



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

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PERSPECTIVES ON  
DISTANCE EDUCATION

Emerging Trends in  
the Development of  
School Networking  
Initiatives





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*Vis Naidoo and  
Heba Ramzy, Editors*

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*The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.*

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## PREFACE

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### Emerging Trends in the Development of School Networking Initiatives

Historically, the learning process took place within institutions such as schools, universities and colleges. The need to be part of such institutions was driven by the notion that access to information and knowledge was only possible by being present where the teacher was. New developments in information and communications technologies (ICTs) and their application to education and training have increasingly allowed learners to access information and knowledge from different sources.

The ability to access and process information using ICT is seen as an important and necessary part of any education and training system. In the developed world, the school component of the education and training system has made massive strides to ensure that all learners have access to information and technology. In the developing world, access is much more difficult due to limitations of the technology and the lack of infrastructure, good information resources and skilled teachers.

In addressing the issue of access to ICT and its use in the school system, many developed and developing countries have embarked on school networking initiatives. Schoolnets can be defined as the entities that facilitate collaboration between schools using ICT. However, in many countries, schoolnets as organised entities do not exist, but the activities generally associated with school networking are being carried out. These activities include:

- Soliciting hardware and software for schools
- Getting schools to collaborate on education initiatives using technology
- Networking to share electronic and other resources
- Training teachers in the use of technology
- Using technology for school management and administration
- Advocating the use of technology to support educational systems

Therefore, this report notes developments within countries and regions in the area of school networking.

The models for such school networking vary among countries. This report focuses on school networking models that have emerged in different regions and the emerging trends and issues that need to be considered. How are schoolnets and their infrastructure being used? How can they be used to support the process of learning, teaching, management

and teacher training? Schoolnets in developing countries have also been driven by the need to support the attainment of quality education at both the primary and secondary levels.

For this publication in COL's Perspectives Series, seven authors were invited to undertake regional scans of school networking developments in the following regions:

- Africa
- The Americas: North, Central and South America
- Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
- The Middle East
- The Pacific Region: Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands
- South Asia
- Southeast Asia

The Commonwealth of Learning was fortunate to have attracted seven reputable authors and two experienced editors to provide a valuable international scan of school networking developments.

*Sir John Daniel*

*President and CEO  
Commonwealth of Learning*



## THE CONTRIBUTORS

**SHAFIKA ISAACS** is currently the Executive Director of SchoolNet Africa (SNA), which promotes learning and teaching through the use of ICTs in African schools, in partnership with schoolnet practitioners and policy-makers in 31 African countries. She is based at the SNA headquarters in Johannesburg, South Africa ([www.schoolnet africa.net](http://www.schoolnet africa.net)). Previously, she worked as a Senior Program Officer with the International Development Research Centre's Acacia Program, which promotes development in Africa through the use of ICTs. She is also formerly the Director of the Trade Union Research Project (TURP), a labour research service organisation based at the University of Natal in South Africa. During her 10 years at TURP, she specialised in research, training and writing publications on globalisation and the impact of changing technologies on the labour market and women's empowerment.

**SHERIF KAMEL** is an associate professor of MIS, the associate director of the Management Centre and the director of the Institute of Management Development at the American University in Cairo. From 1992 to 2001 he was the director of the Regional IT Institute. Prior to that he worked for the Cabinet of Egypt Information and Decision Support Centre. In 1996, he was one of the co-founding members of the Internet Society of Egypt. Dr Kamel has published many articles in IT transfer to developing countries, electronic commerce and decision support applications. He serves on the editorial and review boards of a number of journals: he is the associate editor of the *Journal of Cases on Information Technology* and the *Journal of Information Technology for Development* and the editor in chief of the *International Journal of Mobile Computing and Commerce*. Dr Kamel has served in the Executive Council of the Information Resources Management Association (IRMA) since 2000 as the director of communications. He is a graduate of the London School of Economics and the American University in Cairo.

**STEPHEN KEMP**, PhD, is a teacher, administrator and computer consultant with 27 years of experience at all levels from primary education to post-secondary. In addition, Dr Kemp has been a sessional lecturer at the Universities of Saskatchewan and Regina for over 20 years and has the distinction of designing, developing and delivering the University of Regina, Faculty of Education's first online course at the graduate level. He is the recipient of the Saskatchewan Association for Computers in Education (S.A.C.E.) Award of Merit as well as the Apple Canada Award of Excellence for outstanding achievement in educational computing.

**SANJAYA MISHRA** holds a doctorate in Library and Information Science from the University of Delhi and a master's degree in Distance Education. Dr Mishra specialises in information and communications technology applicable for teaching and learning both at a distance and face-to-face. He had the first-hand experience of working at one of the regional centres of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) for three years before joining the Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) of IGNOU in 1996, where he was responsible for the revision of the course on communication technology for distance education. He has been trained by the World Bank Institute as a Master Trainer on Improving Training Quality through Peer Learning

and Distance Mentoring. As a trainer at STRIDE, Dr Mishra used innovative methods to conduct a training programme on self-learning material development. He also designed the prototype of IGNOU's first social science online programme.

**VIS NAIDOO** joined COL in November 2000 as an Education Specialist, Educational Technology. His role is to work with Commonwealth governments and organisations to focus on educational technology policy and applications and its impact on education and training systems within an open and distance learning context. He is currently working with governments to support their educational technology policy processes, the application of ICT within basic and secondary schools, supporting schoolnet developments and the use of technology for teacher training. Prior to joining COL, Mr Naidoo was the Director of the Centre for Educational Technology and Distance Education, Department of Education, South Africa. During his five years in that role he was instrumental in shaping policy environment in the area of distance education and technology-enhanced learning. He holds a BSc degree and post-graduate diploma in Adult Education from the University of Natal, South Africa, and a master's in Adult Education from the University of Manchester, UK.

**ZOYA NASKOVA** has worked extensively in international development, education and technology. She has established numerous Internet learning centres in schools in seven countries, designed and conducted professional development programmes for teachers internationally, developed curriculum for community service courses for Los Angeles inner city youth, managed a national environmental education campaign in Macedonia, conducted research for a US Senate hearing and taught numerous students, children and adults from around the world. Ms Naskova holds a master's degree in International Policy Studies as well as a bachelor's degree in English Language, Literature and Teaching. Some of the organisations she has worked for are Schools Online, Search for Common Ground, UCLA-LOSH, Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Center for Advancement of Public Policy, ASPECT Schools International, and Los Angeles Unified School District.

**HEBA RAMZY** is currently the Manager of Corporate Social Responsibility Programs for Microsoft Middle East and Africa. She is responsible for initiating a number of programmes designed to integrate the use of ICT in learning through her work as the MENA Regional Director of Schools Online and as Director of the Kids and Youth Programs for the Regional Informational Technology and Software Engineering Center (RITSEC). Prior to this, she was the Director of Electronic Publishing and Kids Information Highway Department of RITSEC. In 1997, Heba created the internationally acclaimed Egyptian Web site for children, Little Horus (<http://little-horus.com>). She then went on to co-found the 21st Century Kids Clubs technology centres. In recognition of her commitment, she has received national and international awards, including an honorary award by Egypt's First Lady H.E. Mrs Suzanne Mubarak. Ms Ramzy is currently a member of the SchoolNet Africa Board of Directors. She holds an MSc from the London School of Economics in Analysis, Design and Management of Information Systems, and a BA in Business Administration from the American University in Cairo.

**CARMELITA VILLANUEVA** most currently worked as the Chief, Information Programmes and Services, UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok. In her professional life, she has helped to develop documentation and information systems in over 15 countries in the region, built national capacity by providing training on ICTs, introduced the use of ICT in secondary schools of ASEAN countries, and

is at present setting up school networking. Ms Villanueva holds a bachelor's degree in Mass Communications, specialising in journalism, and a master's of arts in Mass Communications. She has over 50 publications and repackaged products to her credit dealing with topics on information systems, ICTs in teacher training, ICT indicators, schoolnet, adolescent reproductive and sexual health, population education, HIV/AIDS, and open and distance learning.

**DEREK WENMOTH** was a teacher and principal in primary and secondary school positions, mostly in rural areas of New Zealand, before spending 11 years in teacher education at the Christchurch College of Education where he established the first distance teacher education programme in the country. This work included the establishment of regional projects, working with predominantly Maori communities in rural New Zealand. In 2001 Mr Wenmoth moved to the New Zealand Correspondence School as manager of the eSection, a research and development pilot created to establish methodologies and systems for the school to use in the introduction of online learning approaches to complement the existing paper-based, correspondence courses. In 2003 he was seconded to the Ministry of Education to develop an eLearning Framework for the whole of New Zealand that embraces all sectors of education, including early childhood, schools and tertiary. He is currently a director of Ultralab South whose mission is to research, apply and disseminate the benefits of new technologies in education.

