Greetings to all the stakeholders of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) and esteemed readers of EduComm Asia.

After my joining CEMCA in July 2012, we started planning for re-launch of the CEMCA Newsletter – the EduComm Asia that became irregular in 2010. I started thinking about the relevance of a quarterly Newsletter in today’s abundance of information on the World Wide Web (WWW). Then several of you started asking about the Newsletter, and my conviction about the value of organized information for a specific readership made us sit and plan for this issue. As we began preparing this issue to bring you meaningful, relevant, and appropriate knowledge, we also realised the importance of keeping ourselves up-to-date to serve you better.

We understand the need for information sharing not only about the activities of CEMCA, but also about new developments and trends in the CEMCA’s field of competence. We know how eagerly some of you have been waiting for the issue of EduComm Asia, and it is my pleasure to bring you back this popular Newsletter to you.

This issue has been planned as a special thematic issue on Teacher Education to emphasize CEMCA’s emerging role in the context of its current Three Year Plan (2012-15). Dr. Steve Hutchinson in the Guest Column explores the situation of teacher education in India to situate and explain the rationale and approach of the TESS-India project funded by the DFID. Neil Butcher and Andrew Moore describe the UNESCO ICT-CFT framework application in Guyana as a Case Study of how governments can develop strategy for integrating ICTs in education and build teacher competencies. Spotlight section focusses on Maharashtra Knowledge Corporation Limited—a company supported by State Govt of Maharashtra in India and that has been promoting innovative use of ICT in education, including starting of the eB.Ed. programme in collaboration with I-CONSENT and offered in partnership with the Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University. We have tried to put together useful information in the sections such as SMART Tips, Worth While Web, Book Review and Forthcoming Events.

Our efforts would be to bring this regularly to you, and this is possible only with your suggestions, feedback and timely contributions. Tell us what you liked, what not, and what you want us to include in future. You can reach us through the newly designed website (http://www.cemca.org.in) and also get more recent information about CEMCA activities by subscribing to the eNewsletter.

Wish you a very happy New Year.

Dr. Sanjaya Mishra
India faces a pressing need to educate, train and develop millions of teachers over the next few years in order to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding education system. How to do this at scale and to quality and how best to use new technologies and the different ways of thinking about knowledge that they afford, remain critically important questions. In this guest column I’m going to look at recent trends in education and set out the argument for the development of open resource and practice networks developed by the many (as opposed to the few) set against a focus on learning in and through practice (rather than learning that’s distant from practice). I’m going to end by talking about the newly started, DFID funded, TESS-India (Teacher Education through School-based Support in India) Project and the ways that this seeks to draw on the ‘wisdom of the crowd’ (Surowiecki, 2004) to produce high quality, infinitely adaptable and freely available resources to support school-based teacher education.

**Analysis of the situation**

Teachers, teacher educators and administrators in India know the facts better than anyone. It seems that India has a teacher shortage of around 1.3 million teachers and many more in service require further training and development. This is a huge number, and despite significant improvements in the States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, the research by De et al (2011) reported that in these states

- Enrolment doesn’t mean attendance;
- Attendance doesn’t imply learning; and
- Mindless rote learning still dominates.

Put simply: India requires more teachers who are better trained, in a system that embeds learning to teach in the context of the classroom and changes the way that teachers teach and children learn and motivates both children and teachers to turn up to school. But while this can be put simply, solutions are hard to come by.

Rittel, Horst and Webber (1973) talk about ‘wicked’ problems. Wicked problems like global warming, or global food security, are difficult to define and it’s impossible to see the start or even the end of them. The important thing to recognize about ‘wicked’ or ‘super wicked’ problems is that they’re impossible to solve. You can only move them towards resolution and the most effective way to do that is through collaboration and communication.

Take teacher education in India, for example – a classic example of a wicked problem. There is a huge need to train more teachers, but we seem to find it hard to think of new and innovative quality approaches to teacher training that will help us to address those needs. It isn’t just one single problem; there are many inter-linked problems, each with its own solution that just adds to the complexities of the problem. And treating it as a tame problem - one that can be fully defined and solved through rational processes - will only make the situation worse. Lack of confidence on the ability of distance education institutions to offer training of a sufficiently high quality has resulted in building more teacher training institutions knowing well that a bricks and mortar approach can never train enough teachers. But the rapid expansion of bricks and mortar colleges undermines the need for quality and quantity as faculty lack adequate training and preparation for their roles.

A conventional problem solving approach underpinned by a conventional approach to teaching and learning can’t address the teacher quality and quantity issue in India today. Taking people out of their communities to learn about how to work in them is, I argue, fundamentally flawed. Learning about most things – how to communicate, interact, behave and so on is a local, communal, activity. Bringing people together – in the way that we take people away from their communities and bring them together in lecture halls - as a formal learning experience is not particularly effective at changing the way we do things in practice.

**Take teacher education in India, for example – a classic example of a wicked problem.**

**There is a huge need to train more teachers, but we seem to find it hard to think of new and innovative quality approaches to teacher training that will help us to address those needs.**

When we look at the world today we see a very different approach to learning. We see significant rise in the use of social media and collaborative online tools: Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia are all now commonly used. We now have the tools to collaborate and communicate in ways that previous generations would find impossible to comprehend. And fortunately for us, it’s this ability to
collaborate and communicate that will help us to address the wicked problem that is the Indian teacher education system.

Over time – and with the advent of computer access to on-line forums – the OU developed more interactive ways of faculty staff and students engaging with each other. The OU’s pre-service teacher training course, the Post Graduate Certification in Education (PGCE), was one of the first courses in the OU to use this on-line approach. In those days we gave a computer to each of the PGCE students, which they then passed on to the school that supported them when they had completed their studies. 20 years later – that’s still a revolutionary idea!

During this phase of the University’s development, while the University still decided what ‘counted’ in terms of important knowledge, students engage with faculty and with their peers supporting each other. In terms of teacher education, this was often offering resources, suggesting alternatives, responding to late night calls about how to relate an obscure and abstract content area to a group of troublesome and bored teenagers. This was an important development at the OU – although we didn’t know it at the time. Students had begun to participate in an educationally social way with each other and with the University, supporting each other’s learning with direct support and often through sharing materials and resources that they had created.

And now, as we move forward 15 years, we see new social and online forms of communication and engagement. At this phase of its development the OU started to offer significant amounts of its materials online (OpenLearn) and through iTunesU and YouTube. And while iTunesU and YouTube are still one-way distribution mechanisms (albeit with the opportunity to offer open comment on the resources) OpenLearn leads the way in terms of open access student generated content. In OpenLearn – we provide significant amounts of material (with access to online forums). For example, one set of materials looks at mentoring strategies for teachers in schools, with a forum where people who use the materials can interact and a space where they can ‘rate’ the materials – a bit like ‘liking’ a comment on Facebook. But there is also a part of the site called LabSpace – where users can post their own adaptations or embellishments of the materials for others to use and to rate. The community itself can decide what counts as knowledge and decides whether or not it’s useful. If we think of creating an encyclopedia, this now looks more like Wikipedia.

**The horizontal axis: from one to many to many with many**

When the Open University (OU) in the UK first started in the late sixties, the first generation of courses were based on printed materials that were posted to students – with laboratory kits and so on – that came to be supported by late night or early morning television programmes. Students in those days had to be very dedicated in the days before VCRs. Feedback was, and still is, provided by personal tutors on written assignments and tutors met groups of students face-to-face on a regular basis. The University decided what knowledge was important, it packaged it up and supported students in getting to grips with that knowledge, testing them and then finally offering a certificate: from one to many. This, as it was for most Universities then and now, was a knowledge one-way street. If we had been creating an encyclopedia – we would have been developing the Encyclopedia Britannica: a small group of experts deciding what knowledge counted and then packaging it up for broadcast.

From Encyclopedia Britannica to Wikipedia, from Microsoft’s operating system to Linux, from Outlook to Facebook – the World has changed from one to many to many with many.
The vertical axis: from distant learning to close learning

On the vertical axis (in Figure 1) it’s possible to identify another trend – supported by a growing evidence base – that training and education is (mostly) best done in the context where that learning is going to be used. If you want to learn to drive a car in Delhi – you’re probably better off learning on the streets of Delhi, rather than in a classroom – although it’s probably safer in the classroom! The context is everything. It drives what you learn, how you learn it and how successful you are at it. That isn’t to say that there isn’t a role for theory in helping learners to frame or question practice, but practice itself has its own integrity and poses equally demanding questions of theory.

It’s therefore surprising that there are still many people across the World who believe that teachers can be trained without going into classrooms. Learning to teach in these jurisdictions is a theoretical process with significant emphasis on learning content and other related studies in the areas of philosophy, psychology, sociology and so on. I’m not arguing that these studies are worthless – and when I look at the reading lists of these courses I can see how interesting and challenging they could be. But I am arguing that these studies are only worthwhile in relation to practice if they have the context at their heart. If they don’t, then it’s highly unlikely that it will change the way teachers do things and the way that children learn things. It’s an important point: protocols, ways of working, ideas, are constantly renegotiated and repositioned on their way to practical implementation as different people on the landscape of professional practice engage with the ideas. The ideas that policy makers have at the start of the journey will always be subject to constant change, so that by the end of the journey they might bear little resemblance to the initial proposal.

That takes us back to the second vertical continua: the movement from learning that’s distant from practice to learning that’s close to it. I appreciate I’m being a little bit provocative here (particularly coming from what’s conventionally called a distance education university); but what’s more ‘distant’ – taking people away from their practice and their communities and putting them in a large lecture theatre talking about abstract theory or giving people learning activities to carry out and reflect on with their communities, in context?

To move the argument to focus more specifically on the training and education of teachers, what I’m saying is that the best place to train teacher to teach is in schools, with theory that is closely aligned to practice, that exposes practice to critical questioning and that inspires thoughtful and reflective responses and which also opens up reverse reflection, where theoretical understanding is exposed to the scrutiny of practice. I’m also arguing that teachers as experts in their own practice (and I’m not saying that this is always what others might see as good practice) have a great deal to offer to the learning process. They know the daily realities of their classrooms. Their practice has its own integrity and if we want to change practice we have to find ways to encourage teachers to share their expertise and find ways of integrating different ways of working into their practice.

Let’s look again at the two framing trends in Figure 1. Teacher education courses that live in the bottom left-hand corner see teachers removed from their practice, perhaps to training centres, or teacher training colleges, to receive centrally developed training materials. Courses in this quadrant should be able to demonstrate high levels of consistency as both context and academic creation are limited but they are unlikely to make a significant impact on teacher practice for three reasons:

1) It’s a top-down approach that ignores the contextual expertise that teachers bring to their professional learning.

2) By ignoring this expertise, teachers aren’t helped to see how new learning maps against their context and will be transformed by it.

3) It’s also a process that ignores the creative capacity of the teacher community to support learning. The teacher’s voice is diminished and the teacher is relegated to the role of listener rather than contributor.

And, if you agree with me that the teacher education situation in India is a ‘wicked problem’, it won’t help the Indian education system to move towards resolution.
The argument that follows is that teacher education courses, projects and approaches that occupy the top-right quadrant are more likely to change practice. They are focused in practice and on changing practice with practical activities that recognize the complexity of renegotiation. And they also draw on the expertise and wisdom of the community as teachers take a leading role in supporting the professional education of other teachers.

But there are also problems with this approach. How does teacher education developed by the community address over-arching and national strategic objectives? How do novice readers and users of the resources know what has a quality kite-mark? Zealots of the open approach will say that quality is a matter for the community. Through badging or, in facebook terms, ‘liking’ it’s possible for the community to recognize and reward expertise and support. But there are real problems with this approach when you’re seeking such a significant paradigm shift in practice.

And that’s the starting point for the TESS-India project. What’s the best way to help to move a wicked problem towards resolution; that engages in collaboration and communication; that focuses on classroom activities, but that also recognizes that, initially at least, the community needs some support in identifying best practice?

**The TESS-India Project**

TESS-India (teacher education through school-based support) is a DFID funded collaborative project led by the Open University in the UK that brings together a network of teacher educators from across India to produce free, high quality and infinitely adaptable resources to support a developing teacher and teacher educator community to improve the quality of teacher education and to help partners to increase the numbers of quality trained teachers.

Metaphorically speaking, we’re bringing the best chefs from India together, working in partnership with the OU’s own expert chefs, to create a teacher educator banquet – but the food lacks regional colour, special ingredients and local ways of preparing and cooking the food. We’re then inviting the teacher educator community to the banquet table to adapt the meals and to share their own family and regional cooking secrets. Some will take some of the food and have a picnic; some will set a formal dining table and have many courses and as the participants change the meals and add to the menu and share different ways of eating the meals we’ll all benefit.

**In a bit more detail:**

- We’re developing Open Educational Resources (OERs) to support Elementary teacher education in Hindi/mother tongue, Mathematics, English, Science and Leadership and to support secondary teacher education in English, Mathematics, Science and Leadership.

- We’re focusing on 7 States and with them we will develop an implementation strategy that reflects what the teacher educators themselves wish to prioritize, and what institutional support needs to be in place so that the TESS-India project can deliver transformative practice-based resources tailored to the different contextualized needs.

- We’re going to ensure that the quality of the materials developed, in form and presentation, will be of the highest possible standards using a sequence of structured collaborative workshops.

- We will make ‘classroom-based activities’ for teachers the key focus of the OER materials.

- The OER materials will be designed to facilitate teacher uptake of innovative and successful child-friendly ‘active learning’ pedagogical approaches.

- We will integrate video and audio material into the resources and make these available for download or use on mobile phones and handheld tablets.

- We will design a web environment to host the OER resource network and facilitate shareback, soft certification and voting/reputation management tools.

- The OER materials will be developed in Hindi, English, Odia, Bangla, Kannada and Assamese to maximize coverage and impact.

- And finally, we will engage in robust monitoring and evaluation.

Working from these starting points, the TESS-India partners will reach 1,000,000 teachers by the end of the first phase of the project in 2015 with projected reach of 7 million teachers by 2025.

The TESS-India resources will be made available for print, digital download (including DVD/CD ROMS, Micro SD
cards that can be used in low cost mobile phones) and on the Internet. The specific details will depend on the teacher education project priorities for each State where teacher educators are able to adapt, amend and improve the core resources and share them back with the community.

Conclusions

To summarize, we’re bringing teacher educators from across India and the UK together to produce high quality resources for teacher educators and teachers. Initially we’ll develop these in English and as ‘vanilla’ pan-India resources. Then we’ll work with State-based subject specialist experts who can also work in the language of the State to engage in a process of ‘trans-culturization’. As a result, all of the resources that have been developed at a national level will be localized for use in our 7 focus states. And then, finally, we’ll work with teacher educators to adapt the State materials so that they fit the specific needs of each state.

All of the materials will be held on a website and we’ll invite the larger community to comment, to add resources and perspectives and, through a parallel lab space, invite the community to adapt and refine resources, or even provide new materials. The community will be able to ‘like’ or vote on the new or revised materials and contributors will be able to build their reputational status. And, if the amended or new resources get sufficient support from the community, a central team will be able to quality assure the content and adapt it for inclusion on the kite-marked site.

Through this process, we aim to engage the wider community while still offering resources that are of an internationally high level. The ultimate aim would be to withdraw from this central control and open it up fully to the community. But, given the issues I’ve raised in this column, and of the need for a paradigm shift in teaching and learning approaches in India, we think this half-way house is a prudent first step.

And, looking again at Figure 1, while this isn’t a project that’s in the very top right-hand corner of the top right-hand quadrant it’s a project that fundamentally relies on teachers’ expert knowledge of their context and their active role in renegotiating these pedagogical approaches in this context. It’s an approach that also engages with the teacher educator and teacher community at large, inviting and encouraging their engagement, providing a platform from which they can share their expertise, engage in a bigger community and actively support each other’s development.

Working collaboratively; seeing teachers as the solution rather than the problem; helping them to support each other with a focus on learning in the classroom; developing, sharing and capitalizing on the wisdom of teachers, is the only way, we believe, that significant and lasting change can be made to teacher education in India.

References


Internship Available

CEMCA offers internship to graduate and post-graduate students to gain work experience in the area of CEMCA’s field of competence and enhance their academic knowledge through practical work assignments. Internships are available for 2-6 six months, and should be part of the learning and development plan of the candidate. For details visit Knowledge Management page at CEMCA Website.

Dr. Steve Hutchinson is the Director of the Open University’s TESS-India (Teacher Education through School-Based Support in India) project. Prior to this, he was Director of the OU’s pre-service teacher education course, the PGCE, and Director of the Practice Based Professional Learning Centre of Excellence. He can be reached at <Steven.Hutchinson@open.ac.uk>
Spotlight On...

MKCL and eB.Ed. Programme

By Prof. M. N. Deshmukh

Maharashtra Knowledge Corporation Ltd (MKCL), a state government sponsored corporation, a business house established for propagation of mass computer literacy with the major shareholders -- Maharashtra State Govt. and all the Universities in Maharashtra has offered major technology support for online teacher education programme, in the form of e Platform and Support Services (ePASS).

MKCL is a unique institution in the country which has a great success story to tell. Within a short span of a decade, it has built huge capacity and enriched infrastructural, financial, human and intellectual resources for the state by providing learning, governance and empowerment services to people with a network coverage in all metropolitan, urban, semi-urban, rural, tribal and hilly areas of the state with a network of over 5000 Authorized Learning Centers equipped with more than 35,000 computers and state-of-the-art hardware, software and internet connectivity.

MKCL has made more than six million youth computer literate at a very affordable cost through its MS-CIT course since 2001. MKCL is also providing direct facilitation services to more than a million university students studying in 11 state universities through its Digital University Framework. It not only helps other state Governments to establish similar corporations like Rajasthan Knowledge Corporation Limited, but other countries also take support from MKCL in establishing similar organizations.

MKCL made all its capacities and systems available to I-CONSENT (Indian Consortium for Educational Transformation) for development and deployment of e-B.Ed. programme through its ePASS including mechanisms and management tools and techniques like E-Learning Resources for All (ERA) -- a Learning Management System (LMS) for the students. Technical support services were available to course teams for designing, developing, deploying and delivering, using and updating the courseware and learning materials in the form of Open Educational Resources (OER). It supported ‘Social Wealth’ created through learning activities of pedagogic innovation with constructivist education. This platform is useful also for creating Primary and Secondary Networks of students, tutors and mentors, and the partner organizations.

eB. Ed. (E-Education) Programme

This programme is designed as a new paradigm suitable for a connected society in which learning-working–developing is integrated. This is a degree course about “e-Education” and it is also an e-learning programme. This course is to provide online, packaged ICT based alternative teacher preparation programme for training of large number of teachers using network and Tech-MODE (Technology Mediated Open and Distance Education). It is accessible to any learner (A3 learner - anyone, anywhere, anytime), particularly when this vast number is infested with numerous disparities and divides, as in Indian situation.

The pilot run of this programme was conducted for two years through three study centers and access centers organized with the help of associate universities and organizations and network of local mentors and national and international experts on the panel as central resource grid, using all the advanced technology and expertise at
MKCL e.g., ERA, e-platform of MKCL, Learning Content Management System (LCMS), etc. The pilot batch of 47 students has successfully completed the programme with highly gratifying experiences for both, the learners, as well as, the course teams.

**Challenges and Issues for Innovative Teacher Education Programme**

While developing this programme some concerns in the field came up. For example, educators, as well as, the students of this programme were a product of conventional F2F schooling. De-learning and re-learning was little difficult for them.

Work culture and study habits of students and mentors are not very conducive to learning and working in online environment. They are accustomed to non-reflective learning. Initially they found it difficult to cope up with the requirements of the programme like self study, reflective thinking, group working, independent working / working with the person-person and machine-person activities, and use of ICT.

The course writers had to undergo a process of un-learning conventional teaching and content-centric pedagogy orientation, learning and using constructivist pedagogy, orienting in situated learning design, working for creating real life situations, developing courses, producing the programme, field testing the programme, getting feedback and updating the courses and finalizing the programme for global marketing.

It was very difficult for participants to remain on the new line of thinking. They were constantly going back to old content-centric pedagogical approaches and ways of thinking and working. Many times, after working for several months and then realizing that the work is not what was expected and again restarting from ground zero was quite frustrating to them.

On the hindsight, every one realized, including the course developers, a change in their thinking and insights developed during the two years of working together in the B.Ed. (e-Education) project. Results of the pilot run were very positive and promising.

The programme addresses some of the questions: How to adopt ‘development centric-learning-centric model’ which will provide learning for development, through real life problem situations of which the learner is a part? How to adopt ‘Experiential, contextual learning’ model to integrate the process of educational transformation in the system of ‘living-working-learning-developing-transforming’ together in a connected society? How to create large technosocial structures for this transformation?

**Conclusion**

A novel innovative teacher education program is developed, tried out and field tested with a considerable success and great potentialities which may prove to be a very strong alternative to a mainstream conventional teacher education programme, a model which may provide solutions to number of problems of teacher training faced by many developing countries, particularly, Commonwealth countries.

MKCL is trusted and valued member of the I-CONSENT which offers eB.Ed. programme in partnership with the Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, Nashik.

This write-up has been prepared by Prof. M. N. Deshmukh, Member Secretary, I-CONSENT, who can be reached at <mndeshmukh11@hotmail.com>
While the World Wide Web is full of information for teachers and teacher educators, we present to you a select list of links that are useful to keep as bookmark. All the links were active at the time of going to the press.

- **BBC Teachers site**: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/teachers/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/teachers/)
- **Commonwealth of Learning Resources**: [http://www.col.org/RESOURCES/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.col.org/RESOURCES/Pages/default.aspx)
- **Curriki**: [http://welcome.curriki.org/](http://welcome.curriki.org/)
- **Discovery Education**: [http://www.discoveryeducation.com/](http://www.discoveryeducation.com/)
- **MERLOT**: [http://www.merlot.org/merlot/index.htm](http://www.merlot.org/merlot/index.htm)
- **NASA Education Program**: [http://www.nasa.gov/offices/education/about/index.html](http://www.nasa.gov/offices/education/about/index.html)
- **National Geographic Education**: [http://education.nationalgeographic.co.in/education/teaching-resources/?ar_a=1](http://education.nationalgeographic.co.in/education/teaching-resources/?ar_a=1)
- **OER Commons**: [http://www.oercommons.org/](http://www.oercommons.org/)
- **Smithsonian Education**: [http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/educators/](http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/educators/)
- **Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa**: [http://www.tessafrica.net/](http://www.tessafrica.net/)
- **Teachers; Domain**: [http://www.teachersdomain.org/](http://www.teachersdomain.org/)
- **TeachersFirst**: [http://teachersfirst.com/index.cfm](http://teachersfirst.com/index.cfm)
- **UNESCO Recommendations on status of Teachers**: [http://www.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?catno=160495&set=504F3518_1_339&gp=1&lin=1&ll=1](http://www.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?catno=160495&set=504F3518_1_339&gp=1&lin=1&ll=1)
- **Vidya Online**: [http://www.vidyaonline.net/](http://www.vidyaonline.net/)
- **WikiEducator**: [http://wikieducator.org/Main_Page](http://wikieducator.org/Main_Page)
- **World Teachers’ Day**: [http://www.5oct.org](http://www.5oct.org)
Consultation on Community Radio Technology Programme

An expert roundtable was organised on 4-5 October 2012 that brought representatives of different stakeholders invested in the sector like Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Ltd (BECIL), International organisations, CRS Representatives, NGOs, manufacturers of broadcast equipment and station management software, with the purpose of setting the expectations for the programme and defining its scope. Prof. Santosh Panda, STRIDE, IGNOU guided the process of evolving the programme curriculum as per the Distance Education Council (DEC) standards and procedures for offering self-learning academic programmes. Across the board, the initiative was hailed as timely and much needed and over two days, stakeholders stated their vision and expectations from the course, based on which the scope of the programme was arrived at.

The material development of Certificate on Community Radio Technology will follow a collaborative process and is expected to be completed by June 2013.

COL Support to ICTCE2012

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) supported the International Conference on ICT Culture in Education 2012 organized by the Educational Technology and Management Academy (ETMA) from 27-29 September 2012. With the support of COL, CEMCA facilitated participation of three ODL teachers from the region in the conference. The recipients of the support were Md. Mizanoor Rahman (Bangladesh Open University), Mrs Sharifah Rosfashida Bt Syed Abd Latif (Open University of Malaysia) and Ms. Sabina Yesmin (Bangladesh Open University). Each of the participants presented their research paper during the conference, and also interacted with the participants. While a visit to IGNOU helped Sharifah to know more about the technological practices there, Mizan and Sabina benefitted by interacting with their doctoral supervisors at IGNOU.

Indian Delegation Visited Malaysia

CEMCA supported the study tour of Shri T.K. Kaul, Deputy Registrar, Indira Gandhi National Open University, Shri D.K. Singh, Deputy Registrar, Uttarakhand Open University, and Smt. C. R. Valsala Hariharan, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Govt. of India, for visiting Open University of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur and Wawasan Open University, Penang from 29-31 October 2012, and 1-3 November 2012 respectively. Initiated by the MHRD, GOI, the study tour was aimed at understanding best practices which are followed in governance, financial management and student support services by these two Open and Distance Learning universities in Malaysia. The study team visited different schools, divisions and libraries of both the universities to get first-hand information through interaction with the staff and observed professional practices.
Radio goes Global with Web Radio Initiative

To bring radio listening closer to the web listeners across globe, Newzstreet Broadcast Services Private Limited (NBS) with the initial support of CEMCA has created a platform - “iradioIndia.com” that supports 16 community radio stations go global.

The Web radio project was initiated by CEMCA as a Public Private Partnership (PPP) initiative. Between June 2011 to August 2012 NBS designed a robust audio streaming technology platform to support CEMCA’s initiative. With the launch of “CEMCA Web radio facility” web listeners not only accessed entertainment shows, songs and educational programmes of Community Radio stations but also it allowed educational institutions to provide audio lectures through web streaming technology.

Normally, web radio involves streaming media, presenting listeners with a continuous stream of audio that cannot be replayed, much like traditional broadcast media. In this respect, it is distinct from on-demand file serving. There are two different kinds of facilities which are being provided to different stations by NBS. One is the “LIVE RADIO” and the other is “RADIO ON DEMAND”. The stations can upload their content in the internet platform and can allow listeners to pick and choose the content and then make their own play list and listen on internet platform or they can simply stream their content as they run in their respective radio stations and people can listen as per the programme schedule of the station. Internet radio is also distinct from podcasting, which involves downloading rather than streaming. Many web radio services are associated with a corresponding traditional (terrestrial) radio station or radio network. Internet-only radio stations are independent of such associations.

Web radio services are usually accessible from anywhere in the world - for example, one could listen to a Bangladesh station from Europe or America. For example, Radio Padma in the Bangladesh is now growing in popularity quotient due to web radio. Web radio remains popular among expatriates and listeners with interests that are often not adequately served by local radio stations.

NBS has got adequate strength to support at least 1000 radio stations on the internet platform. NBS provided all kind of support including technology, human resources, and maintenance to community radio stations in the CEMCA project that ended in 2012. While NBS is continuing to provide the services to the stations on one-to-one basis, CEMCA has discontinued supporting the direct maintenance costs to NBS, as it believes that such an initiative should be self-sustaining, and participating stations can pay the small service fees directly to NBS.

CEMCA considers that the web radio revolution needs to grow in India and the Commonwealth countries of Asia. It may be noted that starting a community radio stations requires appropriate permission and licence from government agencies for transmission of radio waves. Whereas, anyone can create a web radio station on the Internet and continue streaming audio/voice. This technology has the potential to make Indian educational institutions global in a cost effective way by allowing them to share their audio lectures online (live or on-demand basis). Web radio will also help create more radio stations, where there is a scarcity of spectrum for traditional radio stations. CEMCA will continue to promote awareness about Web Radio through institutional capacity building and advocacy for web radio. (with inputs from NBS)

Virtual Open Schooling Initiative Launched

CEMCA in collaboration with the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), the premier open schooling institution in the world, launched the Virtual Open Schooling initiative on 16 October 2012. This joint activity will explore the possibility of developing a new model of educational delivery by integrating the already existing excellent ICT infrastructure at NIOS. NIOS currently uses ICT for Online admission, On-Demand Examination System, and Open Educational Resources. The one day national consultative workshop held on 16 October 2012 discussed the concepts and technology for virtual open schooling with the stakeholders, especially with the State Open Schools in India.

Dr. S.S.Jena, Chairman, NIOS while inaugurating the consultative workshop pointed out that even today NIOS and
The new website of CEMCA was launched by Prof. Asha Kanwar, President and CEO, Commonwealth of Learning during the 12th Advisory Council Meeting of CEMCA held at Hotel Grand, New Delhi on 17 December 2012. The new website is available at www.cemca.org.in, while stakeholders can also access the same site through www.cemca.org and www.cemca.asia. The new website is based on the widely used Drupal open source content management system. Thus, it has a variety of features such as social media integration, structured navigation and increased usability experience. The site is designed for web accessibility, and provides increased interface to existing resources at CEMCA and COL.

State Open Schools (SOS) are serving to approximately 5 million students only, and therefore, India needs to strengthen the Open and Distance Education made of learning to serve a larger target group which could be only made possible by offering programmes through VOS model. He also emphasized the importance of VOS in the context of Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) for universalisation of secondary education in India. Chief Guest for the inauguration of the consultative meeting, Ms. S. Radha Chauhan, Joint Secretary, School Education, MHRD, Government of India stated that in the 12th five year plan more than 90% of children in the age group of 14 years should be in School, and virtual schooling could be one of the alternatives to achieve this target. Explaining the importance of ICT as an enabler which will provide relevant tools on a virtual platform, Ms. Chauhan also pointed out the huge challenge of developing and delivering e-content vis-a-vis the common belief that a teacher cannot be replaced.

CEMCA also signed Memorandum of Understanding with NIOS on the occasion to facilitate the VOS initiative and also collaborate in the area of vocational education and development of Open Educational Resources.

Women students in IGNOU’s PGDEL to receive scholarship

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia has announced 10 scholarships to women faculty members to pursue online “Post Graduate Diploma in eLearning (PGDEL)” of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi.

In order to encourage use of online learning in Indian educational institutions, and promote use of eLearning by faculty members, CEMCA will provide 10 scholarships to women faculty members who desires to pursue the online Post Graduate Diploma in eLearning (PGDEL), offered by Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) of IGNOU.

The Scholarship will be in the form of reimbursement of full programme fee. Women teachers/academics from open universities, Higher Education Institutions, NCERT/NIOS/CBSE and other similar organisation are eligible for consideration, and are encouraged joining the programme and apply for reimbursement of fees from CEMCA with confirmed admission.

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Case Study

Implementing the UNESCO ICT Competence Framework for Teachers in Guyana

By Neil Butcher and Andrew Moore

Introduction

The recently developed Information Communication Technology (ICT) Professional Development Strategy for Teachers in Guyana holds the promise of identifying a rapid, cost-effective way to enhance and overhaul existing teacher education systems in environments with few resources and limited human capacity. As the name suggests, ICT is being used to leverage advantage by accessing quality free resources such as curriculum frameworks, teaching and learning resources, and online tools. The strategy acknowledges the central role that education officials, teacher trainers, educators, and students play for it to be realized. It rests on an assumption that, by revising teacher education to embrace ICT, improvements in student performance can be derived.

The Guyana Context

With a population of about 780,000, Guyana is characterized by a predominately rural population, with only 28% of the inhabitants living in urban areas. Life expectancy is good, over 62 years for males and 70 years for females. Expenditure on Education in 2007 was 6.1% of GDP, which gives the country a ranking of 28th in the world.1 The quality of both primary and secondary education in Guyana, however, has been questioned. Research suggests it is only at tertiary level that functional literacy is acquired. This situation has been attributed in part to the low retention of qualified teachers and the subsequent employment of untrained and unqualified teachers.

In 2007, of 9,303 teachers across the system 42% were untrained. In response to these statistics the Ministry of Education (MoE) has prioritized growing the number of qualified teachers by providing opportunities for both pre- and in-service teachers to gain accreditation.

As a crucial component of its strategy, the Ministry identified educational technology, with concurrent development in teacher ICT competencies, as the agent of change in this process. Consequently teacher education and training, supported by technology, has been placed at the forefront of efforts to tackle ineffective teaching and low quality of learning in classrooms. This is a challenge in a country where only 27% of the population is identified as Internet users.

The Ministry of Education’s ICT operational plan recognizes that integration of ICT into education is based on addressing issues of content, access, competency, and the actual integration of ICT into teaching and learning, which is intricately tied with teacher and student competencies in the available technologies.

ICT Professional Development Strategy

The Guyana ICT Professional Development Strategy for Teachers shares the broader vision of the Guyana Ministry of Education’s ICT Operational Plan that:

ICT and other assistive technologies for educational delivery will be supporting a quality and accessible teaching and learning environment at all levels of the education system in Guyana. Further, most graduates of the Secondary level will have attained core competencies in ICT Literacy.

The long-term outcomes of this strategy is to ensure that all Ministry of Education officials, teacher development management and staff, school principals, and teachers are competent to harness ICT effectively to support high quality teaching and learning in Guyanese schools, with:

- Most able to integrate the use of basic ICT tools into the standard school curriculum, pedagogy, and classroom structures, knowing how, where, and when (as well as when
not) to use technology for classroom activities and presentations, for management tasks, and to acquire additional subject matter and pedagogical knowledge in support of their own professional development; and

- A critical mass able to use more sophisticated methodologies and technologies with changes in the curriculum that emphasize depth of understanding and application of school knowledge to real world problems and pedagogy in which the teacher serves as a guide and manager of the learning environment and students are engaged in extended, collaborative project-based learning activities that can go beyond the classroom and may involve local or global collaborations.

The Strategy provides a comprehensive framework and learning pathway for Ministry of Education officials, school principals, administrators, and teachers to become competent to harness ICT effectively to support high quality teaching and learning. This learning pathway uses the UNESCO ICT Competence Framework for Teachers (CFT) as its guiding framework. It seeks to develop core competences for the key intended audiences for a suite of professional development initiatives, as mapped out in figure 2.

The types of strategy initiatives identified in the document include:

1) Revision of the Teacher Education curriculum to incorporate ICT components at different stages of initial and in-service training, including subject specific focus for secondary education.

2) Creation of a suite of ICT integration courses aimed at school management as well as courses for ICT School coordinators and technical training for ICT maintenance and support personnel.

3) ICT awareness and capacity building initiatives designed for education stakeholders at ministerial and teacher education level.

Curriculum and Materials Development Process

In developing the new curriculum the Guyana team used a method that proved quick and cheap to implement, but resulted in a comprehensive professional development ICT programme. By adopting and reworking the UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (CFT) the curriculum revision and materials development team was able to develop a curriculum that created a logical flow between courses run at Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) and University of Guyana (UG). The UNESCO ICT CFT also has at its core a distinctly education focus as it encourages the acquisition of ICT competencies while investigating issues around the national education sector, curriculum, pedagogy, school administration and professional development. In developing materials and activities to support the UNESCO competencies the development
team exploited free and open education resources. They did very little repurposing of these resources but created sets of student activities designed to contextualise the readings. They also created sets of facilitation guides to assist the implementation of the programme.

Progress in Implementation

Significant achievements have been registered in implementation of the strategy to date. These can be summarized as follows:

1) Module development. Two complete professional development modules were developed for implementation in Guyana (one on 'Technology Literacy' and one on 'Knowledge Deepening'). These were then re-versioned specifically for both pre-service and in-service teacher education, resulting finally in four modules.

2) Professional development. As part of the module development process, several workshops have been run with staff from CPCE, UG, and NCERD to develop the skills of lecturing staff to deploy the modules. These were also used as opportunities to integrate feedback from staff into the module design. These professional development activities were well received by participants, and established a basis for subsequent delivery of the modules.

3) Module implementation. The above modules have been successfully integrated into pre-service teacher education programmes at CPCE and UG, as part of the wider Guyana Improving Teacher Education Project (GITEP):

   a) At CPCE, the modules have been deployed in both 2011 and 2012, to groups of around 200 students in each year. The next scheduled delivery of the modules at CPCE is in 2013, when the first module will be delivered to around 350 students. In addition, CPCE is offering a Foundational ICT Literacy module for students with no prior exposure to ICT, teaching them the basics of using ICT.

   b) At UG, the modules have been implemented through the subjects of Science and Technology, having thus been delivered to around 125 students during 2012. Not all aspects of the modules have yet been implemented, as connectivity remains a problem, but the scope of delivery will be expanded when connectivity is supplied (expected in the last quarter of 2012). Encouragingly, around 25 students have also completed ICT Integration projects, demonstrating leadership as potential ICT champions within their schools.

   c) At NCERD, the module on Technology Literacy has been delivered to in-service teachers during August holiday workshops. These can only accommodate 75 students per session, so the modules have been delivered to 75 in-service teachers each during 2011 and 2012.

4) Development of case study and UNESCO ICT CFT toolkit. Flowing from the above activities, two resources have been created: a detailed case study on the Guyana experience and a UNESCO ICT CFT Toolkit. These have been distributed by COL and UNESCO through various channels, including the World OER Congress held in Paris in June, 2012.

Lessons Learned

The following lessons emerged during implementation of the Guyana ICT Professional Development Strategy for Teachers project:

- ICT Professional Development Strategy for Teachers Lessons:
  - High level support of the initiatives is key to success.
- There is need for a Committee to bring key interests and stakeholders together for successful implementation.
- The UNESCO ICT CFT provides an excellent point of reference for development or refinement of development strategies.
- It cannot be assumed that teacher education providers have the necessary skills to develop, adapt, and implement courses aligned with the ICT CFT.
- ICT infrastructure is necessary if a professional development initiative like this one is to succeed.
- A small amount of seed funding is likely to be needed to initiate activities to support technical assistance and capacity building to integrate the strategy into existing processes.
- Communication and advocacy as well as a defined Monitoring and Evaluation strategy are important to support the process.

- **Materials Development Lessons:**
  - Engagement in the process and adoption of the course materials by the lecturers is enhanced if the product meets a real need or requirement.
  - Despite current advances in e-learning that use technology in ever more sophisticated ways, the most appropriate use of technology needs to take into account the context in which it will be used. When assessing the context, both infrastructural issues and human capacity need to be assessed. In this particular instance, the paper-based materials are possibly more useful than the electronic version because access to ICT and familiarity with the tools is still limited for many students and teachers.
  - Open Education Resources can offer a cost effective route to acquiring quality teaching and learning materials, especially in environments where resources are in short supply. It is not, however, a shortcut to the normal materials development process. It requires time, some skill, and creativity to rework the materials to satisfy a specific set of objectives identified by a Curriculum committee or body.
  - The real benefit of using OER is that once a ‘master’ version has been fashioned from repurposed resources it can be legally shared and distributed amongst a large group with no additional costs. Localized repurposing by those who wish and have the skills to adapt it can also be legally endorsed.

**Beyond Guyana**

The partnership consisting of the Ministry of Education, Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec), Microsoft, Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and UNESCO have been instrumental to successful implementation of the UNESCO CFT in Guyana to date. Each partner has provided resources and competencies that created a synergistic effect and mutually reinforced the interest of all parties which is a critical ingredient for a successful and effective partnership.

The combined experiences of these partners in the revision and improvement of Teacher Education through devising ICT in Education professional development initiatives has also resulted in the creation of a “ICT in Education Teachers’ Professional Development Toolkit”.

St Vincent and the Grenadines too needed an ICT in Education Professional Development Strategy for Teachers. Their main concern, however, was to devise ways to improve human capacity to support the activities stated therein. COL and ComSec helped to devise plans to:
  - develop a cache of ICT in Education ‘master teachers’ who would act as mentors to others and another to provide ICT in Education training for School Principals.

Both Trinidad and Tobago and Dominica were supported through the development of an ICT in Education Professional Development Strategy for Teachers. Dominica also had need of a set of baseline survey tools to identify current ICT in Education trends. Samoa already had clear ICT in Education policy directives, but did not have a clear implementation plan. COL and ComSec provided advice on these issues, and also offered access to a number of open licensed ICT in Education programmes for them to adapt and deploy.

Through discussion and collaboration with teachers, teacher trainers and ministry personnel in these countries, COL and ComSec were able to assemble various tools that comprise this ‘toolkit’.

In addition, a resource produced before these activities – the UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (CFT) – provided a conceptual framework for activities in every country.
This Framework is intended to inform education stakeholders about the role that ICT can play in enhancing different aspects of education. The set of teacher competencies described in the Framework are designed to facilitate improvements to school administration, teaching and learning, and teacher professional development through the exploitation of technology.5

Conclusion

The Guyana case study demonstrates that digital resources and technologies can be used effectively as a catalyst for educational change. The potential benefits that can be derived from embracing digital tools and content are significant and can enhance teaching and learning, administration and communication. Where the Guyana Ministry of Education has been farsighted, however, was in realizing that at the core of this transformation was not the technology itself but rather the people who would be expected to wield it. These players can be found at all levels within the education sector: Ministry, agencies, teacher training institutions and the schools themselves. Consequently, Guyana has built a professional development strategy that meets the needs of all education stakeholders. In addition, the initiatives designed to capacitate these personnel illustrate that digital resources such as the UNESCO ICT CFT and OER as well as many digital tools available ‘add value’ rather than imposing additional burdens to existing responsibilities. Educational technology promises, after an initial investment of time and resources, improved productivity, enhanced teaching and learning, more effective administration and pervasive communication channels. The Guyana Professional Development Strategy for Teachers illustrates a potential pathway to achieving transformation.

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SMART Tips

Using ‘Watchlist’ in Media Wiki

By K. Gowthaman

The most common wiki for all of us is Wikipedia, while WikiEducator is growing fast in number primarily within the community of educators. Both these platforms run using the Media Wiki – open source software that is designed to be run on a large server. MediaWiki is extremely powerful and scalable software for a feature-rich wiki implementation. Content of wiki is primarily enriched by its users. As it is a collaborative platform, users can contribute/update articles available in wiki or create new articles. No one owns any page in wiki. As on 8th December, 2012, around 51,019 users have contributed and 19,105 articles uploaded in wikieducator.org. It is always difficult to keep track change of information in ordinary web pages. Moreover wiki is a dynamic platform where pages created by you can also be edited by another user. In such a situation it is difficult to keep track of changes. However, Media Wiki provides several tracking methods.

Wiki’s Tracking Technology

Wiki provides various tracking methods such as Recent changes, Enhanced recent changes, Related changes, Watching pages, Watchlists, Page history, Diff (difference between two versions of a page), User contributions, Edit summary, Minor edit etc. Watchlist is one of the important tracking methods offered by Wiki. Let us discuss about watchlist.

What is Watchlist?

The watchlist provides list of changes (addition/ deletion/ modification/ updation etc) carried out in wiki pages. It functions as a personalized recent change in a selected page. It can provide a list of all watched pages as per requirement such as reverse-order, changes made in date and time. The default cutoff for the watchlist is currently three days for users with less than 1000 pages in their watchlist, and 12 hours for users with more than 1000. (Note: This is a default prescribed by Wiki that cannot be changed by the user).

Each line in the watchlist provides details such as last edit, minor or major edit, date & time, difference between the current and the previous version, editor’s user name and the edit summary etc.

What watchlist does?

i) Last Edit: the last edit made to each watched page in reverse chronological order

ii) Recent Changes: in the recent changes, watch pages will be listed in bold to call attention to them.

My WatchList Link:

Log on to www.wikipedia.org or www.wikieducator.org. You can see watchlist by clicking on the ‘my watchlist’ link in the sidebar. Figure 1 shows the ‘my watchlist’.

How to set your page in watchlist?

You can add pages to your watchlist while (i) viewing an article, and clicking the ‘Watch’ link in the menu bar or (ii) while editing an article, check the “Watch this page” checkbox near the edit summary (Figure-2) or (iii) you can set your preferences to “Add pages you edit to your watchlist” (Figure-3). Remember you need to logged in to perform these task, as these are personal settings.

How to remove a page from watchlist?

In order to remove a page from your watchlist by (i) view the article, and click the ‘unwatch’ link in the menu bar, or (ii) click the “My watchlist” link in the sidebar, and select “edit complete list”. You will be given a checkbox list from which you can select multiple pages to be removed from the list.

Watching a page allows you to receive e-mail notification of changes to it. To enable this feature, you need to select “E-
mail me when a page on my watchlist is changed” at Preferences settings.

**How to control the list of changes displayed?**

*Show/hide different types of edit:* You may choose to hide or show minor edits, bot edits, one’s own edits, edits by anonymous users and edits by logged-in users. Initially the default behavior for all of these is “show”. The defaults can be changed using the options available on the “Watchlist” tab of your user preferences.

*Time period covered:* You can choose how many hours or days you want the list of changes to go back, using the links at the top of the watchlist. For the maximum (30 days), select “all”. For non-standard values, select one of the available links and then edit the value after “days=” in the URL. The default value, which must be a number of days not greater than 7, is set on the “Watchlist” tab of your user preferences.

*Enhanced watchlist:* You can select to display only the last edit to each watched page (“Simple watchlist”). This is currently the default, but can produce misleading results. Having selected the expanded watchlist, you can choose “enhanced” display mode, which groups together all changes made to each page on a given day. You may choose to set the “Maximum number of changes to show in expanded watchlist”

Hope that above description would be helpful for using the Watchlist tracking method in Media Wiki platforms such as Wikipedia and WikiEducator.

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Regional Round Up

Regional Symposium on Open Educational Resources

Educational leaders and practitioners of Open Educational Resources (OER) participated in a three day event at the Waswasan Open University, Penang from 19-21 September 2012 to understand and share knowledge of the role played by emerging technologies in the context of increasing access, enhancing equity and promoting lifelong learning in higher education. Organized in collaboration with DISTED College and IDRC, Canada, the event was supported by the UNESCO, International Council for Open and Distance Education, Association of Asian Open Universities and the Commonwealth of Learning, Canada. Major themes discussed in the symposium covered areas such as institutional policy for OER, technologies for creation of OER, designing OER, sustaining OER projects and initiatives, and quality assurance of OER. In addition to keynote addresses, there were only about 20 selected papers presented in the Symposium giving scope to increased interaction and discussion. About 80 participants from all over the world participated in the Symposium. Prof. Asha Kanwar, President and CEO of Commonwealth of Learning in her keynote presentation emphasized the expansion of the circle of OER as progress in the last 10 year. Her presentation is available at http://www.col.org/resources/speeches/2012presentations/Pages/2012-09-20.aspx

See also: http://www.oerasia.org/oersymposium

TESS-India Consultation Workshop

TESS-India pre-operational consultation workshop was held in New Delhi from 26-29 November 2012. TESS-India (Teacher Education though School-based Support in India) is a DFID funded project to develop high quality free resources to support teacher educators across India. Focusing on seven states in India, the project expects to develop a set of learning resources to support existing or new teacher education projects across India. The workshop in the week beginning the 26th November was a vital part of the planning process aimed to develop a curriculum framework for the writing of the teacher development units. The framework identifies the most difficult aspects of content knowledge and the trickiest area of pedagogical approach for teachers in India, providing the content and pedagogical knowledge map for the resources which will subsequently be adapted and localised and then embedded into existing or new teacher education programme across India.

Dubai SCOP 2012

The Standing Conference of Presidents (SCOP) of the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) met at Dubai from 13-15 November 2012 in the spectacular complex of the Hamdan Bin Mohammed University (HBMeU). The SCOP conference focussed on Open and Distance Education (ODE): Barriers, Opportunities & Strategies Forward, with a view to tackle the various challenges and barriers associated with the implementation of ODE from both an international and regional perspective. Participated by over hundred Rectors and Vice Chancellors of distance teaching institutions around the world, the event was a platform to discuss developments such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), Open Educational Resources (OER) and use of Social Media to promote awareness about ODE. The meeting also discussed the strategic plan for the
ICDE in the next three years. With a mix of keynote presentations and small group work, the event presented huge scope to discuss bilateral and multilateral issues amongst the participants proving to be a great networking event for ODE. Dr. Sanjaya Mishra, Director, CEMCA represented the Commonwealth of Learning in the event and presented one of the Keynote addresses. Dr. Mishra in his keynote entitled “Openness in education” called upon the Rectors and Vice Chancellors to reflect on the concept of “openness” in their universities and develop strategies to create open systems for knowledge transaction using new information and communication technologies to promote learning for development and foster knowledge societies. His presentation is available at http://www.col.org/resources/speeches/2012presentations/Pages/2012-11-14.aspx

Book Review

Open Educational Resources and Change in Higher Education: Reflections from Practice


By S. K. Pulist

The world has been witnessing the exponential growth of Open Educational Resources (OER) during the recent times. The last few years have been instrumental in sowing the seeds of this new form of development, promotion, collaboration and sharing of e-learning resources across the world. Though, the developed countries seem to be more enthusiastic in supporting the new OER initiatives, the educational institutions all over find it difficult to resist adoption of this change and, therefore, need to re-ascertain their stand and reposition them in the new situation. This development has aroused the need not only to recapitulate and consolidate the efforts made in this direction but also to put suitable systems and practices in place for taking care of different dimensions of the concept of OER including the legal and ethical ones.

The Commonwealth of Learning and UNESCO are playing a proactive role in providing guidance in all new international initiatives. The Volume in hand is one such step ahead in the direction of providing solution to many of the ‘legal, managerial, financial, technical, technological and pedagogical’ issues arising out of the new situation before the ‘practising educators’.

In the volume, the 28 scholars through their 15 chapters and separate sections on ‘Introduction’ and ‘Conclusion’ have provided a fresh insight to the concept of OER and its application at different levels in higher education in different parts of the globe. The case studies provided in the volume focus on the experiences and practices being followed in different corners of the world. The ‘Vignettes’ annexed to some of the chapters discuss different dimensions of policy, practice and reflections at international level to ‘capture more personal accounts of OER experiences’. The ‘Introduction’ provides an insight to the different initiatives taken in different parts of the world and active role of UNESCO and COL in taking the concept of OER further. It provides a historical perspective of the OER movement which started in the last
An overview of the variety of topics discussed in different chapters will prove the worth of the book. Chapter 1 discusses the prevalent issues emerging out from the workshops organised in different countries focussing on different aspects of OER laying emphasis on finding ‘innovative ways to support the creation and use of quality resources and promotion of quality teaching practices in higher education’. Chapter 2, describes the most typical barriers and challenges to the development and repurposing of OER as identified through surveys undertaken by UNESCO aiming ‘at investigating the prerequisites, challenges and opportunities for the production and use of OER in the non-English speaking countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States’.

Chapter 3 discusses the major OER initiatives which have taken place in India, with emphasis on government’s commitment to OER development. The author focuses on some major initiatives which have taken place following the recommendations of the ‘National Knowledge Commission’ in the country. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 provide empirical account based on case studies of OER projects in Africa. Chapter 4 specifically studies the different aspects of production and promotion of health OER at the University of Ghana (UG) and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). In Chapter 5, the case study by South African Institute of Distance Education provides evidence to support the argument that experts driven institutional collaborations in materials designing and emphasises that this practice can result in development of high-quality cost-effective OER which would be useful in ‘diverse educational contexts’. While Chapter 6 covers the task of OER development in the core subjects for teacher education across 13 institutions in nine Sub-Saharan countries, Chapter 7 analyses the Open Educational Quality Initiative framework methodology reflecting on its use to promote open education practices. Chapter 8 takes-up the practical and legal issues involved in surfing OER for some specific purposes. Chapter 9 analyses the issues concerning the design and development of OER from a student’s perspective. The author argues that the ‘open availability, accessibility, affordability and acceptability of OER is likely to change the teacher–student and student–student relationships away from the more traditional, teacher-centred, “sage on the stage” face-to-face mode to a more learner-centred, “guide on the side” blended learning mode’.

Chapter 10 presents an overview of cultural and disciplinary ways of identifying the challenges in use of OER across diverse cultures and disciplines. It suggests for establishment of an evaluation process for ensuring disciplinary and cultural relevance of OER. Chapter 11 discusses the experience of using different educational resources on the web – both OER and non-OER with reference to pedagogical and learning principles. The changing role of teachers in the new setting is the centre point of the discussion. The author cites a number of examples to substantiate his view. Chapter 12 concentrates on various methodologies of producing and sharing existing educational materials with the rest of the world in the form of OER. The authors focus on different issues involved in licensing of the educational resources including the legal ones. They discuss different practices of sharing material in this manner. The diagrammatic presentation of the models in the chapter catches eye of the reader. Chapter 13 continues the discussion and takes it to other dimension with special reference to policy and practice. The authors raise some policy issues while citing examples of the way institutions are dealing with these issues and uploading the teaching material in the public domain.

Chapter 14 tries to analyse the OER policy adopted in Brazil. The author in this chapter shares the experiences of OER development project in the country that tries to build awareness advocating for the OER community development. Chapter 15 presents a case study on growth of OER culture in New Zealand with special reference to Otago Polytechnic, nurturing the development of an OER ecosystem with ‘government interventions, institutional innovations and international partnerships’.

The volume reaffirms the contribution of the OER movement in higher education from global perspective in a big way. The experiences shared by the contributors can prove to be of immense help to the beginners who want to make headway in the area of OER development and sharing the resources with the rest of the world following an appropriate licensing policy. The new institutions will find it easy to frame and adopt a policy on OER development and promotion following the experiences discussed in the book. Surely it will facilitate the policy-makers and educational practitioners in viewing the movement from a different perspective and exploring possibilities for making qualitative difference in the way the higher education is imparted globally.

Dr. S. K. Pulist is Deputy Director at Distance Education Council, IGNOU, New Delhi. He can be reached at <skpulist@ignou.ac.in>
Forthcoming Events


For further details contact:
Secretary of IC4E 2013
Address: Room5, 6/F., Shun On Commercial Building, 112-114 Des Voeux Road, Central, Hong Kong.
Tel: 86-28-86528478 (China Branch)
IC4E 2013
E-mail: ic4e@iedrc.org
IC4E 2013
website: http://www.iedrc.org/ic4e
IEDRC
Website: http://www.iedrc.org/

2013 International Conference on Information and Education Technology - ICIET 2013

The International Conference on Information and Education Technology which will be held during 12-13 January 2013, in Bruxelles, Belgium. ICIET 2013 aims to bring together researchers, scientists, engineers, and scholar students to exchange and share their experiences, new ideas, and research results about all aspects of Information and Education Technology, and discuss the practical challenges encountered and the solutions adopted.

For further information, contact:
Email: iciet@iacsit.org
Tel: +86-28-8652-8298
Website: http://www.iciet.org/

6th Annual International Symposium for Emerging Technologies for Online Learning - SLOAN-C

The AA conference devoted to the emerging and innovative uses of technology designed to improve teaching and learning online, the 6th Annual International Symposium for Emerging Technologies for Online Learning will be held from April 9-11, 2013 at Planet Hollywood Resort - Las Vegas, Nevada.

For more information, see:
http://sloanconsortium.org/conference/2013/et4online/welcome

Third International Conference on Learning and Teaching (TIC2013)

To be organized by Tunku Abdul Rahman College, Kual Lumpur, Malaysia from 21-22 October 2013, the objectives of this
conference are to promote collaborations, discussion and sharing of knowledge, experience and expertise on innovative methodologies and strategies in learning, teaching and assessments, digital learning and teaching eco-system; and effects of globalisation on institutional policies and professional development.

For further details, contact:
The Conference Secretariat
TARC International Conference on Learning and Teaching 2013
Tunku Abdul Rahman College
P.O. Box 10979
50932 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Tel: +603-4145 0170 / +603-4145 0123 ext. 447/212,
Mobile: +6012-396 4948
Fax: +603-4149 9253
E-mail: tic2013reg@mail.tarc.edu.my
Website: http://web3.tarc.edu.my/v1/tic/default.asp

The Unisa Cambridge International Conference on Open and Distance eLearning 2013

The University of South Africa in association with Cambridge Distance Education and the Commonwealth of Learning presents the Unisa Cambridge International Conference on Open and Distance and eLearning from 30 September - 3 October 2013 - Spier Estate - Cape Town - South Africa.

For more information, contact:
Genevieve James
Tel: +27124296948
Email: prdconf@gmail.com

24th International Conference of the Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education

SITE2013

New Orleans, Louisiana
March 25 - 29, 2013

For more information, see:
Website: http://site.aace.org/conf/

The EdMedia World Conference on Educational Media and Technology

EdMedia 2013

is an international conference, organized by the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE) at Victoria, BC, Canada from June 24-28, 2013.

For more information, see:
Web site: http://www.aace.org/conf/edmedia/

E-LEARN 2013 - World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare & Higher Education

Las Vegas, Nevada: October 21-25, 2013

For more information, see:
Web site: http://www.aace.org/conf/elearn/

27th Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities

Conference Theme: Leveraging the Power of Open and Distance Education for Building a Divergent World - Today’s Solutions and Tomorrow’s Vision

16-18 October 2013, Islamabad, Pakistan.

For more information, contact:
AAOU 2013 Conference Secretariat
Room-8, Block-7,
Allama Iqbal Open University,
Islamabad, Pakistan.
Email:aaou2013@aiou.edu.pk
Web site: http://overseas.aiou.edu.pk/aaou.asp

25th ICDE World Conference in China

The 25th ICDE World Conference will be hosted by Tianjin Open University, China, on 16-18 October 2013.

Conference Theme: New Strategies for Global Open, Flexible and Distance Learning

For more information, contact:
The 25th ICDE World Conference Organizing Committee
Tianjin Open University
No.1 Yingshui Road, Nankai District,
Tianjin 300191, P.R. China
Tel: +86 22 23679937
Fax: +86 22 23678502
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