A contributor to COL's budget since 2006, the country participates in the annual meetings of the Caribbean Chief Education Officers and other regional meetings and activities.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, COL's activities with St. Vincent & the Grenadines have been in two of the three programme sectors, Education and Learning for Livelihoods. The country participates in annual institutes that focus on quality assurance indicators for the improvement of teacher education as well as activities in educational technology use and open educational resources (OERs). COL is also supporting a Special Diploma in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for practising teachers.

St. Vincent & the Grenadines participated in the activities of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and attended the annual meetings of the Caribbean Chief Education Officers.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

St. Vincent & the Grenadines was represented at the regional institute for policy makers/administrators in education/teacher education, held in Jamaica in March 2008, where the *Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit* was distributed.

ELearning for education sector development

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), two participants from St. Vincent & the Grenadines Ministry of Education attended the first Caribbean regional wiki workshop held in Barbados in November 2008.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

Two delegates from St. Vincent & the Grenadines participated in the regional meeting of Caribbean School Principals, held in Barbados in November 2008. The delegates were from the Ministry of Education and the St. Vincent Technical College.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

St. Vincent & the Grenadines is a member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from St. Vincent & the Grenadines attended three of the six training and course development workshops that took place, on entrepreneurship and tourism, on the professional development of educators and on life skills.

The Ministry Interlocutors meeting in London in July 2008 was attended by the Interlocutor for St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

Mr. Jethro Greene of the Caribbean Farmers Network attended the Media Empowerment for Livelihoods regional workshop in Jamaica in March 2008.

St. Vincent & the Grenadines hosted the regional workshop on the use of media for learning in the Caribbean, in November 2008, attended by 16 media workers from across the region. Four representatives from St. Vincent & the Grenadines participated in the event, including representatives from the Ministry of Education, Garifuna FM and Bester School CMC.

COL supported a Technical Assistance Placement for Bequia Community High School Media Centre to expand and improve the educational use of media and community participation.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL's Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by four delegates from St. Vincent & the Grenadines including representatives from the Ministry of Education and St. Vincent & the Grenadines Community College, the latter sponsored by COL.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by three delegates from St. Vincent & the Grenadines including two sponsored by COL. Delegates were from St. Vincent & the Grenadines Community College and the Ministry of Education.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Caribbean, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in March 2008 was attended by the COL Focal Point for St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting

The Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting, held in March 2008 in Jamaica, was attended by the Chief Education Officer for St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

LOOKING FORWARD

St. Vincent & the Grenadines' growing participation in regional activities as well as its continued participation in the VUSSC provides a solid foundation for further partnership in 2009-2012.