

NAMIBIA

COL activities in 2003-2006

BACKGROUND

A small state of the Commonwealth and a regular contributor to COL's budget, Namibia has been an active member country and partner with COL in the promotion of open and distance learning (ODL).

SUMMARY

In the period 2003-2006, Namibia was an active participant in the setting up of the Virtual University for the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Namibia has also been active in supporting the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA). Delegates from Namibia have participated in a number of capacity-building activities within Africa and in other parts of the world in support of the expansion of ODL and eLearning in the country.

POLICY AND SYSTEMS ENHANCEMENT

Working with regional partners

COL supported the organisation of "The Abertay Conversation: Consultation on Future Developments in Higher Education in Africa" in collaboration with the Association of African Universities, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, University of Abertay Dundee and the Scottish Executive from 29 June – 3 July 2005 at Dunhope Castle, University of Abertay Dundee, Scotland. One delegate from Namibia attended the conference. The purpose of the Conversation was to:

1. Generate a high level and interactive dialogue between the leaders of Africa's higher education institutions, policy makers, agencies and key decision-makers;

2. Stimulate debate and seek consensus on a robust and comprehensive approach to renewing African higher education institutions as engines of social, economic, political and cultural developments;
3. Arrive at an agreement on the concrete steps to be taken to implement the renewal programme supported by the Commission for Africa.

COL has supported DEASA for many years. COL supported the DEASA advocacy meeting in March 2005 where Permanent Secretaries and Senior Education Officials, including representatives from Namibia, were briefed about ODL and DEASA's programme. The briefing focussed on the five goals that drive the DEASA programme.

The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Namibia is an active partner in the creation of the VUSSC (for more details of VUSSC see section on Pan-Commonwealth initiatives). Namibia is also providing expert input for the development of open educational resources for the VUSSC. Representatives attended a three week "boot camp" in Mauritius during which four teams created learning materials using existing open educational resources as inputs. Approximately thirty notional learning hours in each of the subject areas of tourism and entrepreneurship were produced in Mauritius and the work is now continuing online. All materials will be made available online as open educational resources.

Strengthening national systems

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Namibia was invited to the COL regional consultation. He submitted written feedback which resulted in a tentative plan that included a COL specialist visiting Namibia to review their knowledge centre, including knowledge facilities in Windhoek and Oshakati. During this visit a plan of action was agreed to for COL to support eLearning capacity building being undertaken in Namibia.

Achieving development goals through ODL

COL hosted a high level institute attended by two delegates from Namibia in Vancouver from 5-7 May 2005, to explore the relationship between ODL and development. The Institute provided an excellent opportunity for the participants to dialogue across the boundaries of disciplines and functions. The dialogue was facilitated and structured to maximise participation and to ensure the outcome of producing a publication that would address the relationship between ODL and development.

Open schooling

COL and Schoolnet Africa (SNA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in April/May 2004. This current MOU replaces the previous MOU signed on 8 January 2002 and is valid until 30 June 2006. COL and SNA agree to collaborate on:

- the further development of the African Education Knowledge Warehouse of SNA;
- the development of the Schoolnet Champions Capacity Building Project;
- researching ICTs for Education in Africa;
- the plan to enable teacher training colleges to be equipped with ICT and for college lecturers to be able to use ICT and train teachers to use ICT in the classrooms;
- ICT integration into the curriculum, with special emphasis on the use of ICTs in agriculture science where this is a school subject and in the area of gender bias in the use of ICTs in the education system.

COL, together with others including the German Development Agency (GTZ), Microsoft, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) e-schools and Schoolnet, is collaborating with the Teacher Training Initiative (TTI) that will support six TTIs in Namibia. The project started with a workshop from 8 – 10 November 2004 in Johannesburg which included six countries. The purpose of the workshop was to meet with the necessary country and donor partners and to agree on the project concept and plan for working with teacher training institutions. The schoolnet toolkits were available for the international meeting on schoolnets/e-schools, which was held in Dublin, Ireland from 13 – 15 April 2005. This meeting was convened by the Global e-schools and community initiative, established by the UN ICT Task Force.

Namibia participated in the Forum on Open Schooling for Secondary Education, which was held in Botswana in October 2004, to raise awareness and to advocate for the establishment of open schools in the Sub-Saharan region.

Strengthening national networks

A COL specialist visited the Namibian Open Learning Network (NOLNet) in November 2005 and co-hosted a meeting of senior management on how bandwidth limitations were choking the efforts of institutions to deliver on national goals and MDGs. Agreement was reached that NOLNet will take on the issue and find ways to cooperate with XNet, which has already been established to procure bandwidth for schools.

Preparation and use of learning materials

Namibia participated in a quality assurance in teacher education roundtable that was held in India in March 2003. The document and proceedings of the roundtable were published. The publication entitled "Innovations in Teacher Education: International Practices of Quality Assurance" was released in November 2004. Also in November, a workshop on Quality Indicators in Teacher Education was organised from 5 – 7 November 2004. International participants included one each from Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom and two from Nigeria.

COL and the University of South Africa organised a BA in ODL Writers Workshop from 28 November to 5 December 2004. One participant from Namibia attended the workshop. The workshop aims were to:

- Finalise course outlines of second year modules;
- Reflect on challenges experienced with the development of first-year courses;
- Workshop difficult aspects of the development process, such as designing activities and introducing audio, etc. as a supportive medium;
- Agree to a timeline; and
- Write, review and finalise unit frameworks.

The Increasing Access to Secondary School Level Education through the production of Quality Learning Materials was initiated at a meeting organised by COL, which was attended by senior Ministry of Education officials and heads of distance education institutions from a number of Sub-Saharan countries in the Commonwealth. Through the project, ODL materials on English, Mathematics and Science at the junior secondary school level were produced. Botswana, Namibia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Swaziland, Malawi and Mozambique are partners in this initiative. The materials on English and Science have been completed and the materials on Mathematics are at the piloting stage.

Namibia is one of eight Southern African countries who have agreed to work with COL on a five-year distance education project to train upper primary and junior secondary teachers and administrators in Science, Technology and Mathematics (STM). The programme, STAMP 2000+, provides in-service skills training and upgrading for STM teachers. In addition to the STM subject areas, the modular courses in STAMP 2000+ also focus on general education and multi-grade teaching topics such as special educational needs, educational management and curriculum design. The modules are self-instructional teacher materials and are designed to be sufficiently generic to adapt to the specific needs of each participating country.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

COL co-sponsored the Africa Copyright Forum Conference attended by delegates from Namibia, which was held in Kampala from 28-30 November 2005. The sponsorship enabled one delegate from Namibia to participate.

As part of the COL Executive Secondment Programme, Ms. Frances Mensah, Director of the Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), was seconded to COL for three months from March to June 2005. Ms. Mensah focused on cost and financing of ODL institutions and programmes.

The first technical skills development workshop for eLearning was held in Kenya in May 2005. The agenda of the five-day workshop was collaboratively agreed between the technical staff at the African Virtual University, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, the Polytechnic of Namibia and the Ministry of Education in the Seychelles.

Skills enhancement was provided to one policy maker and one practitioner on policy for eLearning, eLearning content development, and support of learners. Training provided in Kenya, August 2004.

Three educators from Namibia participated in the two-week long institute in August 2004, which was hosted by the National Institute of Open Schooling, India on the establishment of an open schooling system.

One delegate from Namibia attended the workshop on eLearning, organised by the University of Melbourne for Science and Mathematics teacher educators from Sub-Saharan Africa. The three-day workshop provided an exposure to various eLearning possibilities.

The 3rd Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF3) was held in partnership with the Distance Education Association of New Zealand (DEANZ) in Dunedin, New Zealand from 4-8 July 2004 and COL provided support to two delegates from Namibia.

In the second phase of the Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme (RGFS), five students from Namibia have successfully completed the Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education offered by the Indira Gandhi Open University (IGNOU). The five students are now working towards their Masters of Arts in Distance Education offered by IGNOU. In addition COL sponsored a RGFS tutor to attend PCF3 and an RGFS tutors meeting.

Two participants from Namibia attended the Management Development Institute in Singapore in October 2003. These institutes, organised by COL in partnership with the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs (October 2003) and the Indian National Council for Educational Research and Training (February 2004), were designed to benefit teacher training college principals and senior administrators from Sub-Saharan Africa. We are hopeful that the skills acquired will facilitate an improvement in the quality and quantity of teacher training, thereby helping to achieve the "Education For All" goals.

Under COL's Young Professionals Attachment Programme Namibia has hosted an intern at the Polytechnic of Namibia.

LOOKING FORWARD

The triennium 2003-2006 was an active period in Namibia's partnership with COL and foundations for future progress were laid on a number of levels. Namibia's role in VUSSC will go on to expand in the future. Namibia has been a valuable partner in preparing for the next stage of COL's activity in the region. An East African Consultation for COL's Three-Year Plan (2006-2009) attended by delegates from Namibia was held in September. The recommendations from the meeting were taken into account in the development of COL Three-year Plan 2006-2009.