ICT Integration & Digital Competencies - a must for 21st century teachers

Presentation Transcript

Common Frameworks on ICT in ED Teacher Training:
Digitally Competent Teachers
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Greetings and Happy New Year Ladies and gentlemen.

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to join you all in the conversation on Digitally Competent Teachers, but first, let me apologize for failing to join you personally. I however do hope that my presentation will contribute to the ongoing discussions on this subject. I would also like to congratulate UNESCO for organizing this meeting and I believe the outcomes of these two days' conversation will help in shaping further discussions on digital competencies and the revision of the ICT Competency Framework for Teachers.

Now, according to Ferrari (2012), "Digital Competence is the set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes…required when using ICT and digital media to perform tasks; …and build knowledge …" Ferrari also adds that "extending and improving digital competence is an essential component in the development of employable graduates". It is therefore clear that digital competences are very critical in today's economies and in the work environments. However, ensuring graduates have the competences and can effectively and efficiently utilize these skills remains a huge challenge especially in the developing countries. This challenge is made even more complex because digital competence is "a multi-faceted moving target covering many areas and literacies and rapidly evolving as new technologies appear" (Ferrari 2012). There is also general agreement that for graduates to have the requisite digital competences and to be prepared as global citizens these competences and values must be introduced to them right from primary school through the entire education ladder. This is where teachers come in. ICT skills and digital competences cannot be introduced to school education without the participation of

teachers. It is therefore imperative that teachers have these skills before they can be expected to use and teach these in schools.

So, if teachers have a very central role to play in ensuring that children are introduced to these competences in preparation for further education and for the job market and yet digital competences cover a variety of subjects or areas, what then needs to be done?   At the Commonwealth of Learning, we know that a lot has been done already by different organizations, agencies and institutions but a lot still needs be done including:

1. Continuous transformation of curricula and learning resources to include different aspects of digital competences, and to include ICTs as both a teaching and learning tool.
2. Transformation of assessment strategies. Changes in the curricula without corresponding transformation in assessment often encourages neglect of those areas that are not examined; because unfortunately, the reality in many school systems, is that, what is not assessed is not learnt. Transformation of curricula must therefore be accompanied by transformation of the assessment strategies.
3. Access to technologies for teacher educators, teachers and learners. This access should include knowledge and skills for technology use since access alone without the requisite skills will be a waste of resources and can be frustrating to all involved.
4. Training and retraining of teacher trainers to ensure they have the right skills to infuse digital skills in the training curricula and their methodologies. Many projects seeking to integrate ICTs have targeted teachers and not enough attention has been paid to training and retraining teacher trainers. The result has been a mismatch; with TEIs continuing to train teachers using old methodologies that do not sufficiently integrate ICTs. Teacher training, teaching and research methodologies that integrate technology are therefore a necessity if true transformation in teacher education is to be achieved.
5. Continuous Professional Development for both teachers and teacher educators to ensure they are all kept abreast of all the technological and curricula changes taking place.
6. We also need more and more partnerships at different levels involving different stakeholders. We need partnerships that include for example local communities, schools, central/national governments, local governments, and development partners. We need to work together to achieve true transformation.
7. Last but not least, we need appropriate policies and policy environments that support transformation, creativity and innovation.

Now, in the next remaining minutes, I will share with you some of our efforts and activities at promoting ICT integration and digital competences here at the Commonwealth of Learning.

Let me first of all point out that our new strategic plan was recently approved with the theme, LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. Teacher Education will contribute to this theme by supporting governments, teacher training institutions and teachers:

1. Develop relevant context-based and pedagogically sound programmes for teachers and teacher educators.

2. Improve institutional capacity to use Open and Distance Learning and ICTs effectively.
3. Improve the quality of teaching and learning in TEIs and in schools; and lastly but not least
4. Support governments and institutions develop OER materials and scale up the adoption and/or adaptation of OER

We believe that in so doing we will be contributing to preparing teachers for the 21st Century and for sustainable development. So, here are a few of the projects we are engaged in.

Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration (CCTI)

This is an online certificate course developed by the Commonwealth of Learning in partnership with SchoolNet Africa and is aligned with the UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teachers. All the nine course modules are available as open educational resources (OER). In the past, COL worked with different Ministries of Education to offer this course directly to teachers. However, beginning last year 2015, and for purposes of promoting sustainability of efforts, the model of provision has changed and COL now encourages institutions to adopt and/or adapt these modules into their existing programmes and provide certification according to their different needs.

CCTI is meant to:

- Improve teachers' teaching experience in the classroom using a range of ICTs
- Increase school manager's involvement in the ICT implementation process in the school
- Build local capacities to integrate ICTs in teaching-learning; and
- Mainstream ICTs in Education,

We have so far worked with Antigua & Barbuda, St. Vincent and Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Bahamas, Grenada, Lesotho and Uganda, and will continue to work with those governments and institutions keen to exploit this resource.

The second strategy is MOOCS

COL recognizes the power and potential of MOOCs to provide access to education, promote innovation, creativity and sharing of resources. COL has partnered with a number of other institutions to mount MOOCs for Continuous Professional Development of teachers and has since run courses in the integration of ICTs and OER in teaching and learning, and in educational research. We will also be mounting an in-service course for teachers in Seychelles on the MooKIT platform, and work has already started with the training of the course developers.

So, COL has used MOOCs for other subjects as well but in teacher education, more than 2,500 teachers and teacher educators have since participated in these different MOOCs.

The MOOC methodologies and technologies provide a huge promise and are of great interest to us. We will therefore continue to explore better ways of harnessing this potential.

Transformation of teacher education programmes through integration of ICTs

In addition to CCTI and the MOOCs run, COL is also currently supporting 8 countries in Africa and Asia to transform their programmes using ICTs. The activities include capacity building for teacher educators, development of online programmes, and training of teacher trainees in online study and use of ICTs for student activities and projects. One of the major motivations for this is the need to prepare teachers for the new role of teachers as facilitators of learning and using ICTs is central to this new role.

Closely related to this effort is **The Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA)**

Under this programme, we will engage with the Governments, educational institutions, teachers, and civil society organizations to assess digital education competencies, develop learning materials around the digital education skills, provide training opportunities for teachers, and monitor student achievement and their relationships to livelihood. The C-DELTA programme will provide a framework for fostering digital learning, and develop skilled citizens for lifelong learning. This is a long-term programme and work is just beginning but we are excited and believe it will help promote a digital education environment in Commonwealth nations.

Promotion of OER

The Commonwealth of Learning has and continues to actively promote the development, adoption and adaptation of OER because of their potential to:

- Provide access to quality teaching/learning materials
- Contribute to enriching teaching and learning
- Exploit the power that ICTs have to facilitate maximum creation, utilization & sharing of information

Encouraging teacher educators and teachers to actively participate in the creation, adoption/adaptation and sharing of OER is one strategy that can be used to help teachers gain digital competences. The Commonwealth of Learning has therefore released its resources under the most feasible open licenses including the Creative Commons CC-BY-SA license and these are available on our website.

In many of the Commonwealth countries, English Language is used as the medium of instruction but there are still challenges with the quality of teaching of English Language. Poor Language skills are partly responsible for the poor performance of children in schools and so COL has, in consultation with some teacher educators in the Commonwealth developed a bank of resources called Open Resources for English Language Teaching (ORELT) that teachers can use to improve the teaching of English in their schools. We cannot build digital competences without addressing language skills. We need effectiveness in language skills for effective communication. ORELT is therefore one of the tools we are using to support teachers achieve this in their schools. ORELT is currently being adapted for use in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and some training of trainers will be taking place in Sri Lanka soon.

Conclusion

ICT integration and digital competencies are a must for 21st century teachers. Whereas a lot has been done before, a lot more remains to be done and together we can make the difference. However, for deeper and wider impact, we will need greater institutional and country commitment, more collaboration and coordination of efforts, and strategic alliances. As the Commonwealth of Learning we are committed to these efforts and will be glad to continue participating in these conversations.

Thank you for your time.