



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

Professor Asha Singh Kanwar

VICE PRESIDENT AND PROGRAMME DIRECTOR



Professor Asha Singh Kanwar became Vice President of the Commonwealth of Learning on 1 April 2006 and assumed additional responsibility as Programme Director in April 2007. She is specifically responsible for stakeholder engagement and programme direction.

Professor Kanwar joined COL as Education Specialist, Higher Education, on 1 March 2003 with the major responsibility of working with Commonwealth governments and organisations in policy and systems development, within the context of open and distance learning (ODL).

Before joining COL, Professor Kanwar was a consultant in open and distance learning at UNESCO's Regional Office for Education in Africa (BREDA) in Dakar, Senegal. During this assignment, her task was to promote and co-ordinate open and distance learning (ODL) in Sub-Saharan Africa and she was instrumental in placing ODL at the centre of ministerial deliberations and the agenda for the development of education in Africa. The West African initiative led to the establishment of an ODL Resource Centre at BREDA and later to the development of a regional Centre of Expertise at the National Open University of Nigeria.

Dr. Kanwar's engagement with distance education began when she joined Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) as a Reader in 1988.

In 1992 she was appointed Professor and 1996 was designated Director of the School of Humanities. In 1999, she became Pro-Vice Chancellor of IGNOU. Professor Kanwar has over 30 years of experience in teaching, research and administration. In addition to the several books, research papers and articles to her credit, she has made significant contributions to gender studies, especially the impact of distance education on the lives of Asian women. These studies have established that better educational opportunities and access to new technologies have made substantial differences to the attitudes, values and concerns of Asian women.

A recipient of several awards and fellowships, Professor Kanwar brings with her the experience of having studied and worked in different contexts, both developing and developed. She received her undergraduate, master's and MPhil degrees from the Panjab University in India. She was awarded a scholarship for a DPhil programme at the University of Sussex, which she completed in 1986. She was also a Fulbright Fellow for post-doctoral research at Iowa State University, where she was later invited to teach, and was a Visiting Fellow at the University of Leiden, the University of Toronto and the Open University of Hong Kong.

Professor Asha Kanwar, Vice President, Commonwealth of Learning

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