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Title: Quality of Learning Resources of Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration Programme: A Case of Bangladesh Open University

Sub-theme: QUALITY AND EQUITY IN LEARNING

Abstract

Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration (CEMBA) programme is a one of the prestigious programme in Bangladesh for making skilled professionals. For ensuring better learning engagements quality of learning resources plays a crucial role. This paper focuses on the quality of learning resources used in CEMBA Programme as per the learners' perceptions as well as the tutors' opinions. The paper also verifies the effectiveness of the learning resources in engaging the learners meaningfully. The paper finally sheds light on the scope of SDG integration into CEMBA courses.

1. Introduction

The qualities of learning resources are essential components for learners in order to drive a stimulating learning experience of the learner. For learning materials in any medium, the importance of clear, unbiased, and accurate content is often taken to be so obvious that the detrimental effects of poor content quality are rarely analyzed. Mikk (2002), however, explained the value of conducting empirical research to measure both content quality and the impact of its absence. While his work focused on the assessment of quality in textbooks, it is equally relevant to content quality in other learning materials, including multimedia learning resources.

With the fascinating inventions and growth of educational technologies, distance education is expanding everywhere in the world in response to the increasing demand for it. At the same time, the higher education institutions, both in developing and developed countries, are struggling with the question of how to ensure that students learning through ODL receive the same educational quality as traditional on-campus students, if not better? There are a number of views regarding the quality assurance in ODL. Some are frustrated about the quality of ODL programmes while others are optimistic about it. Many agencies and individuals are "frankly suspicious of distance education, believing that distance education programs have either low standards or no standards (Carnevale, February 18, 2000; Twigg, Quality, 2001, p. 3).

Poor or inadequate resources are the most discouraging aspect of the classroom ... the room was enclosed and there was no space to perform any activities other than general chalk and talk/teacher-centred strategies (Booth et al., 1998, pp. 3–4). To enhance the quality of education it is essential to improve the basic teaching materials and general school environment. Increasing access without ensuring the provision of quality teaching materials and a suitable learning environment will not improve our societies, as was pointed out by a special rapporteur of the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council, Mr Kishor Singh (2012).

Although there are different views about the quality assurance in ODL courses and the existing alien quality guidelines may not be appropriate in local context, there is no way to leave the question of quality assurance in ODL courses/institutions unsolved. The need to ensure quality of ODL courses even rocketed high as demand for the ODL courses like Commonwealth MBA (CEMBA) is growing very fast. CEMBA is a very high quality professional programs through open and distance education, recognized and accredited throughout the commonwealth. The commonwealth of learning and collaborating universities in Asia, i.e. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Bangladesh Open University (BOU), Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), and Sri Lanka Open University (OUSL), Sri Lanka are pleased to launch the CEMBA programme to be offered initially in South Asia and subsequently throughout the commonwealth. Launched in 2002, the CEMBA programme is now expanding through partnership with universities in Asia, Africa, The South Pacific and South America.

CEMBA is mostly dependent on printed study resources. The printed textbooks are developed and revised centrally under the auspicious of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). In terms of the quality of the contents, it is believed that these are of international standards. However, the quality of the resources depends on their ability to fit with the purpose of the learners. Context plays a very important role in defining the quality of content. Therefore, the need for a quality audit to assess whether CEMBA study resources fulfill the local needs or not.

This paper intends to shed light on the quality of learning resources used in CEMBA Programme as per the learners' perceptions as well as the tutors' opinions. The paper also verifies the effectiveness of the learning resources in

engaging the learners meaningfully. The paper briefly scrutinizes the scope of SDG integration into CEMBA courses too.

2. Objectives

The paper aims at auditing quality of the learning resources used in CEMBA program in terms of need orientation, learner engagement, SDG integration, and context focus. It explores the following aspects -

- The quality of the learning resources of CEMBA Program in terms of need orientation;
- How far the resources of CEMBA program engages the learners;
- Effectiveness of learner support system for CEMBA program;
- Status of SDG integration into CEMBA courses; and
- Strategies for further improvement of the CEMBA Program

3. Methodology

The paper uses mostly the primary data. A opinion survey was administered purposefully on the 50 learners, 5 tutors and 1 coordinator of the CEMBA program at Bangladesh Open University. A structured questionnaire has been used for data collection. For data analysis, statistical software called Strata has been used in the paper. Tabular analysis has been done aligned with the specified objectives.

4. Findings and Analysis

Learning materials must be evidence-based, objective driven, and designed to engage both today's students and teachers. Whether the products are print, digital, visual or web-based, it should meet the learning goals and addresses the different cultural backgrounds of today's students. A well-presented document can be a potent motivation for student learning.

4.1. Perceptions of the learners

4.1.1. Contents of learning resources

Contents of the learning resources play a crucial role in teaching learning. Especially, in ODL system, the quality of learning materials is very much important as the learners need to comprehend the concepts by themselves. Table 4.1.1 summarizes the learners' perceptions about the content of the CEMBA course materials.

Table 4.1.1: Learners' perception regarding the content of the learning resources

Questions	SA	A	ND	D	SD
The contents of the study materials help me to acquire the knowledge and fundamental principles.	51.43%	25.71%	17.14%	2.86%	2.86%
Activities in the course books are well structured and combine ideas to complete assignments.	25.71%	14.29%	22.86%	20.00%	17.14%
Language used in the course materials is lucid and understandable.	74.29%	11.43%	5.71%	5.71%	2.86%
The sequence and layout of the course books are attractive and gives comfortable reading.	34.29%	0.00%	28.75%	22.86%	2.86%
The course materials help to analyze or critically assures ideas, arguments for case studies.	40.00%	2.86%	34.29%	17.14%	5.71%

Strongly agree = SA, Agree = A, Neither agree nor disagree = ND, Disagree = D and Strongly disagree = SD

Source: Personal Survey, 2016

Table 4.1.1 shows that 74.29% of the respondent learners are convinced about the language of the course books; however, in other cases, the responses are mixed. The learners are not happy with the activities, cases, design and academic depth of the of the contents of the course materials.

4.1.2. Compatibility for learner engagement

Engaging learners is a very difficult but a must-to-do job for enhancing quality of learning. The learners of CEMBA programme are distant learners. There the study materials must be designed in a way so that they become self

explained and include the learners meaningfully. Table 4.1.2 summarizes the learners' responses regarding the compatibility of the CEMBA course materials in terms of learning engagement.

Table 4.1.2: Learners' perception about the compatibility of course materials for learner engagement

Questions	SA	A	ND	D	SD
The way the programme materials has been designed is clear and helpful for self-learning	40.00%	8.57%	20.00%	22.86%	8.57%
This learning will be a great incentive to enhance my carrier opportunities	42.86%	37.14%	17.14%	2.86%	0.00%
Learning resources are fully served your purpose.	45.71%	40.00%	11.43%	2.86%	0.00%

Strongly agree = SA, Agree = A, Neither agree nor disagree = ND, Disagree = D and Strongly disagree = SD

Source: Personal Survey, 2016

Table 4.1.2 shows that there are mixed responses on the capability of the learning resources to engage the learners meaningfully. Regarding the design of the learning resources, 40% of the respondent earners strongly agree that these are engaging and helpful. However, 20% were neutral and 23% disagreed. In other two cases, such as career sensitivity and need-orientation of the course materials, learners varied mostly

4.1.3. Need for integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

As the CEMBA students are usually the executives in various government, non-government and multinational organizations. So, any international agenda or goals become important for them while making decisions at their organization or designing the standards in the organizations. They feel that CEMBA course should be integrated with SDGs as soon as possible.

Table 4.1.3: Learners' perception regarding the SDG integration into the CEMBA course materials

	Agree	Neutral	Strongly agree	Total
CEMBA courses need SDG integration	12	5	18	35
%	34.29	14.29	51.43	100
Total	12	5	18	35
%	34.29	14.29	51.43	100

Source: Personal Survey, 2016

Table 4.1.3 shows that 51.43% of the respondent learners strongly endorsed the necessity of SDG integration into the CEMBA study materials.

4.2. Tutor's perception about the learning resources

Tutors play the most important roles in CEMBA. Unlike face-to-face teachers, CEMBA tutors have to go through the whole study materials before coming to the tutorial sessions. Their perceptions give a significant message regarding the quality of the study resources. Table 4.2 summarizes the perception of the tutors regarding the quality of the study materials.

Table 4.2: Tutors' perception regarding the quality of the CEMBA study resources

Questions	Tutor's perception about contents				
	SA	A	ND	D	SD
The way the programme materials have been designed is clear and helpful for self-learning.	0%	40%	20%	40%	0%
Language used in the course materials is lucid and understandable.	20%	0%	60%	20%	0%
The sequence and layout of the course books are attractive and gives comfortable reading.	0%	20%	40%	40%	0%
The course materials help to analyze or critically assures ideas, arguments for case studies.	0%	60%	20%	20%	0%

Strongly agree = SA, Agree = A, Neither agree nor disagree = ND, Disagree = D and Strongly disagree = SD
Source: Personal Survey, 2016

Table 4.2 shows that 40% of the tutors are not highly convinced with the design of the course materials. They disagree (40%) that the materials are helpful for self-learning. Most of the tutors (60%) do not agree nor disagree that the language use in the course materials is lucid and understandable. The tutors agree (60%) that the materials are helpful in terms of critical thinking and case analysis.

5. Discussions

CEMBA program is in high demand among the executives in government, non-governmental and multinational organizations. As busy executives, they always prefer flexibility in learning. Given the very limited use of technologies, the learners of this program mostly reply on the printed textbooks. Below are few of the comments/expectations regarding the text materials -

- Quality of text book should be improved
- Online access to course materials
- Course materials should be easier
- Study materials need to be updated with easy and understandable language
- Course content should be more consistent, well synchronized
- Course content should be more applied
- Course content should be more relative to Bangladesh perspective
- Grading system has to relax
- Course materials should be well printed
- Materials should be self-explaining

6. Conclusion and recommendations

Availability of quality resources for teaching and learning is recognized as vital in providing better learning opportunities to learners. Without suitable resources, it is difficult for teachers to implement the curriculum effectively to improve what and how well the learners learn. A poorly resourced school will discourage and frustrate teachers in their school work and have a negative impact on children's learning. The paper tried to unearth the quality of the CEMBA learning resources based on the learners' as well as tutors' perceptions. The findings clearly show that the learners are not highly satisfied with the CEMBA learning materials. Also the tutors are not happy with the CEMBA textbooks. The following steps can be taken to revitalize the CEMBA courses –

- Continual revision of the course materials
- Taking regular feedback on the materials
- Localization/contextualization of study materials
- Reducing the volume of the books
- Softcopy of textbooks
- Online access to the text materials

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