

COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

Supporting material for the Department for International Development (UK) Multilateral Aid Review, 2010 – Communiqués and The Commonwealth Conversation:

Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM, triennial) Communiqués:

2009, paragraph 13:

“Ministers commended the Commonwealth of Learning on its work since 16CCEM; endorsed the three year plan for 2009-12 “Learning for Development”; and reiterated commitments to continued financial support. Ministers especially praised the work of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), and encouraged its expansion in terms of capacity-building in the use of ICTs in education, and the development and delivery of courses, with particular emphasis on mechanisms for quality assurance.”

2006, paragraphs 14 and 15:

“Ministers complimented the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) on its work and achievements over the past three years, 2003-2006. They endorsed the Plan, ‘Learning for Development, 2006-2009’, and recognised the need to mobilise the proposed level of funding of C\$12 million for the Plan period. Ministers noted with appreciation the United Kingdom’s offer to contribute 30 per cent to the total funds provided by other Commonwealth countries for COL for the Plan period as an incentive for increased funding. They also noted the commitment of the Governments of Cyprus, India and New Zealand to increase funding to COL.”

“Ministers acknowledged that Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has improved access, and enhanced quality of education and training in many parts of the developing Commonwealth. The implementation of the Virtual University of the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) is a step in the right direction as it seeks to bridge the digital divide and encourage collaboration.”

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM, biennial) Communiqués:

2009, paragraphs 91 and 114:

“Heads of Government attached particular importance to the work and potential of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), advocated additional inter-governmental support to advance its projects, and encouraged the creation of strategic partnerships by COL.”

“Heads of Government received with appreciation the Report of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and its three year plan 2009-2012 Learning for Development. They expressed satisfaction that the number of countries making voluntary contributions to its budget had increased to 41, and encouraged other member governments to also consider doing so. They expressed particular appreciation for the work of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, and – with its first period of funding drawing to a close – encouraged the Secretariat to assist the COL in securing new funding to continue and expand the programme in terms of capacity-building in the use of ICTs in education, and the development and delivery of courses.”

2007, paragraph 83:

“Heads of Government expressed satisfaction with the achievements of COL in the 20 years since its creation by the 1987 Vancouver CHOGM. They commended COL’s focus on the development agenda in its 2006-2009 Plan, Learning for Development, and progress in implementing the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, in which 29 countries are participating. Heads of Government requested COL to support member countries in enhancing access to quality higher education, encouraging member

governments to enhance their contributions, as appropriate, to the budget of COL to enable it to carry out these programmes.”

“The Commonwealth Conversation” initiative of the Royal Commonwealth Society, London, 2009 – 2010. www.thercs.org/society/220

From the interim report, *Common What?*, page 34:

“Official Commonwealth Institutions: It is quite clear that the Commonwealth needs modernisation and reform at the institutional level. With the exception of the Commonwealth of Learning (a small intergovernmental outfit focused on distance learning based in Vancouver, that received considerable praise from those who knew it), we have heard frustrations about the way that these institutions work at every turn.”

From the recommendations in the final report, page 51:

“Finally, reaching more people could involve making the Commonwealth more polycentric. The vast majority of its intergovernmental and most prominent nongovernmental institutions are based in London, the Commonwealth of Learning in Vancouver and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative in New Delhi being two notable and successful exceptions. This not only adds fuel to the fire of colonial myths which surround the Commonwealth. It perpetuates an insular outlook and a limited sphere of direct influence.”

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