



COUNTRY PRESENTATION – THE GAMBIA

By: Mr. Anthony Mendy

Background

The Department of State for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology was created in January 2007 by H.E. the President of the Republic of The Gambia. The rationale behind its creation was to address issues of national concern especially in realising the country's vision 2020, PRSP and Silicon Alley Initiative. As such it is crucial for the Department and its agencies to collaborate with partners like COL in actualising the aspiration of the people and the relevance of this Focal Points meeting organised by COL cannot be over-emphasised. With regards to the presentation issues highlighted include use of ODL, overview of needs and priorities, and how this agenda can be supported by COL.

Use of ODL in The Gambia

ODL is an alternative means of providing services and primarily use by the education sector in teacher education in The Gambia. According to the country's Education Policy 2004-2015, the training of teachers for the basic level will continue to use a mix: one or two years of face-to-face (college based training), one or two years apprenticeship with a combined ODL.

Basically, The Gambia College School of Education and the University of the Gambia use ODL in the provision of teacher education and training of school administrators. This is administered as follows:

1. Students after spending sometime at both the College and University go on field experience or apprenticeship (Distance Education).
2. Distance learning materials based on their modules are prepared and given to them as resource material.
3. Mentors are provided to help in mentoring the students especially by lecturers, school heads, Regional Education Directorates, Regional Training Officers, etc.
4. At regular intervals in the term, students are observed by their lecturers in order to assess their performance and receive their assignments from them.

5. At the end of the apprenticeship students attend a face-to-face session prior to sitting to their exams.

Overview of needs and priorities of the Department of State for Higher Education and Tertiary Institutions

1. As the Department of State responsible for policy guidance and development, capacity building in policy development is highly needed.
2. Support in developing a quality assurance system in the higher education sector in The Gambia.
3. Capacity building in the administration of ODL programs in the Gambia.

The Gambia College

1. Capacity building in the development of distance education curriculum, modules and materials for teacher training and ODL.
2. Capacity building for the School of Education Admin staff.
3. Training in the development of quality assurance framework and the use and implementation of the quality assurance toolkit. (Participated in a joint workshop on quality assurance in Abuja).

University of The Gambia

1. Support in training of administrative staff in management.
2. Capacity building in auditing and financial management.
3. Support for Research for academic staff.
4. Provision of material resources in the form of relevant textbooks and learning materials and support in e-library in order to access relevant information and research work.

National Training Authority

The needs of the institution include:

1. Capacity building in curriculum development and assessment.
2. Capacity building in monitoring and evaluation, and quality assurance.

3. Support in the upgrading of the management information system and policy development.
4. Capacity building in Human Resource Development and Records management - support in e-records management, e-procurement.

The Top Priorities for The Gambia

1. Capacity building in policy development for the Department of State.
2. Development of a quality assurance system in The Gambia.
3. Training of staff in instructional and curriculum design, material development in teacher training and ODL.
4. Support in capacity building in auditing, financial management and research for the University of The Gambia.
5. Capacity building in monitoring and evaluation of the TVET delivery system in The Gambia.

What can COL do to further our Agenda?

The Department of State for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology being established recently would appreciate if COL could support its staff development programme. Basically, capacity is lacking in formulation of policy frameworks and, to strengthen its ability to fulfill its mandate of monitoring institutions under it.

Furthermore, we would welcome the support of COL in providing expertise in the area of ODL administration, quality assurance, e-learning and the provisions of basic equipment such as computers in order to enhance the delivery of ODL activities.

To better facilitate the delivery process in both the Department and Tertiary Institutions, COL is urged to consider soliciting support from donor partners in availing to us material resources. We hope if these issues highlighted are addressed it will go a long way in meeting some of our basic needs.