

NIGERIA

COL activities in 2003-2006

BACKGROUND

Nigeria played an important part in the creation of COL when, along with India, it pledged a financial contribution to COL at the 1987 CHOGM. The distinguished Nigerian educator Professor Hafiz Wali held a senior position at COL in its early years. Subsequently, as democracy faltered and Nigeria's membership in the Commonwealth was suspended, its interest in open and distance learning (ODL) also withered and the infant Open University was closed. After returning to democracy and to the Commonwealth, Nigeria has committed strongly to ODL in order to make up for lost time in its educational development.

President Obasanjo, who takes a personal interest in ODL, asked COL in 2005 "to adopt Nigeria as a working model through which COL can serve Africa and the Commonwealth in the emerging global structures of open access to education". He asked COL to focus particularly on the newly reopened National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) "to enable it to grow and become a very entrenched institution in Nigeria".

Nigeria is represented on the Board of COL as a major donor and currently serves on the Executive Committee. It made its financial contribution (with arrears) in 2004-2005 but the contribution for 2005-2006 was not received within the year. Two members of COL's staff hold Nigerian nationality.

SUMMARY

As requested by President Obasanjo, COL has given particular support to the re-establishment of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) as a significant player in the higher education system. An important vehicle for this is RETRIDAL, a Regional Training and Research Institute for Open and Distance Learning housed at NOUN and partly funded by COL. NOUN is also offering programmes developed elsewhere in the Commonwealth with COL's assistance.

The National Teachers' Institute (NTI) has had links with COL for many years. It credits COL with helping it to modernise its approach to distance learning and to extend the use of ODL methods to 62 other teacher training colleges.

Teacher Training Enhancement (National Teachers' Institute) – At the request of the Minister of Education and the Office of the President, COL was asked to focus its efforts on capacity building in teacher education in Nigeria. The organisation responsible for teacher education in Nigeria is the NTI based in Kaduna. This activity has focussed on training in areas that support the development of course materials (graphic artists, desktop publishing, library and production of audio, video) used for teacher education.

Since Nigeria declared an interest in developing open schooling COL has involved Nigerian experts in international meetings on the topic and assisted in preparing a proposal for a pilot in open schooling.

COL has facilitated Nigerian participation in various collaborative networks addressing technology-mediated learning and involving bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) e-schools initiative and SchoolNet Africa.

At the individual level hundreds of Nigerians have participated in training events involving COL, thereby substantially increasing the country's capacity to develop and implement ODL systems.

POLICY AND SYSTEMS ENHANCEMENT

National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)

In 2003 COL committed \$400,000 over three years to establish RETRIDAL at NOUN. Stakeholders from across West Africa developed a plan for RETRIDAL in 2004 and an Advisory Committee was formed. In the same year COL sponsored two RETRIDAL staff members to visit the Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE), a similar unit at the Indira Gandhi National Open University, India.

In 2005 a five-day induction workshop to ODL was held for 180 NOUN staff members, back-to-back with training in Video and Audio Scriptwriting for 50 people. Later that year COL arranged two workshops on Instructional Design and a session on Research Methodology for Distance Education, all with regional participation. So far in 2006, 55 Nigerian and international participants have been trained on Quality Assurance in Distance Education and Instructional Design. NOUN installed an FM radio station with COL's help but could not finalise the licence for the station after the pilot phase.

NOUN has also made arrangements to offer some of the Pan-Commonwealth programmes that COL has helped to develop. A course in Legislative Drafting has been licensed and will be offered in 2006-2009, as will the Commonwealth Executive MBA and MPA degrees.

National Teachers Institute (NTI) and National Commission for Colleges of Education

In a major operation COL oriented the Provosts of all 62 teacher education colleges in the use of ODL and information and communications technologies (ICTs) in teacher education. It helped develop “Norms and Standards and Performance Indicators for Assessing Teacher Education Colleges/Programmes by ODL” and facilitated collaboration between the National Commission for Colleges of Education and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council of India to formulate Quality Indicators and prepare QA materials for teacher training. In this connection COL also arranged for five top Indian teacher education administrators to visit and advise Nigerian institutions.

In order to build capacity for course development and delivery at the NTI all academic staff received training in Curriculum Development, Instructional Design and the Preparation of Self-Instructional Reading Materials. Orientation to recent developments in ODL was given to academic support staff. Twenty members were trained in Video Scriptwriting and Production Processes and 20 more in Video Production and Programming, which led to three videos on teacher training. COL supports the NTI Media Centre with training and technology updates and has also supported a full review of NTI’s Learner Support System, whose recommendations will be implemented in 2006-2009. An NTI FM radio station was installed by COL as part of the teacher education pilot project and reached half a million listeners. Sadly, because of the station’s inability to secure an FM radio licence, it is not currently broadcasting.

The NTI has asked to use the Green Teacher Diploma programme developed by India’s Centre for Environmental Education. COL is facilitating this transfer of know how and materials and sponsoring the training of trainers for the programme at NTI.

Regional and International Collaboration

NEPAD

Nigeria and 16 other African countries are involved in the demonstration phase of NEPAD’s e-Schools Initiative with six Nigerian schools taking part. COL is charged with the Monitoring and Evaluation of the demonstration phase, which is giving it unrivalled experience of the implementation of ICTs in African schools. A first interim report appeared early in 2006.

COL is also working with NEPAD to construct a plan for the use of distance education for the pre-service and in-service training of teachers. The three partners are NOUN, the University of South Africa, and the African Virtual University.

SchoolNet Africa

In 2004 COL updated its 2002 Memorandum of Understanding with Schoolnet Africa. A key activity was collaboration with Teacher Training Institutions in a consortium with the German Development Agency (GTZ), Microsoft, and NEPAD e-Schools. Nigeria was one of six countries involved and took part in the planning meeting in Johannesburg in 2004. Schoolnet toolkits were developed and made available at a meeting held in Dublin in 2005 sponsored by the Global e-Schools initiative of the UN ICT Task Force.

ECOWAS

In 2006 COL signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with the aim of offering literacy and skills training using appropriate technology. The project is set within the NEPAD framework and involves India's National Institute for Information Technology (NIIT) as a partner with COL as the main implementer. Nigeria (through the Ministry of Science and Technology) is one of four West African states involved. Following a consultative meeting in May 2006 a three-year plan is being prepared.

West African Consortium for Teacher Education

COL has facilitated the creation of a West African Consortium for Teacher Education in order to build capacity in the use of ODL and ICTs in teacher development. Nigeria participated in a workshop on learner support held in Ghana.

COL-Poverty Reduction Outcomes Through Education Innovations and Networks (PROTEIN)

This programme facilitates the implementation of innovative projects that adopt ODL and ICT for poverty reduction in the developing Commonwealth (www.col.org/protein). COL offers expertise in ODL and start-up, limited-term financial support to qualifying projects that help build human capacity to gain knowledge and skills in contributing to food security, environmental protection, rural development, nutritional education and micro-enterprise. Successful projects have a high level of inter-institutional collaboration, significant and innovative ODL and ICT use, and well-researched content and learning design to support contextually relevant rural and peri-urban capacity building for poverty reduction.

The Fantsuam Foundation received the award to learn to use video for producing education and training materials and to spread knowledge on the use of solar cooking in the tropics where electricity is a constraint.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Open Schooling

Nigeria has expressed strong interest in developing open schooling as a way of addressing the rapidly increasing demand for secondary education. Nigeria participated in COL's Forum on Open Schooling in Secondary Education in Botswana in 2004. In 2005 Nigeria attended an Institute on Open Schooling for education/government officials organised in India by COL and the National Institute for Open Schooling. Since then COL has been working with the Universal Basic Education Commission of the Ministry of Education to assist in the establishment of an Open School through funding a plan of action for a pilot project and beginning a dialogue with the World Bank about further funding.

Nomadic Education

COL is helping the National Commission on Nomadic Education (NCNE) to progress its work. COL organised a conference on Nomadic Education in Kenya in 2006 and supported four persons from the NCNE to attend, along with four other Nigerian educators involved in providing education to Nomadic groups. The NCNE also participated in a conference on the delivery of technical and vocational education and training through open schooling held in India in 2006.

Management Education

From 2007 the Commonwealth Executive MBA and MPA programmes, developed with COL sponsorship by the four open universities of South Asia, will be offered in Nigeria through NOUN.

Training in Distance Education

Under the Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme fifty Nigerian students are taking the Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education of India's Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) through NOUN. Those who complete the Diploma successfully in 2006 will be able to begin IGNOU's Master of Arts in Distance Education in 2007.

Training in Leadership and Management in Higher Education

Over the 2003-2006 triennium COL has also organised annually, at the University of Abertay, Dundee, a strategic development programme for leaders of Commonwealth universities in Africa. Ten Nigerian delegates took part in these events in 2003 and 2004. The 2005 event, in which Nigeria also participated, took the form of a dialogue on the renewal programme for African universities proposed by the Commission for Africa. The results were available to the G8 Summit held at Gleneagles shortly afterwards.

Training in the Management of Teacher Education

In the period 2003-2006 COL has held three Management Development Institutes in India and Singapore for college principals and senior administrators from teacher training institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa. Eight delegates from Nigeria participated in events.

Quality Assurance in Teacher Education

In recent years COL has paid particular attention to quality in teacher education. In 2004 two delegates from Nigeria took part in a roundtable on quality assurance in teacher education that led to the publication of *Innovations in Teacher Education: International Practices of Quality Assurance*. This event was followed by a workshop on quality indicators in teacher education.

A second roundtable was held in Nigeria in 2005 and inaugurated by Minister of State Hajjia Bintu Ibrahim. This focused on using educational technologies in pre-service and in-service teacher education

and led to a publication on *Criteria for Assuring Quality in the Application of ICTs in Teacher Development*. Delegates from seven African and Asian countries took part.

Training eLearning: Policy and Practice

Nigeria took part in a COL workshop on eLearning for Decision Makers and Practitioners held in Kenya in 2004, and in 2005 RETRIDAL hosted a workshop on eLearning with COL in Nigeria.

Literacy and Livelihoods

His Excellency Michael Omolewa, Nigerian Ambassador to UNESCO and Member of COL's Board, took part in the *International Literacy and Livelihoods Experts Meeting: Learning for Life in a Changing World*, held in Vancouver in 2004.

Tropical Agriculture

COL supported the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Nigeria with the project "Answering Farmer's Needs in Nigeria" in Ago-Are in south-western Nigeria. This project was among the 27 finalists out of over 1,100 applicants for the 2006 Stockholm Challenge Award in the "Economic Development" category. It is a public-private-people run community demand-driven information system for life-long learning with linkages leading to improved food and livelihood security. The Ago-Are multi-purpose community information access points (resource centres) were equipped with basic ICT infrastructure. They provide training to farmers and links to the Community Help Desk and other sources of information on the internet, connecting them directly with markets for inputs and outputs. They also rent out an array of equipment that farmers are lacking. Profitable ventures such as soccer displays and entertaining film shows are contributing to financial sustainability. Capacity building among community members in computer repairs, financial management and managerial skills is creating greater community ownership.

Young Professionals

Nigeria has hosted three interns under COL's Young Professional Attachment Programme, two at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture and one at the West Africa Rice Development Association.

Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning

A large Nigerian delegation led by Minister of State Hajjia Bintu Ibrahim, and with four of its members sponsored by COL, took an active part in the 3rd Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning held in New Zealand in 2004. This Forum was also the occasion for an excellent dialogue between COL and Nigeria. An even larger delegation from Nigeria is anticipated at the 4th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning to be held in Jamaica in late 2006.

EVALUATION

Informal

Informal evaluation of the impact of COL's work in Nigeria is positive. The Vice-Chancellor of NOUN and the Director of NTI praise the contribution that COL has made to the development of their institutions. Other countries in the region such as Cameroon and Ghana are calling on RETRIDAL for help in developing ODL, an important indicator that it is seen as an effective body. Testimonials from Nigerians who have been sponsored by COL for international professional development events are overwhelmingly positive.

Formal

COL commissioned Dr. Patrick Spaven to conduct a formal and independent evaluation of its work in 2003-2006. Some of his scrutiny touched on COL's work in Nigeria. These quotations come from his report.

National Teachers' Institute

"There is a consensus among people consulted that the support COL has provided to NTI in Nigeria has been pivotal. Before COL began its partnership with NTI in 2001, the latter was languishing and its closure had been contemplated. It is now a very important institution in Nigeria – the world's only single-mode distance education institution dedicated to teacher training – with well over 100,000 teachers following courses at any one time... Several informants say that COL's interventions have been crucial to NTI's survival."

Schoolnet Africa (SNA)

"Schoolnet Africa attributes much of its success as an organisation to COL's strategic thinking and what it regards as timely and relevant interventions. Although in money terms COL has been a minor partner – just 4% of SNA's funding over the last four years – SNA assessed COL's interventions in their area very favourably compared to much more substantially resourced donor programmes, whose interventions SNA felt were not always well-timed and appropriate."

Quality of Teacher Education

"The teacher education quality indicators have been favourably received by the organisations taking part in the process. This was made more likely by the highly participatory nature of the process. It also seems to have been an efficient process that kept to its planned timetable."

eLearning Workshops

"To sum up, the market for the workshop series was well-researched, and the timing, shape and content appropriate."

LOOKING FORWARD

The period 2003-2006 has been one of renewed activity in Nigeria. The building blocks for further progress in a number of areas – higher education (via NOUN), e-schooling, teacher training and more prosperity for farmers, to name a few – are now in place. The period 2006-2009 promises well.