



BARBADOS

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1.0 BACKGROUND

Barbados is a small state of the Commonwealth and the most eastern of the Caribbean islands. It has a population of approximately 275,000 and its size is 431 square kilometres. Barbados ranks high among Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) countries in terms of social and economic indicators. Barbados is one of thirty-two states of the Commonwealth and it has contributed to COL's budget since 2005 and takes an active role in COL's regional activities.

1.1 Strategic Cooperation and Technical Assistance to Barbados

The current theme of COL's Three-Year Plan remains "Learning for Development". This plan extends to 2015, and remains focused on the Education for All (EFA) goals and the Commonwealth priorities of peace, democracy, equality and the rule of law as its framework for action. The recommendations elaborated in this document are in sync with the three strategic goals delineated by COL and are intended to inform the education and training priorities that COL can support in the next Three-Year Plan 2015-2018. More specifically, the areas of focus will be drawn from COL's categories of Open Schooling and Online Learning, Teacher Education, Higher Education, VUSSC and TVET Development.

2.0 HOW BARBADOS HAS BENEFITTED/WHAT COL HAS DONE

- Barbados has benefitted through the provision of a regional forum in which to explore the potential benefits of harnessing OER and policy frameworks that allowed the various Ministries to leverage these advantages.
- Through discussions, social media networks and panel presentations there has been a widening of educational access through ODL, bridging the digital divide and the application of advances in connecting technology to teaching and learning for development.
- Capacity building and the creation of a mechanism has enabled the transfer of credits and qualified people across borders of countries through the creation of an accreditation mechanism. The Barbados Accreditation Council is currently developing a National Qualification Framework (NQF). The (NQF) can be referenced to the Transnational Qualification Framework (TQF) developed by COL.
- Through the creation of the Commonwealth Certificate of Teacher ICT Integration (CCTI).

- Barbados also benefited from its involvement in several key COL programmes including the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), the Microsoft “Partners in Learning” initiative and support for open schooling. Barbados participates in regional workshops and attends COL Regional Focal Points meetings.

3.0 EDUCATION AND TRAINING PRIORITIES THAT COL CAN SUPPORT IN THE NEXT THREE-YEAR PLAN (2015-2018)

- Developing and promoting a research culture among teachers and students using generic IT solutions to encourage the development of indigenous materials for use in education.
- Developing course materials that could be suitably adapted for the use of students with special needs and at-risk students.
- Streaming and standardising courses to enhance relevance and allow for programme accreditation.
- Developing a renewable cadre of skilled specialists in technology and the corresponding redressing of the digital divide through infrastructural development.
- Establishing strategic alliances with other institutions and sectors both locally and internationally for the purposes of information/resource sharing, collaborative course development and delivery, articulation and credit transfer.

4.0 SPECIFIC AREAS TO BE TARGETED IN THE NEXT THREE-YEAR PLAN (2015-2018)

4.1 Open Schooling for Marginalised Youth

When any groups are systematically excluded from meaningful participation and achieve below their levels of competence, they become both “marginalized” in their current school environments and economically and socially disadvantaged over their lifetimes.

***Technical Support:** A consultancy could be designed to provide an avenue for students to continue to receive accredited secondary school classes online. This could be through a portal that delivers instruction on-demand covering the complete syllabus for CXC subjects.*

4.2 Deviant and Violent Behaviour among Students (Bullying)

Based on statistics from the Ministry of Education’s Student Services Section, the numbers of at-risk students and students engaging in deviant behaviour has increased steadily over the past few years.

***Technical Support:** COL can work with Erdiston Teachers Training College to develop a short online course for teachers and caregivers to address issues relating to violent behaviour/bullying and conflict resolution.*

4.3 TVET Development

A growing shortage of skilled workers, combined with renewed interest in how to make education relevant to students who do not plan to continue on to university, has put the spotlight on technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Increasing access to TVET would serve the dual purpose of helping to keep more students in the education system while training them to fill the current gaps in the skilled worker sector. The big challenge is how to integrate TVET with academic/general education without compromising current academic/general education options. In Barbados, the option to integrate TVET using online capacity has only been quietly mooted.

***Technical Support:** A pilot study would look into how TVET offerings could be expanded and the impact maximised through the use of online facilities. The consultant would provide a look into the use of simulations to save cost and how the facility might also be blended to provide added support to existing programmes.*

4.4 Online Learning Support

In 2005 the Virtual Campus (Online Modality) was launched. This was a historic educational achievement for Barbados and the SJPP in particular. The online modality was to further expand access to tertiary education and promote lifelong learning.

***Technical Support:** A consultancy could be designed to review the work of the Centre after ten years of operation. The scope of the consultancy could cover an evaluation of the curriculum, operations, efficiency, technology utilisation and the best way forward.*

4.5 VUSSC and the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network (CKLN)

The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network (CKLN) have very similar objectives. The VUSSC mission is committed to the collaborative development of open content resources for education, training and capacity building, and the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) to broaden access to education. The mission of the CKLN is very similar with a goal of utilising the established broadband C@ribNET network to bring greater institutional capacity to the Regional tertiary campuses.

Technical Support: A consultancy could be designed to first engage the Regional campuses regarding stronger collaboration with VUSSC in collaboration with CKLN given the establishment of C@ribNET. This could start with support for mutually agreed upon content creation for the community colleges in the Caribbean.

4.6 Accreditation

The Barbados Accreditation Council was established in 2004 by an Act of Parliament and for almost ten years the Council has functioned as the arbiter of registration and re-registration of institutions offering post-secondary or tertiary education and training, and the accreditation and re-accreditation of programmes of studies and institutions in Barbados. Since the inception, the three institutions in question have tried to secure the initial registration to no avail.

Technical Support: COL could provide further consultancy assistance to the three institutions to assist them in completing the institutional self-study.

4.7 Institutional Policy Development

In order to meet the requirements for accreditation, the tertiary institutions in Barbados need to have in place a comprehensive set of policies and procedures that would allow for effective governance; allow for alignment with international standards; and allow for students, faculty and staff alike to enjoy a professional, productive, and pleasant existence during their tenure at the institution. The scope of the policy development work would include policy/procedure development in several areas of institutional life: these include but are not limited to; Academic Programmes, Academic Support, Administration and Operations.

Technical Support: To meet the requirements listed above, a COL consultant could review existing policies and policy frameworks of the institutions.

4.8 Climate Change Adaptation

Barbados' vulnerability as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) is well known but the adaptation measures needed to achieve resilience to the impacts of climate change on health are not as well-known. Pursuant to this endeavour, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is funding a pilot project entitled "Piloting Climate Change Adaptation to Protect Human Health" (PCCAPHH). This project is being piloted in seven countries worldwide, and Barbados is the only country in the Western Hemisphere chosen as part of this pilot project.

Technical Support: COL can partner with GEF to develop materials online to assist with the sensitization of students and staff at primary and secondary school.

Caribbean Regional Focal Points Meeting
Trinidad & Tobago
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