

Using open and distance learning to overcome barriers

A report of the Workshop held at the

Commonwealth Secretariat, London on 13th December

Conclusions

Opportunities and gaps for possible Commonwealth Action

In the closing session of the meeting, participants were each asked to identify three priority areas within ODL for possible Commonwealth action. Most of the areas suggested are COL's responsibility although some of them were seen to have implications for CommSec. The following list, in no particular order, summarises their views:

1. The use of ODL in difficult circumstances (in conflict areas or disadvantaged and marginalised communities) to make educational opportunities available where they would otherwise be unavailable.
2. Enhancing teacher education capacity through ODL.
3. Adult Basic Education and Training as a vehicle for promoting food and livelihood security and improving health.
4. The promotion of DL scholarships (in addition to conventional scholarships).
5. Neutral information and advice to governments on cross border education and intellectual property rights.
6. Promoting cross-ministry activity.
7. Improved dissemination of good practice in ODL and the use of good practices for highlighting Commonwealth priorities.
8. Quality and regulatory frameworks to support decision-making, e.g. in international, cross-border education.
9. ODL infrastructure and capacity-building, including support for local content development and learning object repositories.
10. Promoting the adoption of a formalised developmental role among major Commonwealth DL providers (such as large-scale open and dual-mode universities) likely to emerge as market leaders in cross border enrolment (in terms of scholarships, capacity-building, English-medium issues) backed up by a good practice award scheme.
11. The promotion of open courseware or 1st/3rd world IP rates.
12. Promoting the legitimacy of ODL via validation, equivalency, good practice guidelines.
13. Information Technology (IT) Hubs and learning centres for out-of-school populations.
14. Special education needs at all levels of education.
15. Improved dissemination of good practice in particular educational areas (and the use of good practices for highlighting Commonwealth priorities).
16. Commonwealth school networking.
17. Mechanisms to facilitate accreditation of courses between countries.
18. The promotion of south-south collaboration in terms of software, networks and initiatives.
19. Developing Commonwealth-wide delivery and consultative systems – including the importance of really listening to requests from poorer Commonwealth countries (devising how to use technologies to deliver demands)
20. Building on the collaborative advantage of the Commonwealth.
21. The role of women to help children learn from ODL.
22. Good ODL practice (as in India) for use in Africa.
23. The need to think beyond the target driven MDGs towards real development impact.