Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth

19CCEM Pre-Conference Meeting

Asha Kanwar & John Lesperance

Commonwealth of Learning
Commonwealth of Learning

WHAT IS IT FOR?

To help Commonwealth governments and institutions use various technologies to improve and expand education, training and learning in support of development.
Where is it?

Vancouver (Headquarters)

New Delhi (CEMCA)
COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING
Strategic Plan
2015–2021

Subject to approval by the Board of Governors of COL and endorsement by Commonwealth Ministers of Education
Learning for Sustainable Development

• Economic growth
• Social inclusion
• Environmental conservation
Leveraging New & Existing Technologies
Two Sectors

Education

Skills
## COL Programme

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Gender
The Virtual University for the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)
Ministerial concerns

- Lack of capacity in ICT
- Brain drain
- Inadequate access to tertiary education
- Uncertainty about meeting MDG & EFA goals
The Idea: a Virtual University for Small States

- Conference of Commonwealth Ministers of Education, Halifax, Canada 2000
- Presented and endorsed by Ministers of Education in 2003, at 15 CCEM, Edinburgh, Scotland
- The objective: to serve learners better
The Vision: VUSSC Must Be Unique

- Enable small states to be contributors as well as consumers
- Strengthen existing institutions
- A flexible model
- Enable delivery in different formats, and be adaptable to different technological environments
The Concept

▪ A network rather than an institution
▪ Strengthen the capacity of national education institutions and individuals
▪ Use online technologies
▪ Create and share Open Educational Resources
VUSSC: Connecting the Commonwealth
Current Management Committee

Asia and the Pacific
Emma Kruse Vaai, Samoa
Fawaz Shareef, Maldives

The Caribbean
Leon Higgs, The Bahamas
Karen Rosemin, Trinidad & Tobago

Africa and the Mediterranean
Ricaud Auckbur, Mauritius
Mamolete Mohapi, Lesotho
Incoming Management Committee

Asia and the Pacific
Rajesh Chandra, Fiji
George Maeltoka, Vanuatu

The Caribbean
Laurie King, Barbados
Pauleen Finlay, Grenada

Africa and the Mediterranean
Daniel Tau, Botswana
Heroldt Murangi, Namibia
What has the VUSSC achieved?

1. Professionals trained in ICT skills
2. Courses offered
3. Free Educational Resources (OER) developed

VUSSC Website and online Learning Management System in place
1. Professionals Trained in these Institutions

- National University of Samoa
- National University of Lesotho
- Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL)
- University of Swaziland
- Maldives College of Higher Education
- Fondazzjoni Temi Zammit, Malta
- University of Papua New Guinea
- Antigua State College
- Dominica State College
- University of Belize
- Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College, St. Kitts & Nevis
- College of The Bahamas
- University of Seychelles
- Namibian Open Learning Network
- Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, St. Lucia
- St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College
- St. Vincent and the Grenadines Teachers College
- University of Cyprus
- Polytechnic of Namibia
- University of Mauritius
- Seychelles Agricultural Agency
- Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, Barbados
- Seychelles Maritime Training Centre
- Vanuatu Institute of Technology
- Caribbean Maritime Institute
- Lesotho College of Education
- Maldives National University
- Tonga Institute of Higher Education
- Open University of Mauritius
VUSSC achievements

- Trained more than 53,000 people
- Enrolled more than 700 learners in VUSSC courses
2. Courses offered: 10 institutions in 8 countries

- National University of Samoa
- University of the West Indies (Open Campus)
- Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning
- Barbados Community College
- University of Seychelles
- Seychelles Tourism Academy
- Villa College Maldives
- Open University of Mauritius
- Mauritius Institute of Training
- Antigua State College
First Graduation

First cohort graduate after following a full-time Diploma in Sustainable Agriculture for Small States, Samoa
3. OER: 13 VUSSC Courses

- Sustainable Tourism
- Disaster Management
- Port Management - Stevedoring
- Sustainable Agriculture for Small States
- Bachelor in Business and Entrepreneurship
- Master in Educational Leadership
“People are no longer seeing themselves as totally responsible for developing a course from scratch. They understand collaborative development and see the benefit of using those shared materials. The benefits of OER have been realized”
Snow Ball Effect

Inspired by VUSSC, Marcia went on to do a Master’s degree in Curriculum, Instruction & Technology and became an OER advocate.

I think of it as the VUSSC Snowball Effect ...in the tropics. I remain grateful.

Marcia Musgrove
The Bahamas
“The workshop has motivated me to develop additional course materials for my own institution. The availability of the course template we’ve used is very helpful for compiling our own materials. The process of developing the courses for the Postgraduate Diploma in Education has refreshed my research skills and helped me realize that there is so much information out there and that our own students, not to mention us lecturers, need the opportunity to be exposed to it”.

Source: VUSSC 2014 M&E report
Impact of VUSSC on formal learners

Increased interest in the subjects taught: 100%
Grades improving: 90%
Gaining confidence: 91%
Increased independence and self-reliance: 92%
Increased experimentation with new ways of learning: 90%
Increased collaboration with peers: 80%
Being more likely to complete my course of study: 91%

Increased interest in the subjects taught
Indian formal learners: 80%
Indian formal learners: 72%
OpenLearn-using formal learners: 46%
OpenLearn-using formal learners: 36%
Indian formal learners: 65%
Indian formal learners: 65%
OpenLearn-using formal learners: 56%
OpenLearn-using formal learners: 56%
Indian formal learners: 92%
Indian formal learners: 79%
OpenLearn-using formal learners: 56%
OpenLearn-using formal learners: 56%
Indian formal learners: 90%
Indian formal learners: 86%
OpenLearn-using formal learners: 67%
OpenLearn-using formal learners: 67%
Indian formal learners: 91%
Indian formal learners: 64%
OpenLearn-using formal learners: 58%
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Development of a Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF)

- Recognition of small states qualifications
- Improve credit transfer and
- Promote learners’ mobility
Referencing of the TQF
Programmes Registered on TQF

- Diploma in Sustainable Agriculture for Small States
- Bachelor in Business Entrepreneurship (Honours)
- Bachelor in Business and Entrepreneurship
- Bachelor in Environmental Science
- Master in Educational Leadership
- Certificate in Tour Guiding
Vanuatu - Minister for Education and Training presenting Aptus to manager of national Tablet project
COMSEC-COL-UWI
Fostering Collaboration

- Repurposing the
  - Diploma in Youth Development Work
  - Degree in Youth Development Work
Pilot countries
- Seychelles
- Samoa

Proposed courses
- Instructional Design
- Curriculum development
- ICT for Educators
- Short professional courses
Impact Evaluators’ Recommendations

- **Strategic Engagement** - secure strategic commitment
- **Policy Commitment for ODL and OER** - policy commitment in each small state
- **Rethink Design, Development and Delivery** - key for sustaining momentum and TQF growth
- **Strengthen the sense of community** - systematic approach to alumni
Objectives

- Capacity building
- Content development
- TQF development

Key Questions

- What more needs to be done?
- How can VUSSC support your agenda of promoting ‘learning for sustainable development’?
THANK YOU