Evaluation of the Commonwealth of Learning 2006-2009 Plan

Final Report

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Dr Patrick Spaven
Brighton, England
www.spaven.com

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Executive summary

1. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning/distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.

2. COL's assistance primarily targets developing Commonwealth countries. Its work is currently grouped into three "Sectors": Education, Learning for Livelihoods and Human Environment.

3. COL has shown that it is relevant to development. It has a unique combination of assets that enable it to perform a niche role close to governments and other important institutions, especially those of small states. It needs to work out how best to leverage this access and trust in less well-established areas, for example learning for livelihoods. COL's relevance is only as strong as its ability to leverage scale and sustainability as well as quality in its work.

4. COL commenced its current Three Year Plan (TYP) in July 2006. It will be completed on June 30, 2009. The plan is set within a Results Based Management (RBM) framework. The framework is based on a logic model containing statements of impact, outcome and output. There are corporate level performance indicators for each of the 3 sectors in which it works.

5. Of COL's 15 corporate performance targets in place at the end of 2008
    *   6 have been substantially exceeded
    *   2 have been exceeded
    *   one has been met
    *   6 have been partially met.

6. The areas where COL met or exceeded its targets were:
    *   acceptance by institutions of the value of ODL for improving livelihoods
    *   individuals trained in the development and use of ODL systems, courses or materials for formal education
    *   networks established for virtual collaboration of educators
    *   take up by institutions of new materials for skills development and environmental education
    *   new media productions developed
    *   major new ODL courses or collections of resource material available for use in formal education
    *   additional institutions and community-based organisations use ODL in health, grass-roots governance and environmental education.

7. The areas where COL partially met its targets were:
    *   formulation of ODL policies
    *   adoption of quality assurance systems for education and training
    *   additional countries adopt open schooling
    *   disadvantaged communities increase income generation through ODL
    *   institutions substantially increase capacity in ODL for skills development and improved livelihoods
    *   policy makers and practitioners in ODL trained in mainstreaming gender.

8. The results relating to COL's targets in the 2006-2009 Plan are not necessarily a good guide to its overall performance. In several cases the targets were either unrealistically ambitious or insufficiently challenging. Quantitative targets moreover, generally do not give a good sense of the quality of COL's interventions.

9. In 2008, COL commissioned external evaluations – both formative and summative - of work in most of its 15 Initiatives, plus two internal reviews that contributed to evidence of performance in programme areas. The performance evaluated is principally at the level of activity and outputs. Despite COL's lack of robust logical frameworks for this period, it is possible to conclude from these evaluations that satisfactory progress - or better – has been made with intended outputs and towards positive outcomes in most areas evaluated. The following are the most important findings from the evaluations and internal reviews about COL's work since July 2006.

   - The VUSSC Initiative is developing capacity in the production of ODL materials very effectively in small states. In one or two cases, the materials produced are beginning to be assembled as courses for learners.
   - The Lifelong Learning for Farmers Initiative has led to self-sustained improvements in the livelihoods of the majority of farmers involved in the original Tamil Nadu initiative. The marketing of L3F has also helped COL to find willing partners to transfer the model to other countries and regions. This is still work in progress. The activity has yet to achieve the intended take-off in scale.
   - COL's revenue-earning e-Learning for International Organisations (eLIO) programme is achieving full cost-recovery, is delivering courses which are greatly appreciated by its customers and clients, and realises high completion rates.
   - The development and dissemination of the Quality Toolkit for teacher education has attracted high levels of commitment from institutions across the Commonwealth and is in use in India. Momentum for adoption is evident elsewhere.
   - COL's media – radio, audio-visual and ICT - empowerment work has had a wide reach and has led to a large number of media productions. It seems to be popular with clients. There has been little systematic monitoring of this work over its relatively long life, and no comprehensive external evaluation, so it is impossible to say with certainty what impact the work has had. A recent internal review found little evidence of self-replication, and many examples of applications that are under-utilised.
   - The support to Bangladesh in the development of its Junior Secondary Education (JSE) open schooling programme has not led to many of the anticipated capacity benefits and other positive outcomes for the JSE. COL has worked with great commitment but has faced serious institutional difficulties in Bangladesh which have weakened the impact of its work.
   - The Green Teachers programme at the Centre for Environmental Education in India – which COL has supported as part of a programme to help CEE become a dual-mode educational institution – has not attracted satisfactory levels of enrolment beyond the pilot. COL is supporting the digitisation of the material, and this, if combined with improvements in marketing, may get the programme back on track.
   - The Centre for Distance Education for the Southern Africa region (SADC-CDE) has had little impact on the region. It is still suffering from a lack of buy-in from the big institutional partners that it was intended to work with.

10. Research among Board members, staff and some other key COL stakeholders suggest that COL's main strengths and areas for improvement as an organisation are as follows.

   Strengths
   - COL has created a paradigm-shift by promoting the use of ODL for development in areas outside formal education.
   - It is the only organisation that works with ODL across development fields and can therefore harness potential synergies.
   - It is, uniquely, able to work at the levels of policy, systems and applications.

- As an apolitical, long-term, international organisation without axes to grind, it engenders great trust.
- Its diverse networks of professionals span both developed and developing countries.
- It is free to work with small Commonwealth countries which often receive no support from other agencies.

Areas for improvement
- COL's focus could be improved still more – it should work in fewer sectors with fewer projects.
- Where it incubates new approaches, COL needs to have better strategies for dissemination and advocacy.
- Because COL rarely works in formal project mode, its front-end analysis of feasibility, and its post-activity follow-through, can be weak. This puts sustainability at risk.
- It may still not have achieved the optimum balance between operating at the level of policy and systems on the one hand, and creating materials and capacitating individuals on the other.
- It needs better accountability and communication about what it achieves, particularly outcomes. This applies both in reporting to its Board and communication to wider groups. This implies better monitoring and evaluation, linked to logical frameworks.
- It needs more openness and knowledge exchange among its staff– particularly about work that has not led to positive outcomes.

Introduction

11. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning/distance education knowledge, resources and technologies. COL's mission is to help governments and institutions to expand the scope, scale and quality of learning. It is mandated to be in the vanguard of technological change in education and training.

12. COL's assistance primarily targets developing Commonwealth countries. Its work is currently grouped into three "Sectors": Education, Learning for Livelihoods and Human Environment. Each Sector encompasses five programmes or "Initiatives" – such as Teacher Education, Health, Welfare and Community Development, and the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Gender and Knowledge Management are cross-cutting themes.

13. COL has been operational since 1989 from its headquarters in Vancouver, Canada. It is financially supported by Commonwealth governments on a voluntary basis. The six major voluntary funding contributors - currently Canada, India, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa and the United Kingdom - each have a seat on COL's Board of Governors. COL receives additional contributions from international agencies, foundations and national governments for specific services and activities. COL's average annual core budget over the last three years has been around 8 million Canadian Dollars. This has been supplemented by additional contributions averaging around 3 million Canadian Dollars per annum.

14. The Commonwealth of Learning commenced its current Three Year Plan (TYP), *Learning for Development*, in July 2006. It will be completed on June 30, 2009. The plan is set within a Results Based Management (RBM) framework. The framework is based on a logic model containing statements of impact, outcome and output. There are corporate level performance indicators for each of the 3 sectors in which it works.

15. COL has commissioned this evaluation of its work to date in the TYP period. The overall purpose of the evaluation is to ascertain what difference COL has made in this period. The evaluation is guided by the OECD Development Assistance Committee's criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The 3 key questions are:
    - To what extent has the Commonwealth of Learning made a difference in the life of its current TYP?
    - What lessons can COL, its Board of Governors and partners, take from the operation of the plan into future planning periods?
    - How appropriate are the 3 strategic sectors, Education, Learning for Livelihoods and Human Environment, in realising the aims of the current TYP?

16. The main clients for the evaluation are COL and its Board of Governors. Interested stakeholders are the 52 Commonwealth countries and organisations with whom COL works.

17. The evaluation's full terms of reference can be found at Appendix 2.

18. The evaluation of the 2003-06 TYP was COL's first comprehensive evaluation. It had wide scope, covering most aspects of COL and its work and resulted in 52 recommendations. This evaluation is shorter, focuses mainly on COL's programmes and, at COL's request, will make only high priority conclusions and recommendations. The recommendations from the 2006 evaluation are included at Annex B.

Methodology

19. The evaluation was commissioned in August 2008 and work began in September. An interim report, was delivered in mid-November, primarily to inform COL's work on the TYP for 2009-2012. A draft final report was issued on 16 February.

20. The principal sources of data were:
    - Data on progress against the corporate performance indicators.
    - Independent evaluations and two internal reviews of a selection of its activities.
    - Telephone interviews with the authors of these evaluations.
    - Consultations with COL Board members and advisers, either through a qualitative questionnaire or telephone or face-to-face interviews.
    - Questionnaires or interviews with COL staff, including 5 who had left since July 2006.
    - Face-to-face interviews and group discussions with COL staff in Vancouver in January 2009.
    - Other documents such as the President's quarterly reports, Board minutes, annual corporate progress reports, COL Education Specialists'(ES) annual reports, selected country reports.
    - COL's website, including interactive sections such as WikiEducator.

21. A list of people consulted is at Appendix 2

Limitations

22. Unlike the evaluation of the 2003-06 Plan, the work did not include direct access to COL activities[1] or discussions with partners and beneficiary-stakeholders. Few informants – other than COL staff and the evaluators – had direct experience of COL's work on the ground. This gap has been filled to a great extent by the independent evaluations and internal reviews, which are relied on heavily.

23. COL is a difficult organization to evaluate. Its work is diverse and dispersed. Much is exploratory and does not always lead to substantial interventions. Its work tends to be contributory or facilitative. That does not mean the interventions cannot be decisive or pivotal - it is simply less easy to attribute outcomes to COL's work.

24. The outcomes defined by RBM system are pitched at a relatively high, generic level, and it is often not easy to draw direct links between a given activity and the RBM-defined outcome. COL rarely works to conventional project formats. As in 2006, the evaluator found no examples of completed logical frameworks.

25. COL's monitoring has been sporadic and mostly confined to activities and outputs. The reporting against corporate indicators, backed by discussions with the staff concerned, provided a valuable orientation. But it has not been possible to make informed assessments of each and every Initiative. The evaluation relies heavily on qualitative impressions of the differences that COL has made – and how it has made them - over this period.

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[1] An exception was the evaluator's participation in part of an on-line WikiEducator training workshop in the creation of OERs.

Findings

Relevance

26. COL's aims to contribute to development in the Commonwealth through the promotion of Open and Distance Learning (ODL). There are two principal relevance issues here.
    - How relevant is ODL to development?
    - How relevant is COL to the pursuit of development through ODL?

How relevant is ODL to development?

27. These questions were put to key informants in the questionnaires and interviews. The overwhelming response to the first question was affirmative. Most people consulted thought that ODL was more relevant to development than ever. In most respects this view is in line with the consensus among development partners. School and technical and vocational education is clearly developmental. Demand and expectation for post-primary school education has grown greatly – partly thanks to progress towards universal primary education – but the supply of conventional instruction has not kept pace. There is a massive shortfall of school infrastructure, teachers and teacher trainers. There is now greatly increased awareness among development partners of the need for non-conventional solutions to the formal education deficit, centred on ODL.

28. There is greater confidence in the quality of ODL, eroding the widely held opinion that it is inferior to conventional education.

29. There is also growing confidence in technology's role in ODL, even in connectivity-poor areas and among poorer communities. Much of this – such as the use of mobile telephony – has not yet achieved breakthrough in scale. But there is a widespread sense of the inevitability of technology's forward momentum, and belief in its potential to empower, which was less evident in 2006.

30. Finally, there is greater acceptance among development partners of the contribution that higher education can make to development. Here ODL has its most solid track record, although both access and quality still have ground to make up, particularly in Africa. In higher education, the distinction between conventional and distance education is increasingly blurred through use of the internet, and ODL methodologies contribute to progress in all parts of this spectrum.

31. Everyone consulted supported COL's view that non-formal learning can contribute significantly to improvements in livelihoods and to health and community wellbeing. Most believe that ODL can play an important role e.g. by supplementing under-resourced agricultural extension services, by reaching people beyond the margins of these services, and by helping organisations provide totally new information and education services, in health for example. This view however is still not widespread outside COL's immediate circle.

32. One indicator of ODL's relevance to development would be the extent to which it finds its way into Poverty Reduction Strategies, country development plans, or is addressed in national ICT or ODL policies. The evaluator has not been able to find a comprehensive study of the extent to which ODL appears in these documents. This might be a useful baseline exercise for COL.

33. Another indicator is that major donors and other international organizations, including the World Bank, UNESCO, DFID and the African Development Bank have recently committed funds to the promotion of ODL.

34. This is not to say that all ODL work is by definition developmental. Many methodologies are not yet appropriate for poorer countries. Any organisation – like COL - working in this field for development must be aware that the devil is in the detail.

How relevant is COL to the pursuit of development through ODL?

35. This question is about COL's positioning – its potential to make a difference. This is not the same as performance, the fulfilment of that potential.

36. COL is a small organisation with a very small budget compared with the large sums available to governments, ODA agencies and even many NGOs. It has only 10-12 front-line staff. It has a very wide brief: to offer services to the 52 member states of the Commonwealth. To have significant potential for development, an organisation with such a low funding-to-client ratio would need to occupy a niche with high leverage.

37. COL appears to meet the niche part of this criterion. It is by no means the only organisation offering help with ODL, but it has some features which, in combination, give it unique access to terrain where ODL's development potential can be fast-tracked. There was a consensus among informants about this.
   - COL is an inter-governmental organisation which gives it access to the political sphere.
   - It is apolitical and international, which generates trust.
   - It has diverse networks of professionals which span both developed and developing countries, and all parts of the world.
   - It has the expertise to work at all levels of ODL - policy, systems and applications – enabling it to diagnose problems and design solutions anywhere in the ODL value chain.

38. The second part of the criterion - that of leverage - is a much bigger challenge for COL. Despite its access to government, trust, capacity to network, and its wide-ranging expertise, if it does not offer services that impact directly or indirectly on large numbers of people, these assets will be under-utilised. Much of this report looks at COL's track record in leverage. The overall finding is that COL is acutely aware of the leverage issue and that it has made good progress in some areas in the TYP period. But there is still work to be done.

39. Much of COL's work is experimental – in the new terrain of informal learning for livelihoods for example – and leverage may be some years off. But COL must convince stakeholders that scale and sustainability are possible in the new terrain. There is still low awareness that ODL has a role to play in informal learning for livelihoods. It needs powerful, evidence-based advocacy. COL may not be well positioned to do this on its own, and it should seek more help in this process.

40. To be relevant to development COL must also create high leverage in more conventional areas such as capacity building in teacher and higher education. Informants believe that – with minor reservations – COL continues to be relevant in these areas of its original core competence. The reservations centre around an impression with a few informants that COL has a tendency to be drawn towards topical issues such as governance and climate change, rather than concentrating on continuing challenges in the education sector. COL is well aware of this issue and is adjusting its focus in the new plan.

41. The landscape in ODL has been changing significantly over the last 5-10 years. In particular, ICT has blurred the distinction between distance and conventional learning. Most informants commented on this, and reminded COL of the need regularly to clarify its role in this changing landscape. One informant went further and suggested that COL needs to seek a renewed mandate from the Commonwealth. Whether or not COL goes as far as that, there may be value in convening a definitive debate among players in both the education/training and wider development spheres, about COL's long-term future role.

Effectiveness and impact

42. COL's work in the current TYP period is grouped into 3 "Sectors": Education, Learning for Livelihoods and Human Environment. There are 5 Initiatives in each Sector, and a number of "Activities" (usually 3 or less) in each Initiative. COL's corporate logic model contains impact, outcome and output statements, and performance indicators (PIs) - with targets - for each Sector.

43. In COL's model the outputs are grouped at the Sector level and are not explicitly linked to particular outcomes. The PIs are also grouped at the Sector level and are not directly linked to particular outputs or outcomes. This evaluation however has attempted to create these linkages where possible.

Education

44. In COL's model, the goal or desired impact of its work in the Education Sector is:

    Universal access to primary education and increased and equitable participation in secondary and higher education with a concern for quality.

45. The work is delivered through five Initiatives, presented in the Plan in the following terms.

    Quality assurance focuses on the development of quality assurance systems at all educational levels.
    Teacher Development is aimed at expanding teacher education through the use of ODL.
    Open/Alternative Schooling promotes the use of ODL and flexible learning to increase access to basic and secondary schooling.
    Higher Education (HE) seeks to develop and strengthen systems, models and materials for higher education through open universities and dual-mode operations.
    eLearning for Education Sector Development is designed to increase awareness, build capacity and develop content for eLearning in the education sector.

Outcome 1

Outcome	Policy frameworks and strategies for ODL application in education adopted by countries and institutions.
Output	Awareness developed and capacity built in countries and institutions for formulating ODL based policy frameworks and strategies for quality education and training for all.
Targets	a) Policies formulated and resources allocated to implement ODL in education in an additional 5 major developing Commonwealth countries/institutions. b) 2 additional developing Commonwealth countries adopt open schooling approaches to increasing access to primary and secondary education. c) Policy-makers and administrators of 5 additional developing Commonwealth countries adopt quality assurance systems for education and training through ODL.

46. Outcome 1 (and the related output) is COL's most strategic and one of its most ambitious. It spans 3 out of 5 of COL's Initiatives in the Education Sector. It envisages governments and/or important institutions taking decisions to adopt ODL in education, and following through, at least to the point of putting strategies in place for the creation of new ODL institutions such as open universities or open schools, or

new cross-cutting approaches such as quality assurance. If this outcome were achieved, it would be a good example of the high leverage that COL seeks.

47. COL has devoted considerable resources to the outcome through its Quality Assurance, Open Schooling and Higher Education Initiatives. By the beginning of 2009, it had partially met all 3 targets. It was unlikely to fully meet any of them.

Policy

48. The first target under this outcome centres on COL's support for the formulation and implementation of ODL policy at national level. COL introduced a systematic approach to policy in the 2003 plan period. It sought to bring together policy makers and institutional leaders from education and other sectors that can benefit from ODL solutions. The aim was to produce a consensus on the need for policy, and an understanding of how to move forward in the light of the needs and conditions prevailing in the country. COL helped to design these national consultative forums and provided funding mainly to support the participation of people with experience and expertise from other parts of Africa.

49. COL has continued with this approach in the 2006-09 period, but on a smaller scale. It has also moved upstream with pre-policy consultancy. In national policy formulation COL has facilitated a consultative forum in Uganda, revived the process begun in the previous plan period in Cameroon, and has provided pre-policy consultancy in 3-4 other countries.

50. Most progress has been made in Cameroon where the draft policy has been completed and sent to the Prime Ministers' Office. A draft legislative order for an Open School is in preparation.

51. COL's target of 5 countries with new policies - with follow-through - will not be met.

52. There is no independent evaluation of COL's work in this area and no comprehensive monitoring. It has not been possible therefore to look closely at this work. However, it possible to make two observations and a recommendation, based to some extent on the evaluator's experience of COL's work in this area in 2003-06.

53. First, it is fair to say that the target of 5 additional countries was ambitious. In 2003-06, 3-4 countries adopted policies; not all of them followed through with implementation. Second, it seems that fewer resources have been devoted to it in 2006-09 and this partly explains why it is the targeted area with the least progress in the period under scrutiny.

Open schooling

54. Open schooling is seen as a critically important response to the rapidly growing deficit in secondary education. The establishment of new open schools however has proved to be an elusive goal. They are major undertakings involving totally different new skill sets, lengthy materials development, new managerial, administrative and support infrastructure. There are few fully fledged open schools in the developing world. A target of 2 new open schools in developing countries in 3 years was ambitious.

55. Open schooling is a COL Initiative in its own right. The Initiative promotes the use of ODL and flexible learning to increase access to basic and secondary schooling, particularly for the marginalised and those whose access to education is restricted. Most informants believe it is one of COL's most important and urgent.

56. COL has had an educational specialist devoted more or less exclusively to it for several years. There was a change of personnel early in the plan period, which, as is normal with COL, led to a reappraisal of strategy and methodologies. Despite this, there does not seem to have been any significant loss of momentum.

57. In the early part of the TYP period, COL continued its support for the Bangladesh Junior Secondary open school programme with targeted capacity building interventions. This has had mixed results. It was the subject of an independent evaluation in 2008 which painted a pessimistic picture of the quality and sustainability of the Junior Secondary programme as whole. It concluded that COL's intervention faced so many institutional difficulties in Bangladesh that it has not led to the anticipated capacity benefits.

58. Alongside that continuing commitment, COL designed a new approach to its work with open schooling, involving a full spectrum of institutional support. There is not enough data to assess the progress of this approach so far, but it is widely praised by informants and appears to be well designed and resourced.

59. One new open school has opened in the developing Commonwealth in the plan period. The National Open School of Trinidad and Tobago received support from COL in several ways during its development phase. This therefore takes COL halfway towards its target.

Quality

60. Quality assurance (QA) is also an Initiative in its own right. A concern for quality is part of the Education Sector impact statement and cuts across its outcomes and outputs. As such, improvements in quality are a more explicit objective than in the previous plan, although concerted activity in QA began early in the previous period.

61. The Initiative focuses on the development of QA systems at all educational levels – higher education, teacher education and schools - encompassing both distance and conventional delivery. The emphasis however is on ODL and technology-mediated approaches.

62. QA in teacher education has received the most time and resources and is the furthest advanced of the QA activities. This aspect of the Initiative has been evaluated externally.

63. QA in teacher education has involved a formal partnership – expressed in an MOU – with the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India which began in the previous TYP period. The initial emphasis was on the collaborative transnational development of quality indicators. The current TYP period has seen the completion of a QA Toolkit, based on the indicators, for teacher education. COL has disseminated the toolkit in about 15 countries, and organised workshops for around 160 people, designed either to promote awareness of the toolkit and its approach, or specifically to train participants in its use.

64. The development and dissemination of the quality toolkit for teacher education has attracted high levels of commitment from institutions across the Commonwealth and is in institutional use in India. Momentum for adoption is evident elsewhere, particularly in Nigeria.

65. QA activity in higher education also spans the last two plan periods, and has begun in schooling. The intervention in HE followed the same path as in teacher education with the consensual development of indicators. It has also piloted a low-cost approach to

quality audit. These efforts seem to be gathering momentum and are regarded by the ES for HE as the most important part of his work.

66. The target of the adoption of QA systems by 5 additional developing Commonwealth countries will not be met in this period. One factor may have been the premature departure of the ES responsible for the work in teacher education which left a staffing gap and temporarily slowed the momentum. However the new ES was already involved in the process, and there is no reason to believe that the target will not be met early in the forthcoming TYP Plan period.

Outcome 2

Outcome	Effective ODL systems in place within single and dual mode institutions providing equitable access to quality formal education and training.
Output	People trained and systems strengthened for using ODL for increasing access and quality in education.
Target	200 or more people from developing Commonwealth countries have their capacity substantially enhanced to develop and/or use quality ODL courses, materials and systems.

67. Outcome 2 relates to a broad spectrum of COL's capacity building work in ODL with existing institutions. This consists principally of training <u>for</u> ODL systems and applications – e.g. in instructional design.[2] The training itself may be carried out at distance or face-to-face. The output and target do not refer exclusively to institutions and therefore include the training of individuals outside specific institutional contexts.

68. In numerical terms, the greatest contributor to the output and target is the WikiEducator programme. WikiEducator is an on-line community incubated and supported by COL. It is intended for the collaborative development of free educational content, commonly known as open educational resources (OERs). It encourages other activities around free content such as the planning of education projects. COL's objective in supporting WikiEducator is to increase access, improve quality and reduce the cost associated with providing education.

69. WikiEducator's Learning For Content programme (L4C) trains educators to develop and edit free content, through online and face-to-face workshops. In return, participants are asked to provide a lesson of free content to contribute to the stock of open source learning materials. It is part funded by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

70. By the end of January 2009, over 1700 people had registered for L4C workshops. Completion rates are not known, but over 50% had converted their participation into a signed commitment to develop open educational resources (OERs).

71. Apart from the L4C training, according to COL records:
    - over 250 people have been trained in the HE sub-sector
    - over 130 in teacher education (including those in QA)
    - over 130 in open schooling (about half for the Bangladesh JSE programme).

72. It should be noted that COL has also been responsible for the training in ODL for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) of about 150 people. This is covered by the Learning for Livelihoods Sector.

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[2] It does not include people trained <u>through</u> ODL, such as the participants in the course in legislative drafting that COL developed and the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes that COL continues to support.

73. Taking the Education Sector results, it is clear that COL exceeded its target roughly by a factor of 10. At first sight this seems like very poor targeting. But the WikiEducator L4C programme was not conceived when the target was set in 2006, and if these numbers are excluded, the overshoot is about 300. Significant contributions to these numbers have been made by COL's Commonwealth Education Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) and the two regional ODL centres it supports in Africa.

74. The numbers show that COL is adept at training people at scale in technical areas, in some cases at very low cost. The WikiEducator experience is especially impressive in this respect. Numbers trained are of course only one part of the picture. The quality of the training and its fitness for context are important variables. We need to know whom COL targets - how strategic are the people and institutions, how great a multiplier potential there is. And we need to know about outcomes – in particular what use is made of the new or enhanced competencies, and whether this is sustained.

75. Data on these variables is patchy. There are however 4 independent evaluations that offer insights into the effectiveness of COL's capacity building. The first is an evaluation of COL's capacity building at the National Teachers Institute (NTI), Nigeria, which although it took place mainly outside the current TYP, is an important case study in the effectiveness of COL's work in this field.

76. NTI is the world's only single-mode distance education institution dedicated to teacher training. In 2001 it was an organisation with considerable scope, but struggling to maintain its foothold, with little expertise in ODL. It embarked on a 5 year development plan and invited COL to play a central role.

77. The capacity building project that followed provided professional development and support to staff across the Institute, combined with infrastructural enhancements. The programme included training in course design, materials production, student support and evaluation. It involved building the expertise of the staff in the graphic design and radio broadcasting units. COL's support began intensively and later took the form of periodic interventions through a long-term partnership process.

78. This is a rare example of a large, multi-faceted capacity building intervention by COL and is often cited as one of COL's most effective interventions. Although NTI has continuing capacity deficits, COL's support could be said to have been transformational.

79. The 2008 evaluation – by the Executive Secretary of the Nigerian National Commission for Colleges of Education – was very positive.

   The model of integrating course development and production, the high quality professional development programmes and the use of COL Specialists in training, combined to create a highly effective strategy for improving the quality of programmes and materials as well as enhancing the institutional capacity of the Institute.

80. The second evaluation is the above-mentioned one of COL's support for the Bangladesh Junior Secondary Education (JSE) programme. COL has had a dialogue for over 6 years with the Bangladesh Open University (BOU) about its plans to provide open schooling opportunities for disadvantaged youth in Grades 6-8. In 2007, BOU, in collaboration with the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), an umbrella for a number of NGOs, launched the JSE. COL intensified its support in the form of technical assistance in 3 areas which were seen as critical for the success of the pilot stage of the project. These were:
   • the enhancement of course development skills

- the training of tutors in implementing open schooling
- the enhancement of managerial/financial management capacity.

81. Progress in COL's support for the JSE was evaluated in 2008. The evaluators were not optimistic about the outcomes. The two principal reasons were:
   - There was insufficient analysis of the realistic learning outcomes for the challenged JSE population, given the present limited and often poor quality inputs.
   - The teachers, though committed, had not changed from being teachers to tutors.

82. The capacity building produced poor results according to the evaluators, particularly in the case of the managerial/financial work. The evaluators believed that COL should have conducted a more thorough ex-ante analysis of the stakeholders and assessment of the risks of poor results. This, they assert, would have led to identification of the institutional weaknesses in BOU and its partnership with CAMPE, and pointed the need for an MOU to address the gaps, contradictions and risks. An MOU would have provided a framework for close monitoring of progress and negotiation of the conditions for each stage in the intervention.

83. The ex-ante analysis might have suggested to COL that it should not proceed at all with its support. This however would have posed a dilemma for COL. Politically and professionally it would have been very difficult to refuse support or delay the start significantly, because by then it had been working with the BOU on a long-term basis. This is not the first time COL has faced this dilemma – the occasional downside of long-term partnership. Another example is its work in Mozambique.

84. An evaluation of COL's recent work in Mozambique was conducted in 2008. The work included management over a number of years of the Secondary Education by Distance Education project. This project was beset with difficulties and at times COL's reputation suffered damage. COL also managed, jointly with the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE), the Training and Capacity Building in Distance Education programme funded by the World Bank in 2003-04. This was a 9 month full-time face-to-face course in distance education for a diverse group of participants, 40 of whom completed the course. Mozambique was at an early stage in the development of its ODL infrastructure and this course was designed to give it a boost by building capacity in a generalised way, creating a critical mass of people with knowledge and skills in ODL.

85. The 2006 evaluation of COL identified several weaknesses in the COL/SAIDE course; and progress in the development of ODL infrastructure in Mozambique since has been fitful. But the 2008 evaluation of COL's work in Mozambique reported that several key ODL institutions in government and tertiary education were functioning and that many of the key positions were filled with graduates from the COL/SAIDE course. The evaluator concluded

   ...the COL/SAIDE programme has contributed significantly to the increase in the number of credible ODL providers and graduates....had been instrumental in establishing/strengthening ODL Units/Centres in their respective institutions.

86. He quotes from a 2007 evaluation by two other authors

   ..there now exists the critical mass of individuals within and outside the educational institutions who have sufficient theoretical knowledge about distance education.[3]

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[3] Moore, M. G and Pereira, L. F. (2007). *Evaluation of the Mozambique Distance Learning Network.* Unpublished Report submitted to the Submitted to Ministry of Education and Culture.

87. The 4th independent evaluation in this area was of the Green Teacher programme, the main fruit so far of COL's collaboration with the Centre for Environmental Education (CEE), an Indian national institution that creates programmes and materials to increase awareness about the environment and sustainable development.

88. COL has been helping CEE over a number of years to become a dual-mode institution. The collaboration began when CEE realised it needed to develop more substantial courses in environmental education for teachers and that this initiative would not be sustainable face to face. It was given force by the India Supreme Court ruling that environmental education must be introduced at all levels throughout the country by 2007.

89. Most of COL's intervention in the Green Teachers programme to date took place in the 2003-2006 period. COL provided:
   - Training workshops in instructional design, content production, learner support etc, led by experts from India and Australia.
   - Individual staff training opportunities.
   - Periodic expert support.
   - Funding for course development expenses (excluding CEE staffing and infrastructure).

90. The independent evaluation in 2008 was positive about the quality of the curriculum and print materials. It concluded that they had "great potential and strength". One significant weakness in course quality, however, was that student support was seen to be inadequate.

91. The evaluation was critical of the low levels of enrolment since the pilot, particularly the most recent intake. It described this as "a matter of concern". The evaluator found a lack of awareness of the course in India which he put down to weak marketing.

92. The evaluation concluded that there was much work to be done before Green Teachers could begin to realise its potential. Much of this – especially progress in transferring it to on-line delivery – was urgent. Other areas where progress needed to be made – and by implication help needed to be given to CEE – included marketing, ICT infrastructure, business modelling and research and development.

93. COL's support for Green Teachers does not appear to have been as strategic as for example in the QA initiative. The evaluator could not identify a long-term forward plan or log frame in either COL or CEE. Given the potential scale of Green Teachers, it would perhaps be unrealistic for COL to have pledged support for all the necessary components of the forward programme. But it would have been in a position to help CEE to plan ahead more effectively.

94. A number of implications for COL's capacity-building work can be identified from these evaluations.

95. The Mozambique training had both width (numbers of people) and depth (length and coverage of content). It seems that training on this scale – not great in some contexts, but significant in a country with very little expertise in the field at the time – has created an engine for Mozambique to develop forward momentum in the development of ODL. The lack of political commitment to ODL infrastructure in the years immediately following the training meant that it did not lead directly to the leverage envisaged. Nevertheless, when the political climate eventually did improve, there were sufficient participants of the course still in place, together with multiplier trainees – for them to take the initiative forward.

96. COL, does not normally, with its own funds, commit to capacity building on this scale. NTI in Nigeria is an exception, although in this case it was a combination of depth training for a small number of individuals, and shorter programmes – workshops for example – for larger numbers. It was also delivered over a longer time frame, to some extent developing organically, unlike the "big bang" Mozambique programme. Although there are still a number of capacity weaknesses at NTI as the recent evaluation confirms, COL's support for NTI is a good demonstration of how targeted, well-designed interventions on a sufficient scale and over a longer time frame - can work well. COL's support for the introduction of ODL in agricultural education institutions in India is another example of the success of the large and deep footprint. The Green Teachers experience also suggests that COL needs to work with longer timelines.

97. Committed leadership in NTI at the time of the main intervention was an important factor in its success. The Bangladesh case demonstrates that institutional weaknesses can blunt the effect of even the most targeted of training. COL has little or no control over these factors. However in an ideal world it would have the option of not proceeding where a pre-intervention appraisal suggests that institutional weaknesses would undermine the effectiveness of the contribution. COL however operates in a sphere where it often cannot easily suspend a long-term relationship, and may have to press on and learn lessons.

98. Unlike the 4 case studies, some of the training by or through COL in the plan period has not been targeted on particular institutions or even countries. This is particularly true of the WikiEducator workshops. Clearly there needs to be a clear rationale for training that is not aimed at a particular context. With WikiEducator, although there is no institutional context in the conventional sense, there is a clear process in mind – the creation of a global virtual community committed to the creation and use of OERs. It is too early to say whether this process is too ambitious an objective, and if it will have the desired impact.

99. There are fewer cases in this triennium where COL's capacity building for ODL has not been focused on specific institutions or processes. The main examples are from HE, including the Master in Distance Education programme and shorter courses and workshops conducted by CEMCA and the two African regional centres. There is a lack of data to show what the effects of this training have been[4]. It is important that all such activity - where the effects are dispersed and less easy to gauge "with the naked eye" - have ex-ante appraisal and are monitored at least for their short-term outcomes.

Outcome 3

Outcome	ODL based materials used for effective organisation of ODL courses and programmes in formal education.
Output	ODL based materials developed and disseminated across the Commonwealth.
Target	5 major new ODL courses/resource material - of which at least one suitable for eLearning - are available for use within the formal education sector.

100. Outcome 3 is primarily about materials created for ODL use in formal education. The target refers to "major" new sets of materials. The output is at the level of availability; the outcome refers to utilisation.

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[4] This comment is about COL activity in the Education Sector. It does not apply to VUSSC in the Livelihoods Sector.

101. According to COL, it has been instrumental in producing 5 sets of new materials in the plan period that meet the target's criteria:
   - Materials for the Open University of Sri Lanka's M.A in Teacher Education.
   - Materials and Tutor's Guide for an International Diploma in Guidance and Counselling offered through the India National Council of Educational Research and Training
   - A training package for India's National Institute of Open Schooling Field Functionaries (tutors, coordinators and academic facilitators).
   - A Handbook in Cost and Financing for Open Schools.
   - Resource materials for capacity building in collaborative online authoring, produced through the WikiEducator Initiative.

102. Some of these materials are already in use: MATE and the WikiEducator materials. Others have been disseminated but not yet used.

103. This aspect of COL's work shares some of the considerations that apply to capacity building – those of quality, scale, focus, leverage and institutional context. There are no evaluations covering work in this area in the plan period, although there is an evaluation of an earlier materials project in TVET in the Caribbean which will be reviewed under the Livelihoods Sector.

104. COL is aware of the risks in producing ODL materials without clear ownership and sound planning for take-up. The STAMP 2000+[5] experience is often cited as warning. This was a major programme of materials production which, most observers believe, did not lead to sufficient take-up to justify COL's investment.

105. From the evidence available, COL's work with materials in the current period seems to have buy-in and does not seem to be in danger of creating any "white elephants". There is anecdotal evidence that the MATE programme in Sri Lanka is not a high priority with the current academic leadership. This however may be a consequence of a change of priority, as in 2006 the then Vice Chancellor of the Open University expressed her satisfaction with it.

Cross-cutting output

Outcome	N/A
Output	Partnerships and networks created for effective use of ODL in education
Target	Networks established to facilitate international online collaboration of 200 or more educators involving representatives of at least 15 developing Commonwealth countries

106. In each of the 3 Sectors in the current TYP, COL has a cross-cutting output relating to partnerships and networks between institutions, and the sharing of strategies and materials. This is a core activity for COL – a standard means of promoting replication or multiplication. Most informants say that COL is very good at this because of the width and depth of its practical experience and the wide range of people and institutions it can mobilise.

107. COL has put forward WikiEducator as an example of a new network which in itself meets the target for this output. WikiEducator has over 4000 registered members who come from over 190 countries, including most of those in the Commonwealth. It would seem from the web statistics that a substantial number of the members – many of those who have participated in the L4C workshops for example - are active in creating and using OERs, and in that sense are collaborating in the use of ODL for

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[5] Science, Technology and Maths Programme for Southern Africa – a modular set of materials for teacher education through ODL.

education. COL has also facilitated a specialised network of open school educators for the creation of OERs.

108. COL has also put forward, as a contribution to this output and target, the growing network of educators trained in the use and adaptation of TESSA[6] . COL was involved in TESSA, but it has not played as central a role as it customarily does in the work it undertakes. There is also a question of how interactive the TESSA community is. The materials have been created by the programme teams rather than the wider TESSA community. TESSA has an on-line facility which allows people to adapt materials and to share their adaptations. An assessment of how much this is happening was beyond the scope of this evaluation.

109. Some pundits believe that professional networks are rarely effective over a certain size[7]. Some assert that this figure is as low as 100 or so. The argument is that identification with and confidence in a network is diluted once it becomes large and more heterogeneous. It is possible that this paradigm needs to be revisited in the light of increased use of open internet- based networks. Much more evidence is needed on the long-term utility of, and outcomes from, larger networks like WikiEducator.

110. Apart from these examples – and networks outside the Education Sector as COL defines it – there have been no significant examples of new networks for international online collaboration in ODL. COL however continues to support existing networks in education and other sectors, most of which operate both on and off-line. The Pacific Association for Technical Vocation Education and Training (PATVET) and the Indian Consortium for Educational Transformation (I-CONSENT)[8] are two active examples where COL has been instrumental in their development, but now plays a supporting role. There is also the Pan Commonwealth Forum (PCF) – a network of networks which COL convenes every 3 years.

Learning for livelihoods

111. The desired impact of COL's work in the Learning for Livelihoods Sector is:

Sustainable socio-economic advancement and improved livelihoods, particularly among disadvantaged communities.

112. The work is delivered through five Initiatives, presented in the Plan in the following terms.

Learning and Skills for Livelihoods creates learning opportunities for improved livelihoods and literacy, and helps the development of TVET using ODL for low technology environments.
Rural and Peri-urban Community Development develops ODL and ICT-based teaching/learning models for sustained improvement of livelihoods in communities depending mainly on food production.
National/International Community Development builds ODL capacity among strategic national and international agricultural education, extension, research and policy-making bodies.

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[6] Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa – a multi-partner programme for the creation and sharing of open educational resources and course designs for teachers and teacher educators. Over 800 educators were trained in the use of the materials in 2008, and this number is expected to grow rapidly in 2009.
[7] For example unpublished research respectively by the British Council and BBC World Service
[8] I-CONSENT is a partnership organisation of individuals and institutions with the goal of using information technology and social mobilisation to develop "quality education for all for sustainable development".

<u>Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth</u> fosters a collaborative network among small states aimed at creating and sharing materials for livelihood-related post-secondary programmes.
<u>Transnational Programmes </u>develops and manages ODL programmes for international organisations on a fee-for-service basis.

Outcome 4

Outcome	Increased adoption by policy-makers of ODL for occupational skills development and improved livelihoods.
Output	Policy-makers more aware of the benefits and the feasibility of ODL for occupational skills development and improved livelihoods.
Target	Break-through acceptance - by key institutions in at least one country each in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the small states of the Commonwealth - of ODL as a viable and desirable option for improving livelihoods.

113.   Outcome 4 is the anticipated result of COL's advocacy of ODL for occupational skills development and improved livelihoods. COL's activity is aimed at making policy-makers more aware of the benefits and the feasibility of ODL for these purposes. The target is for key institutions in at least one country in each of the 3 major geographical groupings of the developing Commonwealth to accept ODL as a viable and desirable option for improving livelihoods.

114.   COL substantially exceeded its target under Outcome 4, which evidently was not well thought through. The VUSSC Initiative has won or harnessed the commitment of the governments of 29 small states of the Commonwealth to strengthening their education systems through the collaborative development and use of ODL resources. The main beneficiaries of this are likely to be livelihoods.

115.   Apart from VUSSC, according to COL:
- Major institutions in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Zambia – and the government of Trinidad and Tobago – are developing policy frameworks to support ODL for technical and vocational education.
- Several international organisations have accepted ODL for developing their agriculture based livelihoods programmes, including the Consortium Group on International Agricultural Research, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, and the Food and Agriculture Organisation.
- The Sri Lanka government and 3 universities have agreed to adopt COL's Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) approach to livelihood development. This has also gained credence in Mauritius, Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Uganda where trials are taking place.

116.   The unique VUSSC Initiative was only at the planning stage at the beginning of the plan period. Apart from that, most of the practical applications in this sector trace their lineage to the previous TYP period or before.

117.   ODL for formal TVET is not new. For example COL has promoted it in the Pacific through PATVET for about 10 years. But it is still not in widespread use. VUSSC is aiming to plug some of the gaps.

118.   Apart from VUSSC, most of COL's work in this Sector in the last 5 years has been in non-formal contexts. COL's advocacy of ODL for occupational skills development and improved livelihoods, gathered pace around the time of the Dunedin PCF in 2004. At that time there was not much support for it among the professional ODL community. Now it has widespread acceptance. All the key informants in this evaluation supported it strongly. COL has been instrumental in this change – it may represent the most profound outcome of it work over the last 2 TYP periods.

119.	Advocacy is still needed in some areas – with governments in the larger states and some international organisations for example – but COL's main effort has now moved on to helping frame policy, building systems and developing capacity and materials. The late entry of occupational skills and livelihoods into the ODL arena has meant it can benefit from newer methodologies and technologies such as the collaborative development of OERs.

Outcome 5

Outcome	Increased and more effective use by institutions of ODL for occupational skills development and improved livelihoods.
Outputs	a) Practitioners more competent to apply ODL for occupational skills development and improved livelihoods. b) New and improved learning materials are produced for occupational skills development and improved livelihoods by partner institutions.
Targets	a) At least one major institution each in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the small states of the Commonwealth significantly increase their capacity to develop and deliver ODL for occupational skills training and/or improved livelihoods. b) Two new contextually relevant sets of ODL/ICT-based learning materials for occupational skills development created; and each is taken up by at least 2 major institutions in different developing Commonwealth countries.

121.	Outcome 5 is a general institutional capacity building outcome covering ODL for both formal and non-formal learning. The outputs and targets brought together under the outcome are about practitioner competence and ODL materials production by or for the institutions.

122.	COL's work towards this outcome has been diverse. It ranges from the VUSSC Initiative; through the strengthening of ODL for formal learning in tertiary agricultural and veterinary education institutions in Africa and India; to the introduction of ODL in institutions in Africa and India to deliver informal learning for literacy and for rural livelihoods.

123.	COL has met target 5a in India and Africa. There is a consensus among informants who are aware of it that one of the most important outcomes of COL's institutional strengthening work over the last 5 years has been the conversion of some agricultural and veterinary education institutions in India to ODL. There is now incipient movement in this direction at Makerere University in Uganda. In small states, VUSSC has not yet reached the stage where the materials produced by participants are in full use in their institutions. As there has been no other significant work in small states, this aspect of target 5a was not met at the beginning of 2009.

124.	Other capacity building in ODL for livelihoods includes the Ghana partnership producing an ODL curriculum for community health nursing, and the work with Arul Anandar College in Tamil Nadu, India which has adopted L3F approaches in its rural development curriculum.

125.	The materials target (5b) overlaps with the one for capacity building. Several new sets of ODL materials have been produced and taken up by institutions such as those mentioned above, in partnership with COL.

126.	It is probably legitimate to include here the materials produced under COL's eLIO programme for staff development in the World Bank, UNICEF and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, United Nations. Although delivered by COL, these materials are owned by the client institutions.

127.   Finally, it is possible that some of the materials produced by the VUSSC Initiative will be ready to be launched as courses by June 2009.

128.   The evaluation has discussed necessary conditions for successful capacity-building in the Education Sector. COL commissioned two external evaluations in 2008 that touch on quality and sustainability factors in Learning for Livelihoods. One is an interim evaluation of VUSSC. The other is an evaluation of the Special Diploma in TVET for the Caribbean.

129.   VUSSC is a formal network of educators selected by their countries, committed to the collaborative development of free content resources for education. VUSSC countries have chosen to focus on the development of post-secondary, skills-related courses in areas such as tourism, entrepreneurship, use of ICTs, life skills, disaster management and fisheries. The VUSSC course materials are intended to be non-proprietary and readily adaptable to the specific context of each country. They are intended to be used in the offering of credit-bearing qualifications.

130.   COL is facilitating the VUSSC initiative with funding support from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Government of Singapore.

131.   There are currently 29 countries (28 from the Commonwealth) participating in VUSSC through interlocutor planning meetings, training and course development workshops, and an international gathering of senior officials for the development of a Transnational Qualifications Framework.

132.   The core mechanism has been the "bootcamp" – two-week workshops that combine both the development of participants and the creation of OERs. There have been 6 to date. Each workshop participant is supposed to train other educators and remain active in ongoing VUSSC content development.

133.   VUSSC was the subject of an interim evaluation in June 2008 which was updated in September. An assessment of the VUSSC programme to date can be made at several levels. There are strong positive indicators of the relevance of the Initiative such as the active participation of so many countries and the high attendance rate at the workshops.

134.   The activities and immediate outputs appear to be good. The activities are praised for their design and execution. There has been some criticism of the initially exclusive use of WikiEducator software, but COL rectified this. Workshop and meeting participant satisfaction is very high and reported benefits are strong. The Bootcamps produce new capacity both in the technical areas but also in terms of collaborative skills and experience. Both are potentially transferable to the member countries.

135.   An aim is to produce a critical mass of trained and empowered people that will be self-sustaining and self-replicating. Whether this will work remains to be seen. Much depends on trained people staying in their areas of expertise for long enough to embed and multiply the learning, and create forward momentum in the creation of materials and courses. This will depend on a supportive institutional context. These conditions will not be there in all countries, but if they exist in a substantial majority, there is a good chance of the model working well.

136.   In-country outcomes are less easily assessable to date. There is evidence of multiplier training and continued work on OERs. The big question for this Initiative inevitably is what use will be made of the materials. Will they be converted into courses and will these courses provide quality education and training for appropriate

students? Who will be the key players in these processes? The parallel efforts to create a TQF will support these outcomes.

137.   COL's work with the Special Diploma in TVET for the Caribbean is somewhat different from the interventions discussed under this outcome because the COL support was for the creation of a curriculum for the formal training, through ODL, of teachers in TVET. The teachers would mostly deliver their instruction by conventional means. However this project is a useful reminder of how difficult it can be to ensure useful outcomes through materials development for ODL.

138.   The completed curriculum was delivered in 3 Caribbean states during the 2 preceding TYP periods, in what was intended to be a pilot phase. There was however no follow-up to the pilot in the region. The departure of the COL specialist may have had something to do with the inertia, although the Caribbean institutions made no move to take it forward themselves. The programme was evaluated by COL in 2008, because it was considering a re-launch if partner institutions could be found. In the light of the evaluation, they have now decided not to be pro-active in that process.

139.   The 2008 evaluation identified some positive aspects of the programme, including evidence of a change in mindset among key educators: from a focus on academic education, to an understanding of the importance of TVET.

140.   However, useful outcomes have been hampered – both for the participants in the course and the region as a whole – mainly by institutional problems. For example:
- In 2 out of the 3 countries, the participants' upgrading was not acknowledged and harnessed by their government institutions. The teachers felt let down.
- Accreditation has not taken place.
- There is a lack of quality assurance, learner support services and other mechanisms that are necessary to promote effective distance education.

141.   The reviewer reported that "no-one consulted could see the programme evolving into a sustainable national or regional programme at a distance" without much greater commitment from their governments.

142.   He concluded that much work needed to be done if the programme was to be carried forward. This would almost amount to starting from scratch with new stakeholder relationship building, needs assessments, as well as thorough revision of the curriculum, materials and improvements in educational infrastructure.

143.   He was also sceptical about the role of COL in the direct creation of educational "packages". He believes that COL should concentrate on capacitating and facilitating others to create their own materials, along the lines of the VUSSC programme. Ideally, OERs would make generic programmes like the TVET diploma obsolete, as organisations would potentially be able to customise materials to their specific needs.

144.   The story of the Caribbean TVET programme is not entirely a bleak one. It might have acquired forward momentum if the piloting had been more comprehensively planned and organised, with closer stakeholder involvement, the application of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and follow-up to each national course.

Outcome 6

Outcome	Marginalised and vulnerable groups have increased access to gender-, generation- and culture-sensitive learning opportunities for occupational skills development and improving their livelihoods.
Output	N/A
Target	At least one substantial and socially disadvantaged community each in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the small states of the Commonwealth significantly increases its income generation through use of ODL.

145.   Outcome 6 is the anticipated result largely of the L3F Initiative, although there has also been some exploratory work with similar approaches and the same objectives in non-farming contexts.

146.   The L3F concept is centred on technology-mediated open and distance learning (Tech-MODE). At its simplest, L3F enables farmers to gain timely access to relevant knowledge and information to enable them to improve their livelihoods. The services are potentially sustainable because the providers' interests - in one way or another – are served by improved farmer livelihoods.

147.   Access is provided principally through information and communications technology – computers, telephony, radio. COL identifies challenged rural groups, helps to establish upstream linkages to learning materials and technology providers; and lateral and downstream linkages to enable the farmers to share and mobilise their experiences and new knowledge. This is achieved through, for example, exchange of good practice, the generation of bank loans, and adoption of insurance and marketing mechanisms.

148.   L3F went operational in the 2003-06 TYP period in 5 villages in Tamil Nadu, India. In mid 2008, despite over a year without COL mediation, significant numbers of farmers and livestock rearers in 3 of the 5 L3F pilot villages were continuing to engage in learning through ICT, and farmers in a 4th village had adopted a similar model. One village suffered an external shock in the form of animal disease, yet recovered. The trigger for the withdrawal of 2 villages from the L3F process was the insolvency of the internet service provider. However a 3rd village that had been using this provider sought out and established another provider and continues to participate in L3F. This suggests that the model can be self-reinforcing under certain conditions. The underlying reason for the withdrawal of the other 2 seems to have been weak social capital. This is now seen by the L3F thought leaders as a pre-condition for sustained success. It is not so much the number of farmers organised, but their degree of cohesion.

149.   Two new players joined the Tamil Nadu L3F programme at the end of 2007. A grass-roots NGO, Vidayal, brought 250 self-help groups into the programme to improve and extend their livelihoods. Arul Anandar College, an autonomous educational establishment, proposed to integrate L3F into its curriculum to increase the number of rural development professionals who were able to apply the concept and its components. Their progress was evaluated in July 2008. Less than a year is too short a time to make a confident assessment of a rural development programme. But it is clear that the new entrants are progressing satisfactorily, if more slowly than planned in some respects.

150.   L3F is still work in progress. It is being implemented or introduced in Sri Lanka, Kenya, Mauritius, Uganda, Jamaica and PNG. As there are a variety of player linkages, it is probably more appropriate to talk about an L3F concept than a model. The generation of self-directed learning for livelihoods is the principal common component.

151.   The L3F initiative has led to self-sustained improvements in the livelihoods of the majority of farmers involved in the original Tamil Nadu initiative. The marketing of the initiative has also helped COL to find willing partners to transfer the model to other countries and regions. However the activity has yet to achieve substantial self-replication and any sign of take-off in scale.

152.   The experience so far has identified three necessary conditions for wider success:
- The importance of social capital mentioned above
- The need to map out the most promising value chains for each farming context
- The need for greater volume of activity to support advocacy among policymakers. Isolated experiments are not enough and self-replication based on word of mouth is too slow. This suggests that substantial funding and strategic partnerships need to be developed to increase the scale of activity in a given country.

Cross-cutting output

Outcome	N/A
Output	More partnerships between institutions to develop strategies for occupational skills development and improved livelihoods
Target	One new partnership network each in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the small states of the Commonwealth, comprising national and international government institutions and community-based organisations, established to develop strategies for the use of ODL for improved livelihoods.

153.   The target for COL's partnership and network output for occupational skills development and improved livelihoods was met largely through the VUSSC Initiative. The consortium of VUSSC government interlocutors which plans and facilitates activity is one partnership or network within VUSSC. Another consists of the government representatives taking the VUSSC Transnational Qualifications Framework forwards. The Framework is designed to enable education policy makers to exchange programmes of study and qualifications between countries and regions.

154.   A 3rd network is that of the educators themselves who are trained at the VUSSC bootcamps. They are expected to collaborate nationally and internationally to develop and share materials using COL-facilitated on-line forums where appropriate. There is evidence of considerable intra-institutional and intra-national collaboration but not of much at the inter-national level.

155.   There has been at least one new partnership established with COL's support in India for the application of TechMODE to livelihoods. The most recent example is the one centred on the Maharashtra Animal and Fisheries Sciences University.

Human environment

156.   The desired impact of COL's work in the Human Environment Sector is

Sustainable development occurring through people living peaceably and equitably under democratic government in healthy environments.

157.   The work is delivered through 5 Initiatives, presented in the Plan in the following terms.

Gender and Development uses ODL and other technologies to foster the full participation of women and to address unequal gender relations that prevent equitable development.

Health, Welfare and Community Development equips and trains government agencies, NGOs and community groups to use video and audio technology for local production of educational materials related to health, welfare and community development.

Environmental Education *e*xpands environmental education at all levels by adapting and using existing ODL programmes and developing new learning materials for sharing across the Commonwealth.

Good Governance develops and adapts ODL materials and training to strengthen democracy and good governance through the public sector, the educational system and NGOs.

Educational Use of Mass Media and ICTs (Media Empowerment) uses policy, strategy, capacity-building and models to promote the educational use of mass media and ICTs - including community radio, village cinema, and ICT kiosks.

Outcome 7

Outcome	Increased adoption by policy-makers of ODL for gender equality, good governance, sustainable environments and better health.
Output	Policy-makers more aware of the benefits and the feasibility of ODL for education [in these fields].
Target	N/A

158.   What COL defines as the Human Environment Sector – health, welfare, governance, gender equity, environment – is less familiar terrain for ODL. COL believes that ODL can contribute to good learning-driven outcomes in these areas and therefore has an advocacy role to play. How much advocacy work it has done and how successful it has been is difficult to gauge. There is no performance indicator relating to this outcome and output and no systematic monitoring.

159.   In this Sector COL's work has been on a smaller scale than in any other. Much, particularly in the Health, Media Empowerment and Governance Initiatives, has been with NGOs or small government units. There has been little work in Gender at all. Some of the work has led to good outcomes as we shall see below, but if the strategy is to leverage high-level and wide-scale advocacy for ODL from successful examples, it hasn't worked well in general.

160.   The Media Empowerment Initiative has been in place in much the same form for about 17 years and while equipment has been installed and people trained in many countries, and COL has publicised it vigorously in a general way, there is no substantial evidence of policy adoption, or of a replication effect which might indicate *de facto* policy. As with other aspects of this Initiative it is difficult to be certain because there is so little systematic, validated information. The Health Initiative has been in place for about 6 years and much the same can be said of it in the policy context.

161.   The Governance Initiative is only 2-3 years old and too new to expect significant leverage.

162.   This is not to say COL has neglected advocacy in this Sector altogether. Ironically, its advocacy activity may have been strongest in its small-scale Gender Initiative. It has publicised its work – such as research into Boys Underachievement – in forums like PCF and the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers.

163.   The Environmental Education Initiative is different. It mainly works in a conventional way, at a higher level, with major educational and development

institutions like the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Karnataka State Open University, CEE and UNESCO. It seems that there is little need for advocacy in this area – the argument has already been won. The main challenge is a more practical one.

Outcome 8

Outcome	Increased and more effective use by practitioners of ODL applications to improve knowledge, understanding and competences in gender equality, good governance, sustainable environments and better health.
Outputs	a) Practitioners more competent to apply ODL to improve knowledge, understanding and competences. b) New and improved learning materials are produced by partner institutions. c) Greater and more effective educational use of mass media.
Targets	a) 25 additional institutions and community-based organisations use ODL in health, gender, governance (grassroots) and environmental education programmes. b) 200 additional health, gender, governance (grassroots) and environmental and agricultural education media productions developed. c) Policy-makers and practitioners in three additional ministries/institutions trained in mainstreaming gender within their jurisdictions. d) 30 young interns placed in 10 countries for professional development and support to COL programmes. e) Five institutions or community-based organisations use COL environmental educational materials for their programmes.

164.   Outcome 8 and the related outputs and targets[9] are about take-up and capacity in ODL for the human environment fields. All the targets appear to have been met or exceeded except for the one for training in gender mainstreaming. The target for interns was met pro-rata in the first year, after which the programme was closed following the withdrawal of earmarked funding by the Government of Canada.

165.   ODL or the application of mass media has been extended to new institutions through COL's work in this Sector. About 20 organisations, covering all the developing Commonwealth regions, have been equipped and trained under the Health and Media Empowerment Initiatives in the current TYP period. In Health, they were mostly NGOs, and in Media Empowerment, public bodies.

166.   In Governance, 4 organisations – 2 NGOs in Bangladesh, one in PNG, and one in Tuvalu – are now using ODL through COL's interventions. In Environmental Education, no additional institutions were using ODL, but new capacity has been built and the work of the previous plan period has begun to bear fruit with ODL-created materials being taken up by several organisations, for example by schools in Karnataka, and an NGO working with street children.

167.   Two organisations – in Bangladesh and PNG – have received training in gender mainstreaming.

168.   COL's monitoring suggests that there have been about 450 new productions under the Health and Media Empowerment Initiatives. In many cases these are additional broadcast programmes or videos in a pre-existing series.

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[9] All the targets in this Sector relate most closely to Outcome 8. This is a flaw in the RBM system.

169.   A gender mainstreaming video was produced to support COL's work with the Commonwealth Secretariat; and a toolkit produced in South Asia on gender-friendly schools.

170.   Using a wider definition of media productions, over 25 sets of materials have been produced using ODL, or for ODL use, in Environmental Education (over 15 – all in India) and Governance (about 10 – in Bangladesh, PNG and Vanuatu).

171.   As in other Sectors, issues of quality and effective, sustainable outcomes are not answered in much depth by these output-level data. There is not a great deal of other evidence in this area one way or another. The main information relied on in this evaluation comes from the Media Empowerment and Health Media Initiatives. A review of this work was undertaken by the incoming ES in 2008.

172.   COL's media work has touched many organisations, in all regions of the developing Commonwealth. It has led to a large number of media productions. There are some examples of applications which have enabled the client institutions – such as the Nova Scotia Gambia Association and the Valley Trust in South Africa - to multiply their own reach impressively. Even where this has not happened it seems to be popular with clients.

173.   However, there are few known examples of self-replication and many examples of applications that are under-utilised. There are few productions that are formally educational in design rather than conveyors of information and messages. This would not matter if people take appropriate learning from the information and the messages. Unfortunately there is no systematic data to indicate whether this has happened on a wide scale.

174.   The review of the Media Empowerment and Health Media Initiatives stressed that ..*building capacity to use media for learning…. requires a long-term vision and a focus on developing an organisation not only with needed technical skills but also a clear mandate and strategy.*

175.   It also asserted that "the focus on media content production, divorced from distribution, also poses challenges". Even though many of the institutions are still capable of producing content, they are usually not directly linked with media distribution channels so are not effectively reaching the target audience.

176.   The review emphasised the need for more focused, longer-term involvement; and a higher degree of engagement with local partners for organisational, not just technical, development. More integration with other programmes and networks was recommended. In planning and organisational terms, it may be sensible to position this media work as cross-cutting, rather than operating as one or two Initiatives in its own right.

177.   Although there is no evaluation of the main part of the Environmental Education Initiative, positive conclusions can be inferred from the forward momentum that exists in the areas of COL's support to institutions like the IISc and Karnataka State Open University.

178.   COL commissioned one evaluation of its environment work: the Western Kenya pilot project in the use of ODL for climate change and water issues. This is very different from the other work in the Initiative and is much closer in approach and intended outcome to L3F.

179.   The principal aim of the project is to explore the potential for ODL – and specifically the Tech-MODE approach – to generate new knowledge about rural

communities' adaptation to climate change and the management of water resources. This is intended to be a multi-directional process, involving exchange of knowledge, information and experience between farmers on the one hand, and research and academic institutions and possibly government bodies on the other. Benefit is also intended to flow in all directions.

180.   This project has not yet reached the stage of full implementation. The learning to be derived so far therefore is mainly about project design rather than execution, outputs or outcomes.

181.   The main conclusions to be drawn from the evaluation are as follows.
- There is a substantial and urgent need for a dialogue about environmental issues between research, policy and similar institutions on the one hand, and people living in rural areas on the other, and COL has the potential to contribute to that effort.
- As far as it has gone, COL's partnership building for the project has been effective.
- But the project design has some weaknesses.
  – There is too much reliance on the academic and research partners for establishing and maintaining effective linkages with farmers. Almost certainly there would be a need for NGOs to mobilise the farmers and to act as intermediaries.
  – The restriction to one location and one set of partnership linkages limits the value of the project as an experiment.
  – The project lacks a solid strategy for carrying forward the results.
  – There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation built into the project.

182.   This project shares replicability and other scale challenges with the L3F initiative. It also raises questions about COL's ability to facilitate highly innovative grass-roots projects in cultural settings that its ESs are less familiar with. If the project moves forward and produces positive initial outputs, it is likely that COL will either need to make a long-term, larger scale commitment, or find suitable partner organisations to take it forward. If it does go ahead, COL should position this as a livelihoods project and not as a venture into work on climate change.

Outcome 9

Outcome	Citizens generally – and marginalised and vulnerable groups in particular – have more equitable access to quality learning opportunities.
Output	N/A
Target	N/A

183.   Outcome 9 is pitched beyond the other outcomes in this Sector in the logical chain. The main – one might say the only - purpose of the advocacy, capacity building and media and materials production outcomes is to provide access to quality learning opportunities for the target groups. This is undoubtedly happening, but on what scale and with which groups is not known in a comprehensive way. There is no indicator and no systematic monitoring for this outcome.

Cross-cutting output

Outcome	N/A
Output	More sharing of learning materials and strategies between institutions in gender equality, good governance, sustainable environments and better health.
Target	N/A

184.   As with the other Sectors, Human Environment has an output which promotes the sharing of strategies and materials through institutional partnerships and networks. There is no indicator for the output and no systematic monitoring.

185.   The evidence that exists shows that COL has helped to create good linkages in Environmental Education resulting in collaboration and sharing. Apart from this, COL does not seem to have generated much inter-institutional activity in the Sector. COL's experience in governance and gender is not mature enough to expect this.

The regional centres

186.   In the 2003-06 Plan period, COL extended its reach by the establishment of 2 "Regional Centres of Expertise" – in West and Southern Africa. It had already had, in CEMCA, a regional centre which it had funded and managed directly since the early 1990s. It also had a regional representative in the Pacific.

187.   In the current TYP period CEMCA has significantly increased both the volume, and - according to informants - also the quality of its outputs. RETRIDAL – the centre based in the Nigeria Open University – has also increased its output and is on a surer footing than in 2006. In the Pacific, COL employs an individual on secondment to provide expertise and manage COL's work in a region. This is a model that COL is reviewing. COL's main concern at the current time is with the centre in Botswana, the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE).

188.   An external evaluation in 2008 found that almost all the people interviewed saw the need and importance of a centre such as SADC-CDE in the region. Attempts at voluntarism in the past had not succeeded. The evaluator reported that the number of capacity-building projects undertaken by SADC-CDE was impressive, but he found that they had little impact on the region. It had made virtually no progress in its objective to become a centre of expertise in the region.

189.   These deficits stemmed mainly from a combination of unrealistic expectations, (given its level of staffing), weak and inappropriate execution in parts of its work plan, and its inability to connect with the two key regional institutions - SADC and the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa – that it was intended to work with.

190.   The evaluator strongly recommended the full integration of SADC-CDE with the SADC organisation, with continued funding from COL in the short to medium term. This proposal is also broadly supported by two other informants from the region. The status quo is not sustainable. SADC-CDE needs a new business model and plan. COL needs to build this in close consultation with the main players in the region.

191.   The elephant in the room is the huge Capacity Building for Distance Education project taking shape in the SADC region. Although in resource terms, COL's contribution in the region is a drop in the ocean, its expertise and international networks could play a niche role in enhancing or complementing the value of the project during its life or after it finishes – above all promoting sustainability of outcomes. This should probably be a priority for COL and it needs to discuss with stakeholders in the region how the future of SADC-CDE can best contribute.

192.   Are there lessons in this experience that are relevant to RETRIDAL and CEMCA? Neither is currently suffering in the same way as SADC-CDE from stakeholder problems. Both seem to be very active in human resource development and CEMCA also in other aspects of capacity building. The main questions for COL in respect of these centres are probably:

- Is their activity as effective as it could be?
- Are appropriate institutions being targeted?
- Is there a sufficient multiplier potential in the training of individuals?
- Is there follow up to the training, to increase the likelihood of it being applied, or to learn lessons about better contextualisation of the training?
- Is COL able to monitor the activity of the centres appropriately?

Client-funded work

193.   COL's policy towards work resourced by extra-budgetary funding – now called additional contributions (ACs) - has shifted in the current TYP period. The policy is now to seek funding only where its supports COL's strategic initiatives. Some informants are not wholly convinced that it will stick to this policy – so it will need transparency and good communication.

194.   One of COL's main sources of ACs is the eLIO programme. It develops and delivers technology-mediated distance learning courses for the staff of international organizations like WHO, World Bank and UNHCR. The learning materials are developed and customised for each organization to promote the learning of relevant occupational skills. Tutors are engaged and trained to facilitate the delivery of the programmes.

195.   The programme has been steadily growing for about 5 years as more organisations are partnered – numbering 8 by July 2008. In 2008-09, its turnover could reach one million Canadian Dollars. The programme is run as a discrete business stream and is now required to cover its costs.

196.   An external evaluation of the programme in 2008 was very positive.

What cannot be dismissed in any analysis of the work….is the fact that all the stated results were met and in some cases exceeded, coupled with a rather overwhelming degree of satisfaction expressed by all the participants, including the learners, the partners, the tutors, the COL staff and the eLIO section employees.

197.   The evaluator emphasised the high completion rate as an indicator of quality, the 62% female participation rate, and the increase in visibility in the international organisations that COL is gaining. His principal concerns were about the limited use of OER software and the fact that COL had not negotiated copyright which would enable it to extend the programme's reach. Despite these reservations, the evaluator had no doubt the programme should continue in its present shape.

198.   There is less than universal support among Board members for the e-Learning for eLIO programme. They are mainly concerned about mission drift and the diversion of apex management time. Although this evaluation has found no evidence to support these concerns, COL needs to try harder to leverage wider benefits from it to support the case for its relevance. A number of questions are raised inadvertently by the independent evaluation.

199.   The 2008 evaluation praises the "strong alignment of the programmes goals… and those of COL in increasing capacity". COL needs to work strategically, through for example the capacity-building of multipliers: to what extent does eLIO impact at a strategic level?

200.   The evaluator also praised the programmes ODL demonstration effect: are the audiences impacted the ones COL needs to reach?

201.   The evaluator was enthusiastic about the opportunities for project work that eLIO activity had uncovered: is it appropriate that COL pursues the type of project work he cites?

202.   The eLIO section appears to be somewhat isolated from the rest of COL. There is little cross-fertilisation which could benefit the organisation as a whole in terms of knowledge about the international organisations and about e-learning. Could this be rectified without affecting the financial "firewall" that surrounds the programme?

Cross -cutting themes: Gender and Knowledge Management

203.   As well as including Gender and Development as an Initiative in the Human Environment Sector, COL defines Gender as a cross-cutting theme in its 2006-09 Plan, along with Knowledge Management (KM). The Plan does not contain much detail of what this means, other than the paragraph below.

Gender equality and knowledge management are integral to COL's work in all three sectors. Because technology-mediated learning is particularly helpful for women and girls, COL uses it to help promote gender equality. And because access to knowledge is central to development, COL is committed to deploying the most modern methods of knowledge management.

204.   This implies that Gender and KM are in the foreground of COL's work. If so it would be expected to define performance indicators and monitor results. This has not happened with the 2006-09 Plan.

205.   COL has the dual aim of mainstreaming gender equality in the organisation and its work, and sharing its understanding and experience of gender and development with others. The evidence suggests that progress on both fronts has been somewhat fitful.

206.   COL has created guidance to its own staff on ex-ante gender impact appraisal of its programmes, but there is not much evidence that they are used. COL has recently launched a Gender section on its website. The Gender micro-site provides access to resources on gender in an ODL context with a special emphasis on ICT. There is no reliable data yet on its usage

207.   Several informants felt that there was still work to be done by COL - particularly in embedding gender impact appraisal - to justify its stance on gender equality.

208.   The reasons for the slow pace of work in gender are not obvious. COL appears to have a gender-sensitive culture. It seems to be instinctive among its staff, who understand the developmental importance of promoting educational and livelihood opportunities for women in particular. Internally, there is a good gender balance among the staff at all levels and no evidence of bias one way or the other. Nevertheless, gender equality is too important to be left to chance, and if COL continues to foreground it, there should be evidence of relevant active processes and of results.

209.   COL's performance in KM is assessed in the section "How COL works".

Postscript

210.   Some of COL's activity has not been captured in this section. For example COL regularly gives ad hoc advice and small scale support to governments and institutions on matters such as the development of open universities or dual-mode institutions. COL staff multi-task when they make visits. This is usually captured in trip reports,

but does not – probably cannot - find its way into more formal performance reporting. There will probably always be a hidden dimension to COL's value.

211.   Some more substantial activities are also not dealt with. The CEMCA/CEMBA distance education programme has been mentioned in passing. It serves significant numbers of people, and is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. It was not assessed in this evaluation because there are no comprehensive data on its outcomes.

212.   For a different reason, COL's Poverty Reduction Outcomes Through Education Innovations and Networks, a grant-based programme for livelihoods, has not been assessed. This is because COL has made a decision to wind it up. This evaluation endorses the principle that COL should not be a funding organisation. It has more than enough direct uses for its resources.

How COL works

213.   This section is about <u>how</u> COL produces the outputs examined in the previous section – about the processes[10] and the resources behind them. COL's processes were thoroughly examined in the 2006 evaluation. This evaluation concentrates on what has changed since 2006, as well as affirming the main continuing features. The main focus is on the programme cycle as this was the area of most concern in 2006, and where there appears still to be room for improvement.

Deciding what to do and learning from it.

214.   A typical programme cycle should consist of:
* Developing strategy
* Researching, appraising and planning programmes
* Implementing programmes
* Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)
* Learning from the M&E and applying the learning to new strategy and activity.

215.   The previous section looked at COL's record in implementation and its effects. The following paragraphs look at the surrounding processes which are designed to ensure that COL *does the right things* and d*oes the things right*.

216.   How COL decides what to do and how it demonstrates achievement were the areas of most interest and concern among key informants in the 2006 evaluation. This year's consultations suggest that the concern is less intense, but there were still questions about how COL plans, to what extent its activities reflect that planning, and how it monitors and evaluates what it achieves. A majority of Board members felt COL needed to be more transparent about all this. The paragraphs below attempt to shed more light on these processes; but COL itself needs to make these processes more transparent for key stakeholders by better definition.

<u>Strategic planning</u>

217.   COL plans on a 3 year cycle. It consults widely outside the organisation before drawing up the plan. For the 2006-09 plan consultations included the convening of a number of regional stakeholder meetings – representing the most extensive consultation process in its history. For the 2009-12 planning process, COL used its Focal Points[11] - there were 3 regional meetings in 2008 - and PCF 5 as the main sounding boards. These consultations, together with the iterative involvement of the Board - provided opportunities for the voices of all Commonwealth states to be heard.

218.   There is some concern among Board members that COL staff appear not to be involved in a systematic way in 3 year planning. There is no doubt that COL ES staff played a central role in defining the work that will be done in their Initiatives in 2009-2012. They have also participated in converting the descriptions of the proposed work into outputs and outcomes in the COL logic model. Staff do not appear to have been formally consulted on other parts of the Plan, but it is likely that in such a small, non-hierarchical, organisation staff have contributed informally to shaping other elements. There does not appear to be concern among staff about lack of involvement.

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[10] In most logical frameworks the level below outputs is labelled "activities". As COL uses the term "Activities" for a subset of its Initiatives, "processes" is used to describe this level to avoid confusion.
[11] See paragraphs 265-268.

219. COL does not just consult. It designs and adjusts its plans in the light of comments from outside stakeholders. The evaluator has been able to observe the later stages of the planning process first hand in 2006 and 2009 and can confirm this. COL's decision to reduce its Sectors from 3 to 2 in 2009-2012 is the most prominent example, but there are others at a lower level, including the way the plan is presented.

220. A logic model was at the heart of COL's TYP in 2006-09 and will be again in 2009-2012. In 2006-09 the model listed the Sectors and Initiatives and contained output, outcome and impact statements and performance indicators with targets. The statements and indicators were grouped under each Sector and not explicitly linked to particular Initiatives. Although some were implicit, the lack of explicit linkages between Initiatives and outputs, outcomes and indicators weakened the logic of the model, and the understanding and accountability that should flow from it. It is likely to have contributed to a weak sense of ownership of the indicators/targets. Ownership is usually a necessary condition for effective use of performance indicators. It is recommended that in future logic models, the outcome and output statements are explicitly linked to particular programmes.

221. 2006-2009 was COL's first experience of using corporate performance indicators. The indicators were designed collaboratively within COL, and broadly reflect COL's outcomes and outputs in terms of both centrality and adequacy. They were also practicable in the sense that the data was not difficult or expensive to capture.

222. There were two main weaknesses. First, COL's partners and other outside stakeholders were not involved in the design of the indicators, which reduced the chances of buy-in from them. Second, the targets were not sufficiently evidence-informed and in some cases were not well thought-through.

223. Despite these weaknesses, understandable in an organisation relatively new to this approach, informants saw COL's logic model as a distinct improvement on performance models in previous plans. In particular they liked the results orientation. Previous plans had tended to emphasise processes more than results.

224. To what extent COL actually follows its strategic plan was another concern in 2006. Board members in particular felt that the plan and apex management had little influence on what COL staff actually did within their Initiatives. The logic model was sufficiently generic to allow for a wide range of activities, and they were concerned that COL staff often rolled over what they were doing before, re-packaging it to suit the new planning nomenclature.

225. The evidence in 2006, suggested that the concern about old wine in new bottles in the 2003-06 period was partly justified. This is less evident in the 2006-2009 period. COL is highly dependent on the expertise, experience, networks and to a great extent the inclinations of its ESs and they still appear to be the main determinants of what goes on at the Initiative level and below. Nevertheless the outcomes and outputs in COL's logic model have provided a structure for more focused individual performance management within COL, and this seems to have been pursued more vigorously than in the past. This has not been entirely welcomed by all staff, but they respect its rationale.

<u>Activity[12] planning</u>

226.   Several of the independent evaluations of COL's work point to the need for more systematic planning of activities – for example more front-end analysis of stakeholder readiness, and longer-term planning with partners.

227.   COL often conducts research before it begins to plan new work. An interesting example of this was the L3F programme which was not launched even as a pilot until both formal and informal research had been conducted and analysed. More typically COL uses action research – a more informal process involving iterative consultations with partners. COL's research mix seems to be appropriate for an organisation of its size.

228.   COL has a checklist of six factors – the "6-R Filter"[13] – which were designed for the ex-ante appraisal of activities. These factors all seem appropriate, but there is at least one important gap: the readiness of partners and other stakeholders to play their part in the activity and sustain it. This assessment is not always easy to make, but it is important to try.

229.   Whatever the merits and demerits of the 6-R Filter, it has not been used consistently by COL for ex-ante appraisal. COL has said they intend not to use it any more. However they need to have, and consistently use, an appropriate ex-ante appraisal mechanism.

230.   The most commonly utilised tool for planning, monitoring and evaluation in development contexts is the logical framework. "Logframes", as they are usually known, are matrices which trace the linkages between inputs, processes and expected results of a project or programme; and list the corresponding performance indicators, means of verification, and assumptions behind the expected results.

231.   COL intended to develop logframes for its Initiatives and activities in 2006-09, but very few were completed. Even fewer were actively used. Instead COL uses a form[14] at the planning stage which includes most of the components of a logframe. Addressing the questions in the form is no doubt a valuable process and the form is used for dialogue at the planning stage among ESs and with apex management. However it has 2 main weaknesses. It does not demand a rigorous approach to M&E; and it is used principally as a tool for getting approval for work. It is not much used – if at all – for the monitoring of progress in-year or between years. Quarterly reporting and dialogue uses a form which is disconnected from the planning form and mainly chronicles processes and outputs.

232.   Logframes have their detractors. They are not magic bullets - they are only tools, which in the wrong hands can be misused. They require disciplined thinking – preferably in collaboration with stakeholders – and a commitment to follow-through with M&E. Logframes should also not be allowed to blind stakeholders to the unforeseen circumstances and changes that inevitably affect projects. Few projects work in a simple, predicted linear fashion. Logframes should be regularly adapted in the light of new knowledge and changed circumstances. Despite these reservations, it is recommended that COL uses logframes consistently in the forthcoming TYP period.

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[12] "Activity" is used here to refer to work at the sub-Initiative level – what in many organisations would be called projects.
[13] Relevance, results, reach, regions, resources, relationships.
[14] The Initiative Proposal form

Monitoring & Evaluation

233.   COL produced corporate indicators for the 2006-09 plan at the level of the 3 Sectors. The majority of these indicators clearly related to specific Initiatives, even if these links were not explicit. COL was able to produce a report for this evaluation on progress in relation to the indicators. It used these data as part of a corporate reporting process on two previous occasions, although less transparently.

234.   This is an improvement on the previous TYP period. However, there is little evidence that COL used performance indicators for internal learning. This is partly because the data in isolation are not very meaningful, and partly because COL has not created opportunities for this learning to take place. The main problem is the lack of complementary data. Little monitoring – other than narrative records of activity and outputs - has taken place. The main exceptions are output data from the WikiEducator Initiative and outputs and short-term outcome data from VUSSC.

235.   Momentum in developing a result-based M&E framework and processes system grew in early 2006. COL organised a 4 day workshop for about 25 staff in July 2006. This led to the re-definition of some elements of COL's logic model and to the final set of indicators and targets for the 2006-09 Plan. It also created a much greater awareness of the value and role of M&E.

236.   However, although there have been further inputs, including a regional M&E workshop with partners in India, momentum towards a fully-operational results-based M&E system slackened after the TYP was launched. It is beginning to gather pace again and it is recommended that this is taken forward to the point where M&E is institutionalised or mainstreamed, and partners and other stakeholders involved. The development and regular use of logframes will help in this process.

237.   Although monitoring has been weak, COL has had a purposeful approach to evaluation in this period. It commissioned 10 independent evaluations in 2008 of a structured sample of its activities, which provided a valuable resource for this "umbrella" evaluation. Some of these evaluations were formative reviews of on-going work. Others were summative in nature. These evaluations have also mostly been well utilised by Initiative managers. For example one has shaped COL's approach to the Diploma in TVET in the Caribbean.

238.   COL has also commissioned contextual research and evaluation in areas such as Open Schooling and ICTs and Education.

239.   Finally COL took seriously the 2006 umbrella evaluation. All 52 recommendations were discussed internally, and agreement reached with the Board whether or not they should be implemented. Progress in agreed implementation has been made in most cases.

Knowledge management and organisational learning

240.   COL's KM work comprises the management of information and knowledge for both internal and external audiences. It includes such things as
- the internet and intranet websites
- internal documentary databases
- news feeds
- collaboration technology such as Basecamp and web-conferencing
- IT technical development and support
- the physical and virtual Information Resource Centre.

241. Organisationally, the KM team are also responsible for communications, including the management of major events such as the PCF.

242. KM is described as a cross-cutting theme in the 2006-09, and in common with other areas of COL's work not directly grouped under one of the 3 Sectors, it does not have corporately-defined outputs, outcomes and indicators. It is recommended that COL considers introducing a small number of performance indicators in non-Sector areas of its work during the 2009-2012 period.

243. This evaluation was not asked to look in depth at COL's KM services. In any event they are difficult to assess because of the technical complexity and the very wide range of users. The Director of KM has led the VUSSC Initiative until the beginning of 2009 and it would therefore be surprising if there were major leaps forward in KM. Nevertheless it is evident to a casual observer and user that there has been steady progress on a number of fronts. The look and feel of the website has improved greatly. COL's news feeds are easier to use. There has been a significant increase in the provision of on-line collaborative tools.

244. Progress has been slower in some areas. One is the management of documentary information flows within the organisation. A large number of reports about activity are generated by COL staff, particularly ESs. These are the main – almost the only – documented source of information about what COL is achieving in its 3 Sectors. KM aims to streamline the way this information is prioritised and brought together in key reporting formats such as the Country Action Plans. It still has some work to do on this.

245. For many years, COL has provided information and knowledge services to outside publics, largely through its website. Although this is not a costly item, as with any service, COL needs to have a clear picture of the value it adds and for whom. From the consumer point of view, informants were divided about whether COL is an effective repository of ODL information and knowledge. COL itself seems to be in a similar position to 2006 – with a less than clear picture of the value it adds. This is difficult with a dispersed service. Web-based response-driven surveys for example are often not very reliable, and more targeted evaluation is likely to be expensive. If COL decides to invest more than its current level of resources, it should probably conduct a thorough appraisal of the market for the IRC.

246. COL's KM unit facilitates the process of organisational learning, but it cannot guarantee that the process will be effective. This is the responsibility of management as a whole. One of the strongest recommendations in the 2006 evaluation was that there needed to be more systematic sharing of knowledge within COL. Staff were seen to be too atomised with little encouragement to engage meaningfully with each other to learn from their experiences. The quarterly Programme Update Meetings (PUM) were set-pieces with series of presentations about activities, but with little real discussion, particularly about lessons learnt. COL did not appear to have a very open culture.

247. There seems to have been some improvement. The Sector team structure that was introduced in 2006 undoubtedly provides more opportunity for dialogue within the Sectors. The Programme Update Meeting process now includes critiques by teams from outside the Sector. Occasional seminars are arranged on specific themes. Nevertheless it is recommended that there are further opportunities for extended dialogue across the organisation about lessons learnt and their implications for the future, in the form of facilitated group discussions rather than presentation-led events. This is turn may foster a more open culture.

Communications

248.   COL communicates with its partners and audiences in several ways.

249.   COL's TYP Plan is a public document and is generally well-received. The structure of the 2006-09 Plan was seen as an improvement on previous years. However there is still a view among a majority of Board members that it is difficult to get to grips with what COL aims to achieve - and actually achieves - particularly in terms of outcomes.

250.   The Board receives quarterly narrative reports from the President. Members said that they had become more informative in the later part of the TYP period. By contrast, the 2 annual progress reports to the Board in the Plan period were said not be very illuminating. The attempt to sum up progress using the 6-R Filter was opaque and of little or no use to Board members.

251.   COL has listened hard to suggestions about how to present its work in the forthcoming 2009-2012. For annual reporting, the improvements have yet to be thought out. Better monitoring against the logic model and logframe performance indicators will help. But COL also needs to illustrate the numbers with narrative evidence, particularly of outcomes, captured systematically and pro-actively throughout the TYP period, not just at the end through independent evaluations. This is where M&E shares common ground with communications. A common platform for the capture and presentation of narrative evidence would be helpful. It is recommended that apex management, Sector and KM staff work together on this.

252.   Other forms of communications are designed for wider audiences. Apart from the website, COL continues to publish its newsletter Connections which has not changed significantly in format. It is probably appreciated mainly by the ODL professional community.

253.   COL staff communicate face to face with particular audiences all the time. This can be in public set-pieces such as the President's speeches which reach large numbers of people, or forums like the PCF; or it can be in private meetings.

254.   In the public sphere it does not seem that COL needs to communicate more, or radically differently. There may be one or two specific audiences, such as ODA agencies, where communications are not as effective as they need to be.

Status and reputation

255.   COL is an intergovernmental body, not an international NGO. This gives it some advantages and carries some obligations. Advantages stem from its access to government, particularly senior levels of education ministries. In 2006-09 it has leveraged this access very effectively in the VUSSC Initiative. Its status also creates the expectation that COL has a long-term future and a long-term view. This, and its apolitical nature, engender trust. Trust, combined with a general impression that it delivers on its mandate, leads to confidence in COL, which in turn open more doors – a virtuous circle which has continued to turn in the current TYP period.

256.   The consensus among informants is that COL's reputation is as strong as ever. In 2006, there were reservations about COL's relevance and effectiveness from some Board members and ODA agencies. Although this evaluation's informant net was not as wide as in 2006, the tenor of comment suggests that these reservations are no longer as strong, or have disappeared altogether.

257. A lingering issue is the degree of COL's involvement with development debates both globally and in specific countries. This is a dilemma for COL because formal engagement with the debates implies a major commitment of time resources, which for a small organisation working with so many countries, is challenging. It has been difficult for this evaluation to gauge whether COL has got the balance right. COL's Focal Points (see paragraphs 265-268) are designed to ensure COL Initiatives match national priorities. There is not enough information about the Focal Points process to assess to what extent this is working. In any event it would be tall order.

258. It is recommended that COL involves the Board, if it hasn't already done so, in a discussion about its direct involvement in development debates. Where COL cannot engage in person, it should ensure it is up-to-date with the content of the debates.

259. An obligation of being an intergovernmental organisation is that it serves the interests of the entire member community. This is a big obligation when the community is as large and diverse as the Commonwealth. COL has tried in the past to meet the obligation by not only ensuring it consults widely, but also by delivering services in as many states as possible in a 3 year period. This stretches its resources and works against critical mass and longitudinality[15]. The VUSSC initiative has the potential to finesse this challenge to a great extent, by pooling the interests of small states and creating an internal momentum which eventually – it is hoped - will not be dependent on COL.

Partnerships and other external relations

260. COL always works with other organisations to deliver its services. Some help to resource COL, others work with them to deliver activities; others still are primarily beneficiaries. COL also has relationships with organisations based on knowledge exchange.

261. Strong partnership is a necessary condition of effective development work. Some informants went further and asserted that COL's reliance on partners is a sufficient condition – a guarantee - of sustainable success. This is not always the case. COL cannot necessarily rely on partner institutions to be able to maintain forward momentum in the capacity-building that it provides. Green Teachers is a good example of this. It needs to plan longer-term with these organisations, even if COL itself doesn't provide continuing support. Many of COL's partnerships are long-lasting, but MOUs and contractual relationships are the exception rather than the rule. It probably does well to avoid contracts in much of its core work; but MOUs – accompanied by regularly reviewed work plans - help to clarify respective roles and responsibilities.

262. COL has pursued a more strategic approach to partnership in the last 3 years. It has devoted more time in particular to strengthening ties with other Commonwealth organisations, the World Bank and UNESCO. This has borne fruit in several ways including project funding, for VUSSC and COL's ICT in Education research for example.

263. COL has developed its relationship with the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation – begun in the previous period - which led to funding of around 800,000 Canadian Dollars in the TYP period, mainly for work with OERs.

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[15] There is a consensus that development benefits from long-term engagement by partners – although not necessarily continuously.

264. Although COL's reputation with bilateral ODA agencies has improved since 2006, there is still a mutual lack of understanding in some areas such as ways of working and accountability. COL may have to spend more time in dialogue with them. This may not necessarily be with COL's customary contacts.

265. An innovation in this plan period was the establishment in 2006 of COL's Focal Points. They are designed to make COL's relationship with each Commonwealth member state more systematic and interactive. Each minister of education was requested to nominate a Focal Point who would be COL's primary contact in a particular country.

266. Among other things, the Focal Points are expected to
- give feedback on COL's work and propose new interventions
- have a co-ordination role among different ministries and institutions in their country where COL works or proposes to work.

267. There is a consensus among informants that this system is working well for COL. It is certainly a streamlined way of obtaining feedback and ideas for the future. How much it is valued by the member countries is not known other than anecdotally. However, the fact that almost every member country has nominated a Focal Point is probably a reflection of the anticipated value, as well as of COL's credibility.

268. So that COL and the Focal Points sing from the same songbook, COL has created 3-year Country Action Plans – in combination, the most comprehensive exposition of their work available. The plans, which also provide for annual progress reporting by COL, seem to have been received positively by member countries. It is important that, in the future, they benefit from improvements in COL's approach to programme planning – including increased partner participation.

COL's staff

269. There is universal praise among informants for COL's staff throughout the organisation. They are seen as intelligent, committed and hard-working.

270. COL's ES cadre has wide and deep knowledge and understanding of ODL, including both new and conventional approaches and technologies. They understand developing country needs and perspectives. As one informant put it: "they don't fall into the donor trap of seeing things from a first world perspective".

271. Because most of COL ESs are "vertically integrated" in their given field – such as Teacher Education - they are required to work at the levels of policy, systems and applications. This is a demanding requirement. Not all COL staff are recruited with this combination of experience already behind them. COL may need to have a more hands-on approach to staff development to ensure that all ESs can press all the buttons as soon as possible.

272. There is high inter-dependency among COL staff, particularly between COL's ESs and their Programme Assistants (PAs). The latter's responsibilities have grown in the last 3 years, with for example the management of extra budgetary contracts. The responsibilities will probably increase if COL introduces a more thorough approach to programme performance management. PAs will need to have their development needs and workloads carefully managed.

273. There has been considerable turnover among ESs. 7 out of 9 currently in post have been recruited since the beginning of the period. This was primarily the result of the introduction of the rotation policy in 2006. COL now has a rotation policy of 9 years maximum, with reviews every 3 years. This was a big break with the past

which created turbulence when it was introduced, but expectations are now in line with the policy.

274.   Loss of continuity among ESs was identified as a serious problem in the 2006 evaluation. COL asks a lot of its ESs. Their expertise, experience and networks determine both the content and the performance of COL's activities to a high degree. When an ES leaves, the momentum usually slackens in their Initiative. Even if the successor arrives immediately, they rarely come from the "same stable" and a period of learning and adjustment inevitably follows. This in many cases is a natural and healthy process of renewal. But the loss of continuity is still a problem. The high turnover among ESs in this TYP period created difficulties such as a marked under-spend in the budget for 2007-08.

275.   There may be no way to mitigate these difficulties, especially if staff leave unexpectedly. A suggestion from more than one informant is for COL to create a cadre of junior ESs who could combine the role of PA with some professional work. This would reduce the continuity problem. It would also provide potential career progression within the organisation. Despite the interdependency and the increasing level of responsibility of PAs, there is no career progression from within to the ES cadre.

276.   There have been changes in the individual performance management of ESs. The framework within which they work is better defined, and their performance is more tightly managed. The extent to which the framework is shaped by them varies, but at least this is a more transparent process and it is done in dialogue. There is a great deal of potential overlap between individual and organisational performance management. Expected programme results should be common to both. The development of logframes and better M&E will contribute to individual performance management as well. There should also be room in performance management for assessing and responding to development needs.

277.   Some Board members felt that COL was stretched at the top because of the need for external advocacy, partnership building, as well as strategic planning and management of programmes and other aspects of the organisation. A suggestion from one outside informant was for COL to create a panel of outside professionals to quality assure and moderate its programme planning, and contribute to thought leadership.

278.   COL has decided to group its Fellows, regular consultants and ODL experts into a network of advisors with a somewhat different value proposition. The plan is for them to be a sounding board for COL's future plans and an advisory resource for member states as well as COL, extending COL's reach. It is recommended that COL keeps an open mind about how best to use this group while monitoring what it contributes and how.

The Board

279.   The evaluation was not asked to assess the performance of the Board. However it is worth mentioning that some Board members expressed views about its own effectiveness. Several members said there was no consensus on what its role should be. Is it predominantly for accountability or should it have a role in creating strategy? If the latter role is to be enhanced, the Board would need for more and better analysis relating to programmes and contextual issues.

Conclusions

280.   There is no doubt that ODL is increasingly relevant to development. Its potential contribution to extending the reach of formal education is well understood, and needed more than ever. It has been shown – not least by COL – that ODL can deliver good quality in education.

281.   COL and others have shown that ODL can also deliver benefits in less formal learning contexts, for example in farming and other livelihood contexts. This may be COL's greatest contribution to development in the last 6 years. Up to now however, the challenges of scale in non-formal learning, especially in developing countries, have not been fully met.

280.   COL's theme is learning for development. It pursues this through support for ODL. COL is not the only player supporting ODL, and it is very small in comparison with most ODA agencies and many NGOs. However COL has shown that it is relevant to development because it has a unique combination of assets that enable it to perform a niche role close to governments and other important institutions, especially those of small states.

281.   While COL has potential relevance, its capacity to deliver this potential – its effectiveness - is only as strong as its ability to deliver quality, and leverage scale and sustainability through its work. The quality of COL's work is not in doubt. Scale and sustainability are COL's main challenges. COL cannot deliver these outcomes on its own – it depends on the right choice of partners. COL needs to include systematic assessment of partner readiness and capacity for scale and sustainability when considering new work.

282.   COL tends to work centrifugally, fanning out to serve the diverse needs of many countries and institutions. It is very difficult to combine this with the type of focus and accountability demanded by its governing Board. Focus matters because without it there is little chance of creating the critical mass and long-term engagement that are necessarily in most development processes. COL works best when it knows its partners and their contexts very well. This is difficult to achieve if it operates in several sectors.

283.   COL should not have expanded its terrain to include governance and gender for development without more thought about its ability to add value there. It was in danger of doing this in climate change, but has pulled back. It takes years to build up an understanding of the institutions and processes in a new sector, and COL doesn't have the luxury of time and resources to do this. There is more than enough work to do in education and livelihoods.

284.   Focus should be about choosing a small number of interventions in terrain that COL understands, and ensuring that enough resources are devoted to promote sustainable outcomes on a sufficient scale. COL should have larger and deeper footprints than in the past. But it should not abandon innovation and all small scale work. Rather it should pursue innovation and small scale interventions either in ways that complement larger scale, more established work, or with strategies for upscaling within 2-3 years. COL should consider making media work entirely a complementary activity rather than separate Initiatives.

285.   The L3F Initiative shows that, where COL incubates new approaches, it needs to have better strategies for dissemination and advocacy. Publicity is not enough.

286.   The VUSSC Initiative appears to be successfully finessing the dual dilemmas of wide reach versus focus, and innovation versus established work. It is too early to be confident that it will achieve sustainable outcomes, but if future evidence shows that it does, the model may be transferable to other contexts – perhaps to networks of medium-sized states.

287.   COL and many of its partners are confident about the ability of OERs to overcome the scale dilemma through their universal accessibility. OERs also have great potential to provide quality through their adaptability to local contexts and needs. Many outsiders however need convincing that there is sufficient institutional capacity in the developing world at present to properly harness OERs. They fear that effective take-up will remain in the hands of a small minority of relatively privileged institutions for several years to come. This may be based on misunderstandings – if so COL has a major communications job to do.

288.   COL has undershot its performance targets in a number of cases. This is partly due to faulty target-setting. Taking targets into consideration but also other factors, the areas where COL most needs to re-appraise its work are national ODL policy promotion and ODL for non-farming livelihoods. There are other areas which are appropriately receiving attention: the reach of L3F; COL's approach to media work; governance and gender for development generally; the future arrangements for SADC-CDE; work with OERs once COL ceases to have hands-on responsibility for WikiEducator.

289.   In other areas COL's work seems to be on the right trajectory, and the evaluation has no significant recommendations for change. This includes the e-LIO programme. In several Initiatives, the ESs responsible are relatively new and are still developing their own momentum.

290.   It is somewhat invidious to commend particular Initiatives, because they work in different ways, with different timelines. However two observations are important for learning purposes. VUSSC seems to be a programme with intelligent design. It demonstrates the value of careful, collaborative planning and preparation (just as L3F did in the previous TYP period). The WikiEducator Initiative has delivered large numbers of outputs in the form of people trained and networking, demonstrating the potential of virtual services in certain contexts.

291.   This evaluation has had a special focus on the programme cycle. There have been distinct improvements since 2003 and more since 2006. COL's TYP process is highly participative. COL has defined its outputs and outcomes at the corporate level and has begun to work with performance indicators and targets. Evaluation is used systematically.

292.   More needs to be done.
   - COL's logic model needs to have explicit links between outputs, outcomes and indicators.
   - Performance indicators need to have owners.
   - Targeting should be evidence-based and more thoughtful.
   - There should be a consistent and more meaningful process of ex-ante activity appraisal.
   - COL needs to introduce logframes at the Initiative level and possibly below, with well-designed monitoring aligned with the corporate indicators. Monitoring should be implemented and sustained.
   - COL should try to systematically and pro-actively capture qualitative evidence of outcomes from its work both for evaluation and communication.

- There should be a periodic – probably triennial – independent survey of stakeholders to track their views about, among other things, the quality of COL's work, and the value COL delivers for them in terms of process, outputs and outcomes. The survey would be a source for at least one corporate performance indicator.
- The learning part of the programme cycle needs to be strengthened both within Initiatives and across the organisation.

293.   COL has worked more strategically with international partners such as other Commonwealth bodies, World Bank and UNESCO. It may need to engage more with bilateral ODA agencies.

294.   The new system of Focal Points promises to deliver value for COL. The proposed stakeholder survey should inform COL what value the system delivers for member states.

295.   Some of the dialogue with international bodies – and private foundations - has led to additional contributions to COL's budget. COL's policy now is to pursue these contributions only for work in line with its strategic priorities. This seems to be working in practice.

296.   An unresolved staffing issue for COL is the loss of continuity and momentum when ES's leave. A solution may lie in a change in staffing structure. The turbulence created by the introduction of rotation early in the TYP has all but disappeared. Individual performance management is tighter than before. Staff development may need to be more hands-on for new ESs.

Annex A

Recommendations from the 2009 Evaluation of COL

1. COL's biggest challenges are scale and sustainability. It should focus on these outcomes in the new TYP period.

2. COL cannot deliver scale and sustainability on its own – it depends on the right choice of partners. COL needs to include systematic assessment of partner readiness and capacity for scale and sustainability when considering new work.

3. There is still low awareness of the role that ODL can play in informal learning for livelihoods. It needs powerful, evidence-based advocacy. COL cannot do this on its own. It should seek more help from partners in this process.

4. COL's decision to focus on fewer sectors and Initiatives is appropriate. It should only expand its scope if it has strong links with institutions in the new terrain.

5. Focus is also about choosing a smaller number of interventions and ensuring that enough resources are devoted to promote sustainable outcomes on a sufficient scale. This should involve longer-term planning with partners.

6. COL should not abandon innovation and small scale work altogether. Rather it should pursue innovation and small scale interventions either in ways that complement larger scale, more established work, or with strategies for up-scaling within 2-3 years. COL should consider making media work entirely a complementary activity rather than as separate Initiatives.

7. The areas where COL most needs to re-appraise its work are national ODL policy promotion, and ODL for non-farming livelihoods.

8. Other areas that need attention are: the reach of L3F; COL's approach to media work; governance and gender for development generally; the future arrangements for SADC-CDE; work with OERs once COL ceases to have hands-on responsibility for WikiEducator.

9. COL may have to spend more time in dialogue with ODA agencies. This may not necessarily be with COL's customary contacts. It is recommended that COL involves the Board in a discussion about its direct involvement in development debates.

10. COL should try to find a solution to the loss of continuity and momentum when ESs leave.

11. COL needs to make its planning, monitoring and evaluation processes more transparent for key stakeholders.

12. Elements of COL's RBM system and programme cycle needs to be improved.
    - COL's logic model needs to have explicit links between outputs, outcomes and indicators.
    - Performance indicators need to have owners.
    - Targeting should be evidence-based and more thoughtful.
    - COL should consider introducing corporate performance indicators to non-Sector work.

- There should be a consistent and more meaningful process of ex-ante activity appraisal.
- COL needs to introduce logframes at the Initiative level and possibly below, with well-designed monitoring aligned with the corporate indicators. Monitoring should be implemented and sustained.
- COL's logframes and the corresponding M&E should be designed with the participation of stakeholders where practicable.
- COL should try to systematically and pro-actively capture qualitative evidence of outcomes from its work both for evaluation and communication.
- There should be a periodic – probably triennial – independent survey of stakeholders to track their views about, among other things, the quality of COL's work, and the value COL delivers for them in terms of process, outputs and outcomes. The survey would be a source for at least one corporate performance indicator.
- The learning part of the programme cycle needs to be strengthened both within Initiatives and across the organisation.

Annex B

Recommendations from the 2006 Evaluation of COL

Relevance

1. COL should ensure that the work of its technology specialists is sufficiently integrated with that of other COL staff.

2. COL needs to be clear about why it is working in any sector and not let its programmes be determined solely by the expertise and job designation of its specialists. It needs to appraise its proposed initiatives thoroughly in the light of their potential impact on development priorities. If this appraisal process leads it to continue to work in a sector, COL needs to present the arguments to its stakeholders through this prism.

3. COL should pursue opportunities to partner donors and governments in receipt of donor funding in the planning, and in some cases implementation, of capacity-building involving ODL.

4. COL needs to be more rigorous in its marketing planning for the materials – both reference and instructional - that it proposes to produce.

5. ICT for learning is a dynamic field with large interests – public donor and private sector – in play. COL needs regularly to review what its niches are in this field if it is to add sufficient value.

6. As with all aspects of COL's work, its further transition to non-education sectors must be accompanied by systematic research and better monitoring and evaluation of initiatives once they are implemented.

7. The planning and management of the L3 Farmers initiative should be seen as a good model for COL's more substantial interventions.

8. There are several factors that need to be built into the appraisal process, the most important of which should be <u>need</u>. All other things being equal, it should concentrate its efforts where the latent potential of ODL to enable development is greatest, for example in many sub-Saharan African countries. However, all other things are never equal and factors such as implementability and sustainability must enter the equation. COL also has to balance to some extent the interests of all Commonwealth countries. This is a very difficult balance to strike. COL's approach to this would benefit from being more systematic.

9. The boundaries of ODL are becoming less distinct. It may in the future be inappropriate to talk in terms of "ODL solutions". COL should bear this in mind in how it defines itself and approaches its challenges.

Resourcing and internal processes

10. The consequences of donor disenchantment are so serious for COL that it should try to find a way of communicating more effectively with relevant people in these organizations.

11. COL needs to improve the way it presents the value it creates. It needs coherent, relevant and evidence-based narrative reporting.

12. COL has not had a sufficiently strategic approach to attracting non-core funding in the 2003-06 period and should develop one for the next planning period.

13. If the overall balance of inputs, outputs and outcomes are to be compared from one COL initiative to another – or for benchmarking with other similar agencies - it will be necessary to find a practicable way of estimating partner inputs.

14. The succession process for specialist staff needs to be managed pro-actively if the benefits of the predecessors' initiatives are to be consolidated and not put at risk.

15. COL has recently introduced individual performance management based to some extent on operational performance indicators. This is an important development that needs to be regularly reviewed and adapted in the light of feedback and other experience. COL staff need direction through hands-on performance management to help them to more actively pursue new agendas. New staff need it to help them orientate to this unusual organization.

16. COL's strategy should inform staffing policy, rather than the staffing profile dictate the shape of COL's programmes.

17. The new three year plan should be more prescriptive, should genuinely contain fewer initiatives – not just aggregate them in larger packages. It would be helpful if it said what COL will cease to do as well as what it will focus on.

18. Although COL will need to continue to be aware of the "levels" dimension to its work, the lead dimension in the new planning period should preferably be outcomes-based, with close links to the MDGs. It needs to be transparent to staff and outsiders.

19. There needs to be more consistency in the application of teamwork. Some staff work in a more collegiate manner than others. COL's reward and recognition system should be used to foster appropriate teamwork.

20. COL should find a way of systematically capturing, collating and presenting credible narrative and other qualitative material about its performance.

21. COL's plans should contain clear programme logic. They need to explain how the various interventions hang together, how for each intervention the inputs are expected to lead to outputs, and how the outputs are expected to achieve both short and medium term outcomes.

22. More thinking should go into COL's M&E system and processes if the forthcoming training is to be really useful.

23. If key stakeholders are to become confident in the RBM system, it is important that COL provides tangible examples of its benefits.

24. There needs to be more systematic sharing of knowledge within COL. Its staff are still too atomised, despite the benefits of the RBM approach. There need to be regular small group events where learning is pooled in a more engaged way, feeding into a continuously evolving strategy process.

25. COL needs to continue with a programme director role which will oversee the new plan's implementation.

COL's programmes – how they work

26. To maximise the advantages of regular dialogue and close relations with partners, some form of structure and defined partnership process is needed.

27. Having a regionally-based resource and a "one-stop shop" for partners has worked well in the Pacific and the decision to phase out these arrangements elsewhere should be revisited.

28. COL needs to establish and maintain meaningful contact with key individuals within the main agencies. Several informants in the World Bank, for example, feel that they know very little about COL and that it would be helpful if a roundtable exchange were set up, followed by more regular dialogue.

29. COL needs to monitor and internalise shifts in aid thinking and strategy at agency and country level. This also implies a closer relationship with key development agencies, both national and multi-lateral.

30. The approaches to key development agencies should not be focused only on getting work from them. They should be about establishing regular knowledge exchange, both through multilateral forums and bi-lateral dialogue. Knowledge should flow in both directions. COL should not underestimate its own knowledge assets. It needs to be involved proportionately in global sector debates in education, and even in other sectors where it aspires to add significant value.

31. COL does not at present have an active gender policy and consistent processes. It is aware of this and intends to develop one. This should be speeded up.

32. COL needs to do more planned, well-timed, follow-up such as might have led to faster or more widespread positive outcomes in the case of the 2004 Kenya national ODL forum or the e-learning workshops.

33. There is a consensus among key outside informants that concentrated effort, if carefully targeted, is something COL should do more of. This evaluation endorses it, although it should be a gradual, managed process and carefully monitored. Concentration need not imply work with many fewer institutions or countries. It may mean focus on fewer processes or issues, such as quality in ODL or poverty reduction, with wide application.

34. A bigger footprint need not imply a move to full project mode in all cases. The MOU can be an appropriate form of road map. A well-designed MOU gives both sides a common vision and understanding of the collaboration, while leaving them the flexibility that is often necessary in a long-term relationship. COL and its partners need to build in appropriate work plans and monitoring and evaluation to their MOUs, to a greater degree than the ones seen in this evaluation.

35. The exit strategy for each of the African regional centres of expertise should be front-of-mind over the next three years.

36. The decision has been taken to integrate CEMCA more closely with COL. In this case, a more purposeful transformation strategy should be worked out and implemented.

37. With fewer donor-funded projects in education, now is not a good time for COL to attempt to acquire critical mass expertise in donor-funded project pursuit.

38. Most key informants believe that COL should either withdraw from donor-funded projects altogether or only get involved where it can perform the role of strategic adviser. This evaluation inclines to the second view and in fact encourages COL to become involved as a strategic partner.

39. COL should continue to explore private foundations as a source of non-core funding.

40. There is a consensus, endorsed by this evaluation, that where COL is involved in policy, it should ideally also be involved in advising on policy implementation. This implies more use of a vertical integration approach than at present with more detailed planning, more teamwork and a larger footprint.

41. The model most likely to prove fruitful at the policy/strategy level, *prima facie*, is that of strategic adviser to governments seeking to
    - frame and implement ODL policies
    - introduce ODL within other policies
    - implement new ODL systems or major applications.

    Where donors and other outside agencies are involved, COL should seek the role of intermediary, helping both sides to maximise the value from the development partnership. This role would be incompatible with COL as a competitor for donor-funded work.

42. To represent value for money, COL's contributions at the lower levels should be designed to lead to take-up by others - not just sustainability - preferably on a self-replicating or cascading scale.

43. There may be other scenarios where COL's work at the level of applications could be justified, but the rationale for the application, and the programme logic should be worked out and articulated in advance, not left to chance. The sustainability of applications, once they are up and running, should not be COL's responsibility. Regular use of COL specialist staff time to maintain applications is difficult to justify.

44. COL needs to be thorough in its appraisal of initiatives - against agreed and well understood criteria - before getting involved. This applies both to products like teaching materials, and services like advice, training and consultancy.

45. The intervention criteria in COL's 2003-06 plan should be revisited and updated regularly in the light of COL's experience and of current development thinking - and applied more systematically.

COL's programmes - outputs and outcomes

46. On-line networking is an area that COL should consider developing for its communities, although the resources and expertise that are needed are considerable and planning is paramount.

47. COL should ensure that it does not pursue initiatives without adequate buy-in from key stakeholders.

48. COL should concentrate resources on an institution, as in the NIOS example, not just to enhance that institution's capacity for its own clientele but also to mobilize the institution in capacity-building elsewhere in the country and beyond.

49. COL should follow through with activity designed to help institutions make use of materials produced in partnership with COL.

50. Capacity-building for dual mode seems to be a particularly fruitful area for COL, where its expertise and experience can make a significant contribution, with potential multiplier effects.

51. COL is doing less competency enhancement outside an institutional or programme framework than it used to. As it has little evidence that the more dispersed approach works, this is probably right. There is a risk however that, if COL concentrates too much on a limited number of institutions or programmes, opportunities will be missed. COL should retain some capacity for wider competency building. But it should do this in a strategic framework with planned M&E and follow up. This is both to ensure that it produces positive outcomes and also to spot and build on encouraging developments such as the one at JKUAT.

52. Network creation and enhancement is an area that would benefit from an overall evaluation by COL to identify good practice not just for COL but wider audiences.

Appendix 1

Acknowledgments

Evaluating COL in 2008-09 was not as challenging as in 2005-06 because I had a more informed picture of ODL and of COL, as a result of that earlier experience. Nevertheless the cooperation and support of many people helped to make it a feasible and interesting exercise.

COL's Vice-President, Asha Kanwar created the vision for the evaluation and ensured that it stayed on track and had the resources it needed.

Lydia Meister was meticulous and responsive in the administration of the evaluation.

Other COL staff gave generously of their time to complete questionnaires, provide monitoring information, take part in one-to-one interviews and group discussions, and helped to test approaches to logframes.

Former COL staff gave valuable hindsights to their work and COL in general.

The independent evaluators were cooperative to a woman and man in agreeing to have their methodologies, findings and conclusions rigorously probed in lengthy phone conversations.

Most Board members and advisers either tackled a lengthy questionnaire or engaged in real-time discussion with great commitment.

Appendix 2

Terms of reference

The External Evaluation of the 2006-2009 Commonwealth of Learning Strategic Plan

The Project and what it has set out to achieve.

1. The Commonwealth of Learning commenced its current Three Year Plan, *Learning for Development* in July 2006. It will be completed on June 30, 2009.

2. The plan, set within a Results Based Management framework, aims to achieve developmental impact through open and distance learning methodologies. Overall corporate objective, short and medium term outputs and outcomes and a long term impact statement were set. This is replicated at the programme level, of which there are three sectors, and the 15 initiatives which fall within them. Performance Indicators were framed in the COL Corporate Logic Model indicated in the current plan.

The reasons for the evaluation and the key questions that the Consultant should answer.

3. It is now necessary, in the final year of the plan, to evaluate it against the objectives set at the start of the plan and provide a report to the Board of Governors. The overall purpose of the evaluation is to ascertain what difference COL has made over the past two years, moving into the third and final consolidation year. The evaluation should consider both the strategy and the activities at the initiative level. An 'evidenced-based' assessment of short/medium term outcomes is needed with both quantitative and qualitative data. Longer term impacts may be more difficult to ascertain for initiatives of less than five years duration, but should be done where possible, and an impact assessment plan written with a timetable for evaluations where it is not possible to assess impact at this stage.

4. The evaluation should be guided by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee's international criteria of Relevance; Effectiveness; Efficiency; Impact; and Sustainability.

5. The three key questions that the evaluation should answer are:
• To what extent has the Commonwealth of Learning made a difference in the life of its current Three Year Plan?
• What lessons can COL, its Board of Governors and partners, take from the operation of the plan into future planning periods?
• How appropriate are the three strategic sectors, Education, Learning for Livelihoods and Human Environment in realising the aims of the current Three Year Plan?

Who the main client and interested stakeholders are.

6. The main client for the evaluation is COL and its Board of Governors. Interested stakeholders are the 52 Commonwealth countries and those with whom COL works. It would be necessary to consult with Board members and the DFID Evaluation Department to ascertain their views on the evaluation.

The context in which the evaluation is taking place.

7. The over-arching context is the progress that the international development community is making towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. COL works

with Commonwealth government to help them achieve their MDG goals. COL also considers Commonwealth priorities when committing resources. These are the goals of partner governments which may lie outside the scope of the MDGs, although essentially most development effort can be read through the MDGs. COL's particular context is that Commonwealth governments may use the evaluation report to decide if and at what level they will fund COL in its new plan.

A rough guide to the tasks to be completed and the schedule.

8. The evaluation should consider both the strategy and the activities at the initiative level. In preparation for this latter examination, COL has conducted evaluations of key activities in eleven of the 15 initiatives. In some instances, more than one activity has been evaluated within an initiative. It is envisaged that the evaluation strategy will consider COL's work over the life of the plan through the evaluations presently being conducted.

9. There has been constant monitoring over the life of the plan, reported in two Board papers (June 2007 and June 2008) and through quarterly reports supplied by the President. There is a wealth of data contained in these reports on how the plan is progressing.

10. It is envisaged that the methodology would employ a desk study of the data produced by the initiatives; and interviews with the key stakeholders and COL staff. The main sources of data for the evaluation will be:
• External evaluations at the Initiative level;
• Phone interviews with external evaluators;
• Phone interviews with key partners;
• Relevant internal monitoring data where it exists;
• Internal reports, such as the President's quarterly reports to the Board;
• Interviews, where possible face-to-face, with COL staff; and
• Interviews with selected Board members.

What the outputs from the evaluation may be and when they are due with specific dates if the report is required for a particular meeting.

11. A report to the Board will need to leave COL by April 30, 2009 for the Board meeting to be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A draft interim report should be made available by November 15, 2008 in order that it may be used when drafting the new strategic plan, 2009-2012. Work on the evaluation should continue in the New Year until the final report is completed. There will be monthly progress reports submitted in writing to COL and supplemented by either face-to-face meetings or telecoms from August 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009.

Information about the size and format of the report

12. The report should be no more than 40 pages plus appendices in length. It should contain both quantitative and qualitative evidence of short/medium and long term outputs/outcomes/impact in an easily read and digestible form. The findings could be presented as a table, thus:

Programme	Initiative	Short Term Output/Outcomes	Medium Term Output/Outcomes	Long Term Impact

Name and contact details of the Evaluation manager and reporting requirements during the evaluation and whom the report should be sent to.

13. The Evaluation manager is Professor Asha Kanwar, Vice President and Programme Director, Commonwealth of Learning, Suite 1200, 1055 West Hastings Street, Vancouver BC V6E 2E9 Canada: akanwar@col.org. The contract manager is Lydia Meister, Programme Coordinator, Commonwealth of Learning.

14. There will be monthly progress reports, starting end August 2008 through to end December 2008. This will be in the form of a written report, to be agreed between the manager and the Consultant, a teleconference or face-to-face meeting. The final report should be sent to Sir John Daniel, President and CEO, Commonwealth of Learning.

Appendix 3

People consulted

COL STAFF	
Ameresekere, Ruvani	Programme Assistant
Askounis, Helen	KM Coordinator
Balasubramanian, Dr K	ES, Food Security and Environment
Clarke-Okah, Dr Willie	ES, Higher Education and Policy Development
Daniel, Sir John	President and CEO
Fehr, Helen	Board Secretary and Gender Officer
Ferreira, Frances	ES, Basic Education and Open Schooling
Kanwar, Dr Asha	Vice President and Programme Director
Karlsbjerg, Kari	Programme Assistant
Kwan, Angela	Learning Manager, International Organisations
Lesperance, John	ES, VUSSC
Li, May	Programme Assistant
Mackintosh, Wayne	ES, eLearning and ICT Policy
Mallet, Josh	ES, Literacy and Livelihoods
McEachern, Doris	Director, Finance, Administration and Human Resources
Meister, Lydia	Programme Coordinator
Munro, Dr Tanyss	ES, Governance
Pringle, Ian	ES, Media
Schlicht, Patricia	Programme Assistant
Sreedher, Dr R	Director CEMCA
Tereault, Christie	Course Coordinator, International Organisations
Umar, Dr Abdurrahman	ES, Teacher Education
Walker, Carol	Programme Assistant
West, Paul	Director, KM and IT
Wilson, Dave	Communications Manager

FORMER COL STAFF	
Alluri, Dr Krishna	Former ES
Lentell, Helen	Former ES
Phillips, Susan	Former ES
Tyrer, Rod	Former Programme Director
Walker, David	Former ES
COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS AND ADVISERS	
Chong, Denise	Writer, Ottawa, Canada
Glennie, Jennifer	Director, South African Institute for Distance Education, Johannesburg
Griggs, Laura	Senior Analyst, CIDA, Ottawa, Canada
Kaluba, Dr Henry	Adviser and Head, Education Section, Commonwealth Secretariat, London, UK
Levesque, Dr David	Senior Education Adviser, DFID, London, UK
Omolewa, H E Prof Michael	Ambassador/Head, Permanent Delegation of Nigeria to UNESCO, Paris, France
Sissons, Dr Linda	CEO, Wellington Institute of Technology, New Zealand
Smith, Ransford	Deputy Secretary-General, Commonwealth Secretariat, London, UK
Tarrant, Professor John	Secretary General, Association of Commonwealth Universities, London, UK
Whiteman, HE the Honourable Burchell	High Commissioner, Jamaica High Commission, London, UK
OTHER INFORMANTS	
Alsop, Terry	Education Consultant, Cambridge, UK
Deshmukh, Prof M. N.	Member-Secretary, I-CONSENT, Mumbai, India
Dunlop, Dr Cathie	Director, Research and Evaluation Unit, Continuing Studies, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada
Farrell, Dr Glen	Consultant, Vancouver, Canada.
Fentiman, Dr Alicia	Research Fellow, Von Hugel Institute, Cambridge, UK
Fugere, Dr Robert	Consultant, Toronto, Canada

Harrison, Dr Myra	Education Adviser, NZAID
Hendrikz, Dr Johan	Manager, Unit for Distance Education, University of Pretoria, South Africa
Janakiram, Dr. Jana	Associate Professor, School of Environmental Design & Rural Development, University of Guelph, Canada
Junaid, Prof Muhammad Ibn	Executive Secretary, National Commission for Colleges of Education, Abuja, Nigeria
MacDonald, Andrea	Executive Director, Nova Scotia - Gambia Association, Halifax, Canada
McGreal, Dr Rory	Associate Vice-President, Research Centre, Athabasca University, Canada
Murugan, Prof K	Director Student Support Services, Tamil Nadu Open University, India
Siaciwena, Prof Richard	Coordinator (Research and Evaluation), Directorate of Distance Education, University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia
Swarup, Prof Smriti	Former Director, Department of Special Education, Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University, Mumbai, India

Appendix 4

Main materials consulted

COL documents

"Learning for Development" - COL Three-Year Plan 2006-09

Cumulative Progress Reports on COL 2006-09 Plan: July-December 2006 and July 2006 to December 2007

Report on Sector outputs July 2006 to October 2008

Quarterly Sector activity reports

President's quarterly reports to the Board

Country Action Plans and reports

COL Website content and user statistics

Minutes of Board meetings and retreat

Education Specialists' handover notes

Internal assessment of COL's Media Empowerment programme, September 2008

Report of RETRIDAL Program Monitoring Trip, May 2008

Transnational Qualifications Framework for VUSSC, concept document, May 2008

VUSSC Business Plan

WikiEducator Status Reports

COL *Connections* 2006-2008

Independent evaluations reports

Quality Assurance in Teacher Education - Dr. Smriti Swarup, August 2008.

Capacity Building at Centre for Environment Education, Ahmadabad, India - Prof M N Deshmukh, August 2008.

Capacity Building at National Teachers Institute, Kaduna, Nigeria – Prof. M. I. Junaid, September 2008.

Capacity Development at the Bangladesh Open School – Dr Alicia Fentiman and Terry Alsop, August 2008.

Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education – Dr Johan Hendrikz, June 2008.

Special Diploma in TVET in partnership with the University of Technology, Jamaica – Prof. K. Murugan, September 2008.

Lifelong Learning for Farmers in Tamil Nadu – Dr Jana Janakiram, September 2008.

VUSSC Interim Report and M&E Update – Dr Cathie Dunlop, June and September 2008

The e-Learning for International Organisations programme – Dr Rory McGreal, August 2008.

Review of the programme *Achieving Community Health through Youth Development and Leadership*, Nova Scotia Gambia Association (supported by COL's Media Empowerment work) – Joan Baxter, October 2007.

Climate Change and Water Resources Management pilot in Western Kenya – Dr Robert Fugere, September 2008.

COL's work in Mozambique – Dr Richard Siaciwena, June 2008.

Other publications and materials

The Commonwealth – the Way Forward, Kamalesh Sharma, Speech to the Royal Commonwealth Society, London, 2 October 2008

Aid Effectiveness, a Progress Report on Implementing the Paris Declaration Working Party on Aid Effectiveness for the Third High-Level Forum, Accra, Ghana September 2008

Survey of ICT and Education in Africa: A Summary Report, Glen Farrell, and Shafika Isaacs, World Bank, Washington DC, 2007

Open Educational Resources, the Way Forward, Susan D'Antoni, International Institute for Educational Planning UNESCO, Paris, 2008

Open Schooling for Secondary & Higher Secondary Education: Costs and Effectiveness in India and Namibia, Greville Rumble and Badri N Koul, COL, Vancouver, 2007.

MDGs and the Environment: Agenda for Inclusive and Sustainable Development. World Bank Global Monitoring Report 2008.

Education for a Digital World: Advice, Guidelines, and Effective Practice from Around the Globe. Dr. D.G. Harper, BCcampus and Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver, 2008.

Appendix 5

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AC	Additional contribution
BOU	Bangladesh Open University
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education
CEE	Centre for Environment Education
CEMCA	Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
DFID	Department for International Development
eLIO	e-Learning for International Organisations
ES	Education Specialist
HE	Higher education
I-CONSENT	Indian Consortium for Educational Transformation
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IISc	Indian Institute of Science
IRC	Information Resource Centre
JKUAT	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology
JSE	Junior Secondary Education
KM	Knowledge Management
L3F	Lifelong Learning for Farmers
L4C	Learning for Content
MATE	Master in Teacher Education
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-government organization
NIOS	National Institute for Open Schooling
NTI	National Teachers Institute
ODA	Official development assistance
ODL	Open and distance learning/education
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OER	Open educational resources
PA	Programme Assistant
PATVET	Pacific Association for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
PCF	Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning
PNG	Papua New Guinea
QA	Quality assurance
RBM	Results based management
RETRIDAL	Regional Training and Research Institute for Open and Distance Learning
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADC-CDE	Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
Tech-MODE	Technology-mediated open and distance learning
TESSA	Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa
ToRs	Terms of reference
TVET	Technical/Vocational Education and Training
TYP	Three Year Plan
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
VUSSC	Virtual University for the Small States of the Commonwealth
WHO	World Health Organization