



INDIA

Focal Point: Shri Praveen Prakash

Report presented by Shri Anand Kumar Singh

Indian Open & Distance Learning (ODL) Scenario:

At present the ODL system in India consists of one National Open University (IGNOU), 13 State Open Universities (SOUs) and 200 Distance Education Institutes (DEIs) which are the distance education arm of conventional universities. There are about 4.0 million learners in the ODL system. ODL constitutes about 21.9% of total enrolment in the higher education system. The Open Universities offer programmes in diverse disciplines. However, the jurisdiction of the SOUs offering programmes in the distance mode is limited to the respective States as provided in their respective Acts under which they were established. Besides receiving financial assistance from the States Governments, the SOUs are also provided grants by the Central Government through the University Grants Commission (UGC)/ IGNOU for overall development that includes development of courses materials, development & applications of new technology, computerization, library, research & development, quality assurance measures, networking of distance education (DE) system, construction of buildings, etc. Distance higher education is regulated through the University Grants Commission, and has a system of accreditation of educational providers.

Apart from this, there is one Open School at the national level, and 17 state Open Schools catering to secondary and senior secondary education in the country.

The Commonwealth of Learning has a regional centre in India – the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA). Along with the interventions from COL headquarters, CEMCA has been assisting in several activities in India. Some of its current activities are:

Open Schooling

- Assisted development of the Virtual Open Schooling (VOS) platform at the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS).
- Developing industry linked courses for school education with NIOS.

Higher Education

- Promotion of Open Educational Resources (OER): Organised workshops in India from 7-9 January 2014 in collaboration with Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAU), Hyderabad, etc. to promote OER based e-Learning.
- ICT Leadership in Higher Education event organised in February 2013 for Vice Chancellors in select universities in India. This activity is aimed at developing

capacities of institutional leaders to ingrate technology into teaching and learning by taking proactive steps and developing technology master plans, including appropriate policies for OER.

- Quality Guidelines for OER developed and disseminated.
- CEMCA also assisted to develop Open License Policy Guidelines for the National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT), a scheme of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

Teacher Education

- In the last two years, CEMCA has organised many workshops for Teacher Educators in the country to train them on appropriate use of ICT in education.

Technical and Vocational Skill Development

- Supported the development of open and distance learning courses in compliance with the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF).
- Assisted Tamil Nadu Open University (TNOU) to align its vocational courses to the NSQF.
- A course on “Community Radio Technology” developed and disseminated with support of Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Ltd (BECIL).

Community Media

- Community Radio Continuous Improvement Toolkit CR-CIT version 2.0 finalized in cooperation with University of Hyderabad.
- Many workshops for training Community Radio Broadcasters organised and over 200 women trained in Community Radio broadcast through a cascade model of training.
- Supported the development of Web Radio Manual to help higher education institutions use streaming audio technology rather than take the Community Radio route.
- Three CR workshops organized for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- Besides these activities of CEMCA, COL headquarter is engaged directly in organizing activities at National Institute of Open Schooling, Gawahati University, NCERT and other institutions.

Top Priorities and How COL Can Further Support the National Agenda of India:

Skill Development

Skill gap of graduates is a major problem in India. Moreover, skilled human resources are essential for sustainable economic growth. India has set a target of skilling 500 million people by 2022. Skill development will assist the human resources of the country to be globally competitive and attain internationally recognized qualifications to gain access to

decent employment. Skill development is necessary for stimulating sustainable development and contributes to the transition from an informal to formal economy. There is a need to consider skills development at all levels, and also document skills related to indigenous arts and crafts and provide certification. COL's focus need to be on developing capacities to transform the existing system into international standards, and help scale the skilling process using technology-enabled learning.

School Education

The policy at present is to make secondary education of good quality available, accessible and affordable to all young persons in the age group of 14-18. While the quality of school education is a matter of concern, it is important to develop 21st century skills, including skills of critical and constructive thinking, use of ICT, organisation and leadership, and community services. COL's focus may be towards intervention at the pedagogical level, while also supporting the establishment of new Open Schools for increasing access.

Teacher Education

The quality of school education is primarily dependent on the quality of trained teachers available in schools. Shortage of teacher in schools is a major problem, and there are many untrained teachers. It is important to provide in-service teacher training and enhance the institutional capacities to offer technology-enabled teacher training. COL's interventions may be increased in improving quality teacher education as well as improving the capacities of teachers by enriching their training in ICTs.

Quality Higher Education

In India, there are nearly 700 universities/ university level institutions. Quality has many dimensions in higher education institution. Assessment and accreditation continues to be a major focus for the Government. It has also been increasing support to the States through a new vehicle, Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) – National Higher Education Mission. Increasing Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education is yet another objective of this mission. In order to improve the quality of education in an average college/university in the country, it is important to focus on the quality of teaching and infrastructure. COL may focus on how to improve the capacities of teachers in higher education to engage in quality teaching and learning.

Focus on technology for improving quality of education and development

Through the NMEICT Scheme, the Government of India is focused on improving the quality of teaching-learning through the use of ICTs in higher education. It is important that technology enhanced learning becomes integral part of the teaching-learning system at all levels of education, including both formal and informal education. In order to make ICT an integral part of the process, it is important to focus on teacher training, as well as infrastructure development at educational institutions. While Open Educational Resources (OER) will improve access to quality educational resources, and also enable its re-use and

adaption in local languages, it is also important to have exemplary courses made available to learners as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC). These courses should be accessible to any student from anywhere in the country, and for that infrastructure need to be improved. COL's current work on OER and MOOC should continue to help teachers understand the potential of OER and integrate it in their teaching and learning.

Under the NMEICT Scheme, significant progress has been made in developing low-cost access devices & software applications for ICT-based education, generating e-content across disciplines and providing connectivity to colleges and universities. The challenge now lies in embedding the technologies in the teaching-learning processes. Also the challenge is to enable and empower teachers in adopting a technology-enabled environment, supporting them in acquiring skills in e-content development and make them adept in emerging modes of technology-based delivery. Another important area that requires urgent intervention is to put in place a policy acceptable to all stakeholders for integrating technology-enabled learning as a part of curriculum and recognising degrees/diplomas earned through the online or blended mode. COL may focus on these also.

*Asia Regional Focal Points Meeting
Penang, Malaysia
September 2014*