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In this issue

Guest Column	2
Spotlight On	6
Worth While Web	8
CEMCA News	9
Case Study	14
Regional Round Up	17
Book Review	18
SMART Tips	19
Technology Tracking	21
Research Shows	22
Forthcoming Events	24



From Director's Desk

I am pleased to present this issue of *EduComm Asia* to our esteemed readers, and thank you all for your kind support and best wishes. In the month of November 2013, we had the 13th Meeting of the CEMCA Advisory Council (CAC), where we presented with pride the CEMCA Annual Report 2012-13 (available on our website). We also had the opportunity of welcoming our new members of the revamped advisory council. The CAC now has proportionate number of representatives from COL/CEMCA, member states and experts.

The beginning of the new financial year of CEMCA also brought to us some new challenges in terms of staff movements. I take this opportunity to thank Ms Rukmini Vemraju, who left CEMCA at the end of September 2013 after serving 10 years as Programme Officer. She contributed to strengthening of the Community Radio activities of CEMCA, and also shaped the current Three Year Plan (TYP) related to Livelihoods and Health. I am also pleased to welcome Dr. Ankuran Dutta to our CEMCA Team as the new Programme Officer succeeding Ms Vemraju. Dr. Dutta, as a young and dynamic professional, comes with huge experiences in academics, research, writing, and educational media production activities, including hands-on experiences of setting up and running

Community Radio station. I am sure you will provide all support to him to serve our stakeholders better.

We are thankful to Prof. V.S. Prasad for permitting us to edit and re-print his lecture at the IDEA 2013 as Guest Column in this issue. I am sure, this will provide food for thought to all those involved/not involved in distance education to reflect and think about improving quality access to higher education. This issue is a kind of special issue on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and Open Educational Resources (OERs). The sections on Spotlight, SMART Tips, Worth While Web, and Book Review cover developments on OER and MOOCs. In the Technology Tracking section, we introduce you to a new Google innovation to provide last mile connectivity to remote areas – Project Loon.

We hope that you will like this edition of *EduComm Asia*. As indicated always, your support and continuous engagement is critical to keep us focussed not only to implement our activities, but also to bring relevant information through the Newsletter. Do write to us about what you want to see more in the Newsletter, and how you can be part of the team of contributors.

Dr. Sanjaya Mishra





Guest Column...

The Disconnect between Dharma and Karma in Indian Open Distance Learning

By Prof. V.S. Prasad

This Guest Column is an edited version of the Prof. G. Ram Reddy Memorial Lecture Delivered by Prof. V.S. Prasad during the Annual Conference of Indian Distance Education Association (IDEA) in Hyderabad in April 2013. We are thankful to Prof. Prasad for his permission to reprint this in the EduComm Asia - Editor.

“Between the idea and reality falls the shadow”

- T. S. Eliot

At one time I was an active participant in the procession of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in India. Now, I am on the road side watching the continuation of ODL procession. It is said that the person on the road side has better view of the procession than the person in the procession. I am looking at things ‘with pessimism of the intellect but optimism of the will’ (with respect to Antonio Gramsci). I am a ‘disturbed optimist’ – disturbed about some of the practices of ODL and optimist about its potential.

Fifty years of modern system of ODL in India is a story of achievements and frustrations. With a modest beginning in 1962 as correspondence system in University of Delhi, today it is a huge system with 14 Open Universities and around 200 institutions offering ODL programmes in diverse areas with an estimated enrolment of around 4 million students. The theme of the discourse is to critically examine the present practices, called as *Karma*, with principles that guide us to do right things called as *Dharma*. The *Dharma* and *Karma* words are used in the secular sense of right conduct and actual practice. The

presentation is an attempt to understand negative practices to move forward positively.

The Dharma of ODL

The ODL is a way of thinking and a way of doing. The essential elements of *Dharma* of ODL include:

An effective instrument for democratisation of education: “Ivory Tower Thrown Open” is one of the titles of the books on ODL. It conveys the spirit of ODL. Access to all and learner managing their own learning are two essential elements of democratisation of learning. The open admission policies are based on the assumption that it is exit standards, not the entry standards that matter. Like citizen is the centre of democratic polity, the learner is the centre of democratic education system. The autonomous model of study, without the constraints of time and space enables the large numbers to have access to education.

A means for social justice: In developing countries educational opportunities are less accessible to poor people because of

many socio-economic and political factors. The ODL enables the people to overcome some of these limitations. The flexibility of study enables the learners to manage their study along with work and family; it includes people in geographies that otherwise would be excluded; it supports the inclusion of women where their independent movement is not possible; it permits participation of groups otherwise shut out by costs. This is more an inclusive form of education.

A means for development: The ODL as a national strategy for development finds place in many developing country’s vision documents on education. ‘Learning for development’ is the vision and mission of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). The ODL is extensively used for capacity building, skill development, and for professional development of working population.

Technology mediated form of education: Distance education is a delivery of teaching and learning by a variety of mediating processes to those who are separated by time and space from those who are teaching. The technology is used to expand educational opportunities and to enrich the learning experience. Mind boggling developments are taking place in the field of technology and their use for educational processes.

Quality imperatives: Quality is essential for making the meaning of other elements of *Dharma* of ODL. The quality of learning materials, student support services, student evaluation and administrative services are critical to the effectiveness of ODL. In the competitive context, the ODL legitimacy and credibility depends on the quality assurance of its operations. The openness of the system makes the quality of operations amenable for more public scrutiny.

Teacher as a facilitator: Teachers in ODL are facilitators, than traditional instructors. To put it differently there is a

shift in their role from a 'sage on the stage' to a 'guide on the side'. The focus is shifted from expositional form of teaching to facilitating form of teaching. Teaching in ODL is also a group activity and a collective-activity. In a multi-media form of teaching-learning subject expert is one of the member of the group of academics engaged in teaching through ODL. The identity of academics in ODL is more complex and inclusive.

The institution as promoter: It is observed that in conventional education teacher teaches, whereas in distance education institution teaches. The institution as an arrangement for realization of common purpose is critical in the ODL system. Good logistics along with good learning materials and good students support services is considered as important requirement for a successful ODL system. The leadership plays a very important role in putting in place result based management system to achieve the goals of ODL.

The Karma of ODL

Indian ODL system can be described "as one system, many models". There is a great variation in the practices of the system. Any generalisations about practices have to be qualified by exceptions. Here, an attempt is made to identify broad trends in the present day ODL practices. These include:

Large enrolment: Delhi University started correspondence programme with an enrolment of 1112 students. Now, we have ODL institutions with hundreds of thousands of enrolment. The enrolment growth rate in ODL is higher than the growth rate in conventional system. In some of the dual mode institutions ODL students are more in numbers than conventional students. Some of the Open Universities and ODL centres are following open admission policies, particularly in admissions to liberal education programmes at undergraduate

level. This is giving second chance to a large number of dropouts from conventional system and others who discontinued school education for various socio-economic reasons.

Diversification of programmes: Initially ODL institutions started with liberal arts programmes, with assumption that ODL is appropriate for education of liberal arts only. In the first decades of ODL journey, there was a strong resistance for launching of Science and Professional Programmes. Now, the ODL system is offering all types of programmes in Science, Technology, Education,

During the last fifty years of ODL, the pendulum of programme offerings moved from one extreme of restricting only to Arts programmes to another extreme of offering any programmes.

Management, Health Science, Agriculture, Information Technology, Arts, and Culture. The flexibility in ODL is enabling many institutions to offer skill development and professional development programmes in many areas to meet the needs of market and employers. During the last fifty years of ODL, the pendulum of programme offerings moved from one extreme of restricting only to Arts programmes to another extreme of offering any programmes.

Active role by private sector: The private sector, particularly major players in industry are trying to use ODL for development of human resources, particularly in professional and vocational fields. Many private players are offering education and training programmes through ODL. Many of these programmes are at certificate and diploma levels, may or may not be recognized by appropriate

bodies. This mode is extensively used by private sector for skill training with employment potential and is very popular.

Commercialisation as a drive for expansion: The expansion and diversification of ODL is driven more by profit motives of private sector or resource mobilisation drive of public sector ODL institutions. These commercial motives are influencing institutional decisions about learning materials, support services, evaluation systems and administrative arrangements.

Use of technology: The correspondence institutes started with use of print materials for delivery of programmes with not much student support services. Over the years multimedia in various forms is being used by many ODL institutions. Some of the ODL institutions are using interactive technologies for delivery of programmes. The ICT is being used by some ODL institutions for teaching-learning and for administrative purposes. In spite of some of these developments, printed material is the dominant form of learning material used in the system. The significant difference over a period of time is only in the improvements made in the print material formats by incorporating programmed learning strategies, making them more suitable for self-directed learning. The other technologies used are more supportive in nature and only symbolic in many institutions.

Quality assurance systems: There is a great variation in quality assurance policies, systems and practices followed by ODL institutions in India. At one end of the spectrum we have IGNOU, some state Open Universities and some ODL institutions, which do have quality assurance practices like good study materials, student support services, technology infrastructure etc. At the other end of the spectrum, many institutions are offering sub-standard ODL programmes with large enrollment by franchising delivery. Effective mechanism to ensure quality of these programmes is

yet to be in place, though efforts were made by the Distance Education Council (now part of UGC as Distance Education Bureau).

Regulatory framework for ODL: In the initial phase of ODL no regulatory framework outside the university system was envisaged. Later, with offering of ODL programmes by many universities, the University Grants Commission (UGC) developed guidelines for starting of ODL programmes. The Distance Education Council (DEC) established in 1991, was entrusted with regulatory responsibilities to maintain standards in ODL. The multiple regulatory councils in higher education are also expected to regulate the standards in professional, technical and vocational programs, coming under their respective jurisdiction. The multiplicity of regulatory agencies is a feature of Indian higher education system and ODL is a part of that system. Prof. N. R. Madhava Menon Committee on Distance Education examined in detail the present regulatory arrangements of ODL and found it very inadequate and ineffective. The alternatives suggested by the committee are in the process of implementation.

The Areas of Disconnect

The critical examination of ODL practices shows some disconnects with the ideal. Some of these are:

Distortion in the goals of ODL: The profit making or resource generation orientations of some of ODL institutions results in compromises with the social goals of the system. It is paradoxical to use the system meant for socially disadvantaged for generating resources. The system is subsidised by learners. Some of the public universities are using ODL and affiliating system as a means for resource generation. It amounts gross violation of academic norms. It is distressing to observe the attitude of some dual mode universities which accepts ODL students, but exhibit no

sense of ownership or pride in them. Their usefulness is measured in terms of surplus generation. Some Vice-Chancellors even boast of their achievements in terms of surpluses generated through distance mode.

Constraints on openness of ODL practices: The products of ODL from the open admission stream are facing innumerable difficulties in further admissions to programmes in conventional system and in employment. There are many restrictions on programmes to be offered by ODL system. Recently, MHRD issued action points on recommendation of Madhava Menon Committee say: “a conventional university/institution to be granted only for such ODL programs which are being

The ODL in India is an ineffectively over regulated system. It may result in regulation based on subjective judgment of regulators as per their likes and prejudices. The regulatory systems are more concerned in restricting bad practices, than in facilitating good practices.

offered through the regular conventional mode”. It has not taken into account the needs of different target groups of ODL and the broader objective of ODL programmes for professional development and capacity building, in framing this action proposal. The limitations of conventional system should not constrain the ODL system. Present ODL system is also not providing sufficient flexibility to learners to accumulate credits from different institutions and pursue studies by different modes.

Limited use of interactive technology: Interaction is the essence of education. The ODL in India is not able to effectively

use interactive technologies in its teaching-learning activities. The interactive technologies will help in deeper academic engagements. The use of social software such as blogs, wikis, podcasts and social networks enables the learners to engage in networked learning. The use of technology for improving the quality of learning and for requirements of knowledge based society is not well appreciated by most of the ODL institutions.

Quality deficit: The ODL institutes who are guided by desire to make quick money are more interested in selling their programmes, than the quality of their practices. It is quite possible that in a competitive context the market may be a driving force for quality. But in a context of demand driven system the supplier can play all tricks to sell the products. The social demand for qualifications, unmindful of competency outcomes, may result in unconcern for quality. It is a challenging task for quality mechanism to weed out the bad apples from the barrel.

Ineffective regulatory system: The ODL in India is an ineffectively over regulated system. It may result in regulation based on subjective judgment of regulators as per their likes and prejudices. The regulatory systems are more concerned in restricting bad practices, than in facilitating good practices. The unhealthy practices in offering technical education programmes by some ODL institutions resulted in AICTE banning the offering of technical education programmes through ODL. The enrollment of thousands of students to research programmes by some ODL institutions without any concern for quality resulted in UGC banning research programmes through ODL. We cannot blame AICTE or UGC for their actions. We, in the ODL have to own the responsibility for the irresponsible actions of some of our fraternity. But, we also expect from the regulatory agencies a different response. It is more appropriate to prescribe the requirements to offer

programmes through ODL than totally prohibiting the programme offer.

Lack of professionalism in management of ODL:

The governance system of most of ODL institutions lack professionalism in their operations. The simple expectations of ODL learners are to receive the materials on time and examinations to be conducted as per schedule. Even these expectations are not fulfilled by many ODL institutions. The systems are becoming huge and adequate structures are not created to attend to all the needs of learners. The student support services are to be professionally managed. The results based management is the new age mantra of organisations. The leadership deficit is another concern of ODL institutions.

Ambiguity on the teachers' role in ODL:

Teacher is equally important in ODL as that of in a conventional system. May be teachers job in ODL is more complex and more difficult because of use of multiple technologies for teaching-learning purposes. There is a constant debate in ODL circles about the roles, responsibilities and relationships with others in the system. The teacher identity is not satisfactorily addressed in ODL system. The relationships between the multiple players engaged in teaching-learning in ODL are a constant source of irritation. There is a feeling that teachers in ODL are engaged more in management activities than in academic activities. This may not be a satisfying situation for serious academics. The strengthening of ODL system management may relieve teachers from some of the administrative responsibilities and enable them to make meaningful academic contributions.

The way forward

The ODL in India has made significant contributions in providing the space to space-less in higher education. The

system has acquired sufficient experience and acceptance to play an important role in future. The earlier discussions on limitations and concerns of the system are only to emphasise the need to overcome some of these limitations to reinvigorate the system to make more meaningful contributions. How do you build an ODL system which is learner centric, academically acceptable and institutionally effective? The suggestions for the way forward include:

Reemphasise the social goals of ODL:

The *Gurukula* is considered a teacher centric system; the conventional system an Institution centric system and ODL is a learner centric system. The social goals of ODL, the service orientation and the development orientation of ODL need to be re-emphasised. It is essential to prevent hijacking of the system by profiteers and racketeers. Market economy may be acceptable, but education as a market commodity has many unacceptable social implications.

“Mediating processes” of learning must be chosen carefully:

The “mediating processes” used for teaching learning and for communication play a critical role in the effectiveness of ODL. The nature of the target group, the institutional preparedness and the contextual factors should be taken into account in designing

the ODL methodologies. It is said that if two conditions i.e. learners preparedness to learn through distance mode and institutional preparedness to adapt appropriate methodologies of teaching and learning, are fulfilled, the ODL institutions can offer any programmes. There is a need for capacity building of staff and leadership to understand and manage the ODL operations.

Make quality the defining element of ODL:

The ODL institutions should be made accountable for quality. They should be empowered with necessary autonomy to take measures for quality. Internal quality assurance system should build the capacity of staff to understand and manage quality assurance. The quality assurance frameworks must focus on social outcomes, not merely the educational outputs. The social auditing of learning system and materials in terms of gender, class and environment makes the ODL a socially relevant system. The external regulatory authority should facilitate the internal systems for quality assurance and ensure the public accountability of ODL institutions. The institutional autonomy emphasised by various commissions and committees for conventional system is equally applicable to ODL system. Faith in the system is necessary for the trust in the system.

The future depends on what we do in the present”.

- Mahatma Gandhi

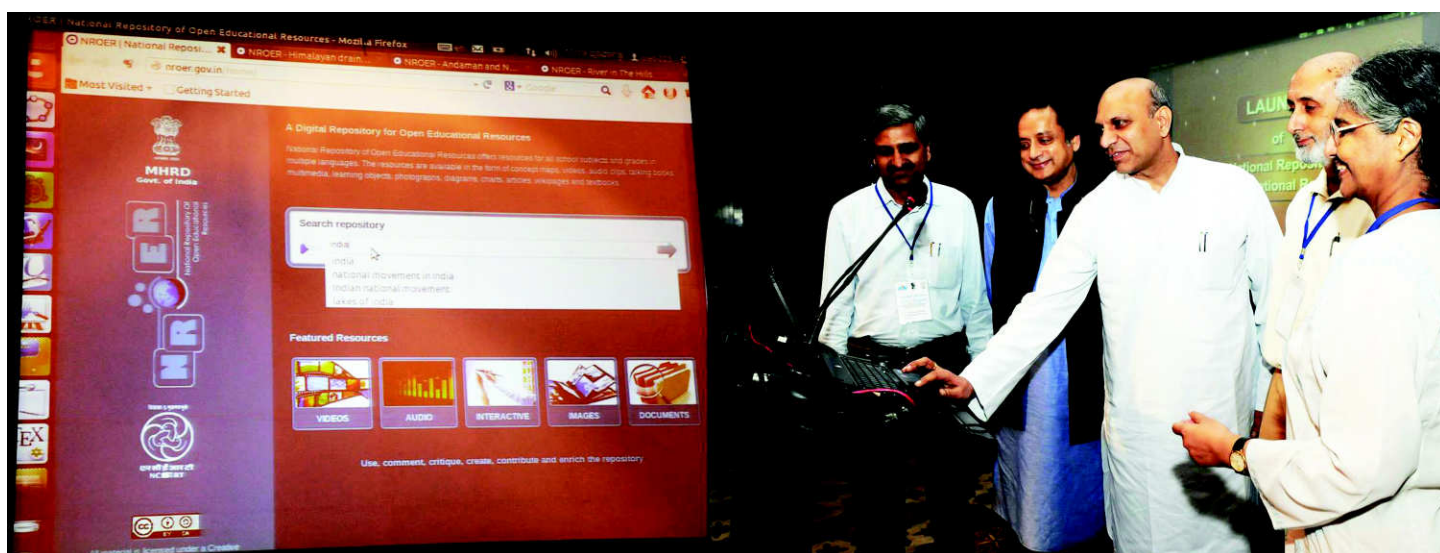
Acknowledgements: Most of the data in this presentation is based on “Report of the Committee to Suggest Measures to Regulate Standards of Education Being Imparted through Distance Mode”, under the chairmanship of Prof. N. R. Madhava Menon, Ministry of HRD, Government of India, December, 2011. The ideas in this presentation are borrowed freely from the writings of stalwarts like Gajaraj Dhanarajan, Sir John Daniel, Asha Kanwar, Alan Tait and many others and publications of COL. Individual references are avoided in the spirit of open ideas used for public discussion.

Prof. V.S Prasad is a Honorary Fellow of Commonwealth of Learning, and Former Director, National Assessment and Accreditation Council, Bangalore, India, and former Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Indira Gandhi National Open University, India, and former Vice Chancellor of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, India. He can be reached at prasadvs99@hotmail.com

Spotlight On...

National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER)

By Prof. Rajaram Sharma



Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET), a constituent unit of National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), came into existence in the year 1984 with the merger of Centre for Educational Technology and Department of Teaching Aids. Today, CIET is a premiere national institute for educational technology in India, and its major aim is to promote utilization of radio, TV, films, satellite communications and information technology tools in school education. The institute undertakes activities to widen educational opportunities promote equity and improve quality of educational processes at school level. Within its mandate to create quality educational content for the school children, it is involved in the development and management of the National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER) of digital resources – documents, audio-visuals, interactive objects, images etc.

NROER is a solution developed to address the challenges faced by the education sector in India. It intends to reach the unreached, include the excluded and extend education to all. It is a collaborative platform involving everyone who is interested in education. It offers resources for all school subjects and grades in multiple languages. It brings together all the digital resources for a school system such as educational videos, concept maps, audio clips, interactive objects, photographs, diagrams, charts, images, articles, learning objects, talking books, textbook pages and documents, any resource that can be served digitally.

The National Repository is based on the concept of Semantic Maps. It organizes its collections into an ever growing semantic map of concepts. The map itself is a learning resource for teachers, through which they can critically assess

the curriculum and aids them in the construction of their own unique learning themes for their classrooms. The digital resources are mapped to these concepts. They are further classified into various stages of schooling and further into multiple subject areas of the curriculum. Teachers can access various resources, upload resources, share, comment and rate the resources.

Dr. Shashi Tharoor, MoS for Human Resource Development, Government of India remarked during the launch of the repository – “This initiative is also a significant step towards inclusive education. Opening access to all requires a debate on the issue of ownership, copyright, licensing and a balancing of reach with legitimate commercial interests. This is particularly important for public institutions and public funded projects. NROER frees itself of these foundations since it carries the CC-BY-SA (Creative Commons–Attribution–Share Alike) license which allows it to legally reuse, revise, remix and redistribute content. To contribute to the repository, one must ensure that they are hosting the resources under a Creative Commons license (CC-BY-SA) and that the documents uploaded are encoded using non-proprietary, open standards.”

The NROER proposes to feature content

in all the Indian languages. Workshops will be organized in different states to multiply the resources and the content on the repository in regional languages. This will involve the efforts of teachers and students and various educational institutions. The process will involve translation of existing content in addition to the development of new content in different languages.

The National Repository is developed in collaboration with the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. Metastudio, the platform hosting the repository is an initiative of the Gnowledge Labs, Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education, Mumbai. NROER was launched by the Honorable Union Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister, Government of India Dr. MM Pallam Raju on 13th August 2013 in New Delhi. Addressing the Conference organized during the launch of NROER, Dr. Pallam

Raju said that the school education has in the recent times witnessed immense growth. Having promised our children the right to education, leveraging technology is important to expand the school system.

The repository is now open to the public and can be accessed at <http://nroer.gov.in>. Beginning with concepts in sciences, social sciences and mathematics, the repository will expand to include all classes from Grade 1 to 12 across different subjects. It also aims to cater to the teacher education courses at the D.Ed., B.Ed. and M.Ed. levels.

For the widespread dissemination and popularizing the national repository, CIET, NCERT is organizing a series of online events, the first in this series was the event called ‘Connecting Knowledge, Connecting People (CKCP)’. Launched on 5th September 2013, on the eve of National Teacher’s Day, it remained open till 12th September 2013. The response received for this event on the repository from the

teaching fraternity was quite overwhelming. The next event on the repository was organized in the month of October, in commemoration of the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, and was called ‘A Tribute to Mahatma’. This event started from 2nd October 2013 and remained open till 31st October 2013. During this event the repository received quite a lot of rare images and material related to the life of Mahatma Gandhi, which adds on to the already existing huge collection of images, photographs and other resources on the freedom movement.

The National Repository has received an encouraging response in terms of unique visits, repeated visits, access by users to different resource pages, number of repeated hits on

various resource pages and bandwidths of uploaded content in terms of in-house uploading and external contributions both. Since launch we have received over 16,269 unique visitors and 871,704 hits on the Repository (Statistics collected from 13th August 2013 to 10th November 2013).

The dream of a National Repository will be realized when the NROER becomes useful to each and every teacher, each and every child, across geographies, bridging the digital divide. This dream requires the contribution and critical participation of each one of us. Be a part of the movement. Join today!

For further information, contact:

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Worth While Web

Ten Platforms for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)



1. **Canvas Network**, <https://www.canvas.net/>

Canvas Network gives instructors and institutions an open platform to share their expertise and institutional experience with the world. It uses the Canvas, Open Source Learning Management System of Instructure.



2. **Coursera**, <https://www.coursera.org/>

Coursera is an education company that partners with the top universities and organizations in the world to offer courses online for anyone to take, for free.



3. **EdX**, <https://www.edx.org/>

EdX is a non-profit created by founding partners Harvard and MIT. Based on the principle of Open Source Platform, its aim is to expand access to education for everyone.



4. **Future Learn**, <https://www.futurelearn.com/>

FL is a private company wholly owned by The Open University, with large number of partner universities from the United Kingdom. Its aim is to connect learners from all over the globe with high quality educators, and with each other.



5. **Iversity**, <https://iversity.org/>

A German Company that wants to bring campus experiences online, Iversity provides structured multimedia enabled course environment.



6. **Open to Study**, <https://www.open2study.com>

Open to Study is an Australian MOOC platform; courses offered are supported by Open Universities Australia for accreditation and certification.



7. **OpenUpEd**, <http://www.openuped.eu/>

OpenUpEd is a pan-European platform for MOOC, supported by the European Commission. OpenupEd has been initiated and is coordinated by the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) and mostly involves open universities.



8. **P2P University**, <https://p2pu.org/en/>

P2PU is a grassroots open education project that organizes learning outside of institutional walls and gives learners recognition for their achievements. Registered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organisation in California, it functions as a community providing full open courses.



9. **Udacity**, <https://www.udacity.com/>

Udacity was born out of a Stanford University experiment in which Sebastian Thrun and Peter Norvig offered their "Introduction to Artificial Intelligence" course online to anyone, for free. Its mission is to bring accessible, affordable, engaging, and highly effective higher education to the world.



10. **Udemy**, <https://www.udemy.com/>

Udemy is an education company in San Francisco, California. It provides a large bouquet of courses in a variety of disciplines and subjects.

Staff News

Ms. Rukmini D. Vemraju left CEMCA on 30 September 2013 after serving over 10 years as Programme Officer (Livelihoods & Health). She joined CEMCA in December 2003, and contributed significantly to the Community Media activities of CEMCA/COL. We at CEMCA and COL thank her for contributing to strengthen the community radio movements in India and Bangladesh, and wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

Dr. Ankuran Dutta joined CEMCA as Programme Officer (Livelihoods & Health) on 18 November 2013. Before joining CEMCA, Dr. Dutta served the KK Handiqui State Open University, Assam as Deputy Director (Multimedia), and has been active in the Community Radio



movement in India. As a teacher and researcher, Dr. Dutta specializes in folklore, community media, and human rights. Dr. Dutta has received the Shastri Indo-

Canadian Fellowship for faculty enrichment in 2010-11. We at CEMCA and COL welcome Dr. Ankuran Dutta and look forward to his contributions to serve our stakeholder better.

Award for Former Intern

Ms Rajeswari Gorana of Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad, who completed a short internship for 8 weeks at CEMCA received the International Change Leadership Award instituted by

GIZ, Germany for her project on “eLearning course on ESD for in-service teachers” that she prepared during her stay at CEMCA from 1 January to 27 February, 2013. Prof. Asha Kanwar, President and CEO of Commonwealth of Learning while congratulating her for the award said “Congratulations and well done. I hope this is only the beginning of many other stellar achievements. I’m glad CEMCA was able to facilitate this in some way”. We at CEMCA and COL join her in congratulating Ms Rajeswari.

Interns at CEMCA

The following three interns served for short duration as Intern and learned about the activities of CEMCA.

- Ms. Suruthi Aggarwal
- Ms. Kastoori Barua
- Ms. Gaganpreet Kaur

We thank them for their interest in CEMCA activities, and wish them very bright future.

New Publications

The following documents have been published, distributed, and are available through CEMCA website.

- *Community Radio Continuous Improvement Toolkit* by Vinod Pavarala and others.
- *Self-Assessment Toolkit for Community Radio Stations and Practitioners* by Jayalakshmi Chittoor Parameswaran
- *OER TIPS: Guidelines for You to Build Your Learning Materials* by Paul Kawachi
- *eLearning in Commonwealth Asia 2013* by S.K. Pulist



Developing Curriculum and Self-Directed Learning Materials for Open Access

With the support of UNESCO, Paris, international multi-stakeholder experts’ meeting on development of curriculum and self-directed Learning (SDL) tool for Open Access (OA) was organized by Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), New Delhi on September 4-6, 2013. Twenty experts who are philosophers,



practitioners and scientists working to promote Open Access participated in the workshop/meeting from Argentina, Croatia, India, Lithuania, South Africa, Sri Lanka, including officials of UNESCO Paris and New Delhi. The meeting was held to develop the Curriculum blueprint for the SDL on Open Access for three different groups of stakeholders i.e., Librarians, Researchers of Universities and UNESCO Staff.

Dr. Sanjaya Mishra, Director, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, New Delhi welcomed all participants and highlighted the importance of OA as an emerging global phenomenon of high importance. He outlined the meeting's objectives and encouraged the participants to frame a dynamic, flexible and object-oriented curriculum for three main stakeholders i.e., Librarians, Researchers and UNESCO staff. Dr. Bhanu Neupane, OA specialist at UNESCO, Paris highlighted the UNESCO's role in promoting Open Access, and emphasized its commitment to provide a platform for increasing access to information and knowledge around the world.

Dr. Leslie Chan through Skype shared an online presentation from Canada on the literature survey on capacity building needs of librarians. Dr. Anup Das briefly presented situation analysis of researchers awareness and understanding of OA in a research university, i.e. Jawaharlal Nehru University. Dr. Sanjaya Mishra presented the outcomes of a Delphi Study to carry forward the main objectives of the meeting. During the workshop/meeting all participants worked in three groups: curriculum for Librarians, curriculum for Researchers and curriculum for UNESCO staff.

All the three groups developed detailed curriculum and presented to the plenary for further clarification. At the end of the meeting Dr. Sanjaya Mishra expressed gratitude to all the participants for sharing their valuable time and contributions. He specially thanked Dr. Bhanu Neupane and Ms. Iskra Penveska from UNESCO for their supports to this project. Dr. Mishra also thanked Dr. Ramesh C Gaur and Prof. Uma Kanjilal, who are advisors of this project for their kind continuous support. With the support of the experts, CEMCA is in the process of developing the content of the SDL on OA.

Quality Guidelines for Open Educational Resources



During the 27th Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) held at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Islamabad, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), organised an orientation and review workshop on quality

assurance (QA) guidelines for open educational resources (OER) as pre-conference. About 40 participants from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Korea, and Japan participated in the pre-conference workshop.

Mr Vis Naidoo, Vice President, Commonwealth of Learning, inaugurated the workshop, while Prof. Paul Kawachi served as the lead facilitator. Dr. Sanjaya Mishra, Director, CEMCA coordinated the workshop and supported as co-facilitator. The Workshop utilised the *Quality Assurance Guidelines for Open Educational Resources: T.I.P.S. Framework* published by CEMCA. The general aims were to test out the TIPS Framework and see how it can be further improved. This Framework consists of only 28 criteria - as a shortened format of the OER QA Guidelines version-1 (which consisted of 65 criteria). A full list of criteria was compiled from a global survey of OER experts which collated 195 distinct criteria - and this list is the most comprehensive and explicit list of OER QA criteria as yet assembled. OER prospective authors are encouraged to read through and select criteria appropriate to their own intended context - in view of the fact that each context is unique. The teacher as OER author is well positioned to understand the wants and needs of future students so as to best design OER localised to the context. The TIPS Framework is intended for use by teachers throughout Asia and the world, and translations into other languages (Urdu and Chinese) are underway.

Currently, the OER QA guidelines are also being tested by teachers, at Acharya Narendra Dev College and School of Open Learning, on voluntary basis for course development of select foundation courses of University of Delhi. This Workshop was successful in raising awareness of OER, in raising awareness on the need for QA, and in demonstrating the effectiveness of the OER QA TIPS Framework. The Workshop participants became keen to create their own OER.

Open Access Week Celebration

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) in partnership with UNESCO, New Delhi and Jawaharlal Nehru University organised a national conference on 21 October 2013 at the Convention Centre, JNU campus on “Opening Up by Closing the Circle: Strengthening Open Access in India” to celebrate the worldwide Open Access Week from 21-27 October 2013. About 400 events were held around the world to promote awareness and advocacy for



Open Access to scientific information to all. CEMCA as part of the Commonwealth of Learning has an OER policy for all its publications, and UNESCO also has adopted Open Access policy since July 2013.

Currently only about 20% of research information is available in Open Access, and there is a need to increase the same. Especially for the researches that are supported by public funds, it is expected that the results are also available to all in Open Access. Open Access is the free access to research information to all through either a repository or a journal. There are about 9944 Open Access journals and 2452 repositories at the end of September 2013. While only three countries have national legislation for Open Access in the world, there are over 180 institutional policies and over 80 funder policies registered in ROARMAP. While the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) have adopted OA polices, only a handful of institutional policies are there to promote Open Access in India.



This advocacy event participated by over 120 student researchers, library professionals, scientists, and publishers encouraged Open Access through institutional mandates, and would support an enabling environment towards national policy guidelines on Open Access to scientific information and research. In the inaugural session, Prof Sudha Pai, Rector, JNU, Prof S K Sopory, Vice-Chancellor, JNU, Mr Shigeru Aoyagi, Director and UNESCO Representative to Bhutan, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka participated, while Prof Ramakrishna Ramaswamy, Vice-Chancellor, University of Hyderabad delivered the keynote address. Dr. Ramesh C. Gaur, Librarian, JNU and Ms Iskra Panevska, Adviser for Communication and Information for South Asia, UNESCO coordinated the event.

Community Radio Video Challenge: Why Community Radio Matters?

The CR Video Challenge (CRVC) is a joint initiative of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), New Delhi, to engage the Indian youth in CR and promote understanding and importance of CR as an alternative media for community’s self-expression, learning and development.

The CRVC is a 3 minute video competition amongst students pursuing media studies in Indian education institutions during the period of the contest. A distinguished panel of jury will

adjudicate the submissions and select the swards which will be distributed on the World Radio Day 2014 (i.e. February 13, 2014). Academic Partner for the event is Apeejay Institute of Mass Communication (AIMC) which is one of the leading media training institutes in the country. The theme of the video competition is **Why Community Radio Matters? Last Date: 30 December 2013.** Website for submission:

<http://crvc.cemca.org.in/>

Workshops for Teacher Educators to Promote Communities of Practice

Two workshops were organised by *IT for Change*, Bangalore, with support from CEMCA for the faculty members of CTEs (Colleges of Teacher Education) and DIETs in Karnataka from the Bangalore and Mysore divisions from 21-25 October at Bangalore Rural DIET and for those from Belgaum division from 11-15 November at Dharwad DIET, towards building 'Communities of Practice' (CoP) amongst teacher educators. The SCERTs in the other South Indian states were also invited to participate in these workshops, and Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh deputed SCERT and DIET faculty to participate in these workshops.



These workshops were organised by *IT for Change*, Bangalore in collaboration with DSERT, Karnataka. The workshops focused on the use of ICTs for teacher educators' professional development, ranging from building basic ICT skills to participating in the CoP platform for teacher educators, including access to web resources and networking through mailing groups. Educational tools such as Geogebra, Audacity, PhET, Marble, KGeography, Kalzium, and Freemind,

video creating tool Record My Desktop, image editing tool GIMP were covered for providing hand-on training. Participants also learnt and practised use of Web 2.0 tools, and browsed the Karnataka Open Educational Resources (KOER) wiki portal maintained by the teachers CoPs, made teams, each of which choose a topic to build 'personal digital resource libraries' by gathering digital resources in text, image, video formats from the

Internet, and adding their own annotations/ comments. The participants realised that digital processes are much more dynamic and hence there would not be a 'final' resource, since these would forever undergo revision and enrichment, this is the spirit of OER (whose '4 Rs' are **Reuse**, **Revise**, **Remix** and **Re-distribute**).

In both workshops, the participants were very enthusiastic and enjoyed becoming more familiar with the digital world. The participants from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh shared that the use of free and open source tools was an important learning for them and that CoP was a powerful and democratic teacher development model. Both states would like to introduce similar CoP programmes for teachers and teacher educators and ITfC has already shared a proposal with SCERT, Tamil Nadu.



See <http://www.teacher-network.in>

Sharing Audio Content through *EK duniya anEK awaaz*

Launched in 2008 as the first initiative of its type in South Asia, *EK duniya anEK awaaz* (literally translated as One World, Many Voices) offers an innovative platform to the region's Community Radio practitioners to assist

them share and develop a Community of Practice (CoP). Popularly known as EDAA, the portal brings together operational community radio stations, community radio initiatives, government departments and organisations involved in producing radio-compatible IEC material at a common platform.

In addition to facilitating content exchange and knowledge sharing, *EK duniya anEK awaaz* aims to promote peer

learning, peer-review and exchange of community-based knowledge. As of October 2013, EDAA hosts 1,500 plus users, 5,100-plus radio programmes in 28 languages and dialects across 36 thematic areas, and a 100-plus knowledge resource base.

Commonwealth Education Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) has been a supporter of this platform since its inception and has partnered with EDAA for the

continuous up-gradation of its technical platform. With support from CEMCA, EDAA has introduced modules to facilitate conversion of radio programmes from proprietary formats to open source formats like OGG Vorbis. With the institution of CEMCA-OneWorld awards for knowledge sharing, the EDAA portal has seen a tremendous growth, breaking its past records.

Over 2,500 new radio programmes were added to the platform during the past four months starting from August 2013 – in turn reflecting as an enhanced

bandwidth usage. Currently, the portal handles a bandwidth usage of around 40 GBs every month.

Recent Award Winners are:

- Radio Benziger, Kerala (top contributor till August 2013)
- Radio Media Village, Kerala in September 2013
- Radio Rimjhim, Bihar in October 2013

CEMCA and OneWorld Foundation India congratulate the Award winners!



See <http://www.edaa.in>

Industry Linked Programme for Sound Designers

CEMCA is supporting the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) to develop a job role based programme for Sound Designers as per the NVEQF guidelines, and the strategy developed jointly by NIOS and CEMCA to implement NVEQF for Open Schooling. A workshop was held from 28th Oct 2013 - 30th Oct 2013 at NIOS Sec-62 Noida to develop the curriculum for the said course.

Seventeen experts from all over the country participated in this workshop, and contributed towards development of the curriculum on the basis of the qualification pack of the Media and Entertainment Skills Council (MESC). Dr. S.S. Jena, Chairman NIOS inaugurated the workshop and welcomed the participants. He explained the modular approach to be adopted in developing the curriculum. Mr. R. Thyagarajan, Head (Administration & Finance) represented CEMCA in the workshop and appraised the role of CEMCA to the participants.

Dr. Manju Gupta, Dy. Director Vocational Education, NIOS explained about various



courses and activities of NIOS in the field of Vocational Education. This was followed by a presentation by Ms Shivali Chawla on job roles of sound designer and development of self-learning materials for the target group in open and distance education. Ms. Sonal Mathur representative of MESC distributed the draft National Occupational Standards developed by NSDC for the job role of sound assistant, sound engineer and sound designer for validation by the experts. In the next two days curriculum along with infrastructure norms for the role of Sound Assistant, Sound Engineer and Sound Designer was developed. Participants were duly introduced about the lesson writing format of NIOS, societal concerns to be taken care of and the copyright norms. The programme will be developed in a modular manner covering all the job roles as per the MESC norms.

Prof. G. Ram Reddy Social Scientist Award 2013 for Director, CEMCA

Prof. G. Ram Reddy Memorial Trust, Hyderabad has instituted the Prof. G. Ram Reddy Social Scientist Award to be given bi-annually to an Indian scholar, preferably 50 year or below age, who has done significant academic work in any one of the following areas:

- Public Policy and Governance
- Local Organizations/ Panchayati Raj
- Education and Distance Education

The Trust has selected Dr. Sanjaya Mishra, Director, CEMCA to receive the Prof. G. Ram Reddy Social Scientist Award – 2013 for his contribution to Open and Distance Learning. Dr. Mishra will receive the Award and citation in December 2013, and deliver the Prof. G. Ram Reddy Memorial Lecture.

Case Study

Online Staff Development Programme for Academic Counsellors

By G. Mythili

Introduction

Staff development is an essential component in the organisational growth of any education institutions. The staffs who work in the distance education institutions or open universities come from other fields like conventional education system, industry, administrative, private sectors and professional fields like medicine, engineering, nursing, teaching etc. Also development of distance education programmes need team effort to offer successfully. Staff development is a continuous process and open universities provides such programmes to their faculty and other administrative staffs.

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), India, provides various professional development activities for different categories of personnel associated with the university. IGNOU serves the educational aspirations of over 3 million students in India and 43 other countries through the twenty-one Schools of Studies and a network of 67 regional centres, around 3400 learner support centres and around 60 overseas centres. The University offers about 477 certificate, diploma, degree and doctoral programmes, with strength of around 600 faculty members and academic staff at the Headquarters and Regional Centres and about 54,200 part-time academic counsellors from conventional institutions of higher learning, professional organisations, and industry among others.

Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) has been

conducting staff development programmes for teaching and non-teaching staff of IGNOU, State Open Universities and Distance Education Institutes in India. It is also serving the distance training, research and capacity building needs of Asian, African and the Caribbean countries. More than 630 major training programmes have been conducted by STRIDE since 1987.

As there is a need for providing training on open and distance learning (ODL) to a large number of academic counsellors of IGNOU and other open universities the STRIDE has developed and offers the Academic Counsellors' Training (ACT-Online) since 2010.

Academic Counsellors of IGNOU

One important category of personnel in distance education system is 'academic counsellors' who are involved in tutoring and counselling to a large number of learners at the study centres spread all over the country and abroad. As the academic counsellors are drawn from conventional universities, industry, health and agriculture sectors, and non-government organizations, they are usually not familiar to the ODL system. They need training at the beginning and advanced training after a few years of service in the ODL system. Normally IGNOU

conducts face-to-face discipline-wise training of the academic counsellors at the Regional Centre level. However, all the academic counsellors cannot attend face-to-face training due to time factor. IGNOU has conducted few hundreds workshops ranging from 1-day to 15 days for training of academic counsellor. Every month some new academic counsellors join and the turnover is also high. So, STRIDE has developed an online training programme for academic counsellors.

Keeping in view the nature of the tasks and responsibilities, the on-line training programme provides a platform for the professional development of the academic counsellors. Online training offers flexibility to academic counsellors to access contents pertaining to technology and pedagogy and about the distance education system at a time and place convenient to them since they are engaged in various activities and tasks.

ACT-Online (Academic Counsellors' Training Online)

The ACT-Online is developed and offered in a fully online environment. The training programme is a professional development programme of 3 credits (90 hours). The programme is designed specifically for those who are engaged in the task of providing tutoring, counselling, and other technology-mediated support to the distance learners. The ACT-Online program is accessible at <http://www.ignouonline.ac.in/actonline>.

The ACT-Online is grounded in both the



theory and practice of ODL. The technology of online learning helps more in building up interactivity among peer group and academic counsellor. Panda and Mishra (2008) developed a framework for online continuous professional development within which design of learning resources can be located. They have also reported a classification of online resources into following five elements:

- Orientation and organization
- Learning activity
- Interaction and collaboration
- Support
- Analytic tools

The above mentioned five online resources are in-built in the ACT-Online programme. It is envisaged that by the end of the online training the learners (Academic Counsellors) are expected to be able to:

- Discuss the concept and theories of ODL;
- Discuss the development of ODL in the country and abroad;
- Explain the nature, characteristics and importance of self-learning materials;
- Discuss the importance of learner support in distance education;
- Differentiate between counselling and tutoring;
- Organise support services using various modes (face-to-face, audio-visual media, computer etc.);
- Conduct academic counselling sessions at learning centres;
- Write tutor comments on assignment responses;
- Organise support services for educationally disadvantaged and disabled students;
- Use basic information technology in support services (e-mail, internet etc.); and
- Locate relevant educational resources on the web.

Curriculum: The 90 hours of workload can be completed in minimum duration of 45 days, while learners can complete the same in the maximum duration of 90 days as well. Thus, the programme is designed keeping in view the flexibility needs of the learners. In order to fulfill the objectives of the programme, the curriculum has been designed and learning materials developed to cover the following:

- Part-A covers the basic knowledge of ICT for academic counsellors.
- Part-B provides the knowledge of Open Distance Learning (ODL) concepts, theories, tutoring, counseling, assessment and so on.
- Part-C engages with various activities, case studies, evaluation of assignments, collecting feedback from students, and so on.

Technologies: The ACT-Online has been developed in fully online environment. The contents have been uploaded in the website which the participants can download and study offline. PowerPoint presentations and video clips are also provided as support elements. The online training environment includes interaction, individual and team-based activities related to cognitive and psychomotor domain, online discussion board, and collaboration. This online training programme has been designed in ASP and Dot NET as front-end and MySQL as back-end. The online environment is developed by eGyanKosh, IGNOU.

Online Tools: In the ACT-Online programme, e-mail, discussion forum and online chat are used for interaction between peer to peer and mentor. Email is very effective tool for communication. A separate institutional mail id is created for ACT-Online programme to communicate with participants. The mentors of ACT-Online programme provide support to the participants from entry to exit. Each and every participant receives tutor comments on their assignments and also receives academic support and additional web resources whenever required.

Collaborations: Engaging everybody to participate is very important in the online training. Providing collaborative environment in the online training leads to peer to peer interaction and learner to teacher interaction. Online interactions not only go beyond academic requirements and expectations but also motivate, demonstrate willingness to comment, and encourage others to continue interacting (Patrick, 2003). Academic counsellors of IGNOU are a diverse group placed in every corner of the country. Everyone has some experiences to deal with distance learners. The ACT-Online programme provides the environment where the counsellors can share their experiences, technologies used for their tutoring/counselling process in the discussion forum, and through email.

Assessment: In between the contents, the self check questions have been incorporated for self assessment. The academic counsellors have to complete (i) a lesson plan of three counselling sessions (organizing counselling session for distance learners) (ii) experiential essay on his/her experience as an academic counsellor (iii) five samples of assignment-responses evaluated by him/her as tasks/activities during the programme. After completing their tasks, the participants upload these tasks in their portfolio and also get their results online.

Satisfaction Survey on Professional Development Programme

The ultimate goal of professional development programme for academic counsellors is to improve student learning (Mythili & Biswas, 2013). The use of new technology enables the counsellors to use new techniques in teaching learning process. A satisfaction survey was conducted among the participants of this programme to know the effectiveness of the online resources. Around 50 academic counsellors who participated in the ACT-Online programme were selected for the

survey. A self designed questionnaire with 5-point scale was used to collect feedback. Some of the findings of the study are described here.

Orientation and Organisation

Welcome and calendar, instructor and learning community, concept map and syllabus are the important components under this heading. These components are incorporated in the ACT-Online programme. While analyzing the participant's responses, around 35.25% participants were very satisfied and 61.30% were satisfied with the objectives, eligibility, credits, syllabus and other related information. Internet connectivity is one of the essential components in online training. While analysing the accessibility of the website, 54.87% of participants expressed their satisfaction on access to ACT-Online website, while 28.62% were very satisfied and 17.70% were not satisfied. In terms of connectivity, 26.11% were very satisfied and 49.80% were satisfied with local internet connectivity.

Learning Activity

Learning activities are the potential components of online teaching learning process which helps to develop knowledge and skills. Course materials and activities help to engage the participants during the training. Course materials include text as PDF files, audio, video and other multimedia components. Activities are assignments, collaborative discussion, and self assessment activities. On the contents provided, 82.43% participants were satisfied and 18.55% very satisfied. 55% of the participants were satisfied with the self-assessment activities.

Interaction and collaboration

Online learning provides sufficient opportunities for interactivity. Peer to peer interaction, pupil to teacher interaction and collaborative projects or collaborative assignment can be designed in the online

training as required. Interactivity can be synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous interaction happen real time by using web conference, online chat, etc to clear the doubts on the subject in fixed time. Asynchronous interaction have time lag, and are provided through email and discussion forum. The ACT-Online programme is designed as on-going or continuous training programme, and therefore, web conferencing is not

Online environment is not comfortable for all the participants. Participants require support for their learning as well as using the online platform. Mentor support and technical support are important component for online training. Mentor or facilitator provides support to enable participants for their learning. There should be 24X7 technical support for the participants for any online training programmes.

included. However, email and discussion forum are part of the training programme. 54.29% were satisfied and 25.71% were very satisfied with discussion forum while 14.81% indicated dissatisfaction with discussion forum. 65% were satisfied with email communication.

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Support

Online environment is not comfortable for all the participants. Participants require support for their learning as well as using the online platform. Mentor support and technical support are important component for online training. Mentor or facilitator provides support to enable participants for their learning. There should be 24X7 technical support for the participants for any online training programmes. Around 45.75% were satisfied, 23.34% were very satisfied and 12.21% were not satisfied with support received from the facilitators. Also while studying online 52.78% participants were satisfied and 23.65% were not satisfied with the technical support received.

Conclusion

This programme has been successfully completed by 95 academic counsellors, while 726 are currently active. A majority of those who have completed the ACT-Online programme are male and above 30 years of age, with at least a master degree. The short term online training programme facilitates the academic counsellor to upgrade the knowledge on ODL and ICT which helps them to conduct counselling sessions. The overall reaction of the participants to the programme is positive, and there is a need to promote this programme to encourage the new and existing Academic Counsellors to enroll and complete the programme.

Ms G. Mythili is Analyst at STRIDE, IGNOU, New Delhi and has been involved in design, development and delivery of the ACT-Online. She can be reached at gmythili@ignou.ac.in

Regional Round Up

Conference of Asian Association of Open Universities

The Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad hosted the 27th Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Universities (AAOU) from 1-3 October 2013. The theme of the conference was “Leveraging the Power of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) for Building a Divergent Asia –Today’s Solutions and Tomorrow’s Vision”. Over 250 research papers were presented in the conference under five sub-themes: (i) Emerging Trends in Open and Distance Learning; (ii) Building a Global Future through Research and Innovative Practices in ODL; (iii) ODL and Human Capacity Building; (iv) Technologies and Strategies for providing Education through ODL; and (v) Application of ODL in Various Disciplines. About 40 participants attended the pre-conference workshop on 1 October 2013, organised by CEMCA on Quality Assurance of Open Educational Resources. The workshop was facilitated by Prof. Paul Kawachi and Dr. Sanjaya Mishra.

The conference was inaugurated by the Minister of Education Engr Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman, and COL Vice President Mr Vis Naidoo delivered the keynote address. The valedictory session of the conference was graced by the President of Pakistan, honourable Mamnoon Hussain. The conference also witnessed the election of Prof. John Chi-yan Leong, President of Open University of Hong Kong as the next President of AAOU for 2014-16. He invited all the delegates to the next AAOU conference invitation to be held at Hong Kong from 28-30 October 2014.

The 27th AAOU Conference was hosted by AIU under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Nazir Ahmed Sangi, Vice Chancellor, and supported by staff of the University coordinated by Dr. Zahid Majeed. Some of the photos of the event are showcased here with the courtesy of AIU.



Book Review

Open Educational Resources: Innovation, Research and Practice

Edited by Rory McGreal, Wanjira Kinuthia and Stewart Marshall; published by Commonwealth of Learning, Canada, 2013, pp. xxiii, 239, ISBN 978-1-894975-62-9.

By Dr. S.K. Pulist

This is the third book I am reviewing under the theme Open Educational Resources (OER) published by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). The contribution of UNESCO and COL in promotion of concept of Open Educational Resources (OER) since its primitive stage has been commendable. The book under review is published by COL and UNESCO/COL Chair on OER at the Athabasca University. The volume brings together the experiences of 37 scholars in OER from 10 countries spread over 5 different continents. In 16 chapters, the book focuses on the four major themes i.e. 'OER in Academia', 'OER in Practice', 'Diffusing OER' and 'Producing, Sharing and Using OER'.

The socio-economic imperatives have forced the educational institutions around the world to emerge as a collective body of OER developers. The OER movement can now be seen as a 'social practice' as supported by 'African Health OER Network'. The OER comes to the rescue of teachers and the taught alike. While the teachers would be busy in using and creating the OER, the learner communities are its major beneficiaries. All this happens while being in their 'own social spaces and networks'. There are still some spaces which are conservative in their approaches and need to build mutual trust for sentiments of OER movement to penetrate deep in their professional practices. The experiences of Open University in Netherlands are a case in point.

The six-stage description of 'OpenLearn' development speaks volumes about the development of OER environment. Stephen Downes in his chapter has tried to broaden the horizon of the term 'openness' while defining it from the perspective of OER

usability, which is more encompassing. The OER University (a consortium of 20 post-secondary institutions and organizations) seems to be providing

solutions to some of these issues through its anchor partners. The OER movement has created an entire 'Value Chain' that links the learners with relevant and appropriate learning materials.

The book is also available in the 'OER knowledgecloud' which is slowly taking the shape of a huge OER repository (also with full text access). It is expected to meet the 'growing need for an expansion of OER research base' so that new knowledge on OER could be explored. It could be used to build mutual trust among OER stakeholders. The authors advocate the importance of 'building bottom-up process of OER generation' where 'top-down policy support' would act as mutual 'trust-based interaction' bridge which is a noble approach to systemic development of the OER body of knowledge.

There are many challenges involved in the journey. While availability of the OER can be ensured to some extent, repurposing the same and accommodating the cross-cultural and local issues is a bigger challenge. In fact we are yet to know the real potential of OER by realizing bigger initiatives. The OER meta-data also needs to be strengthened. However, the positive impact of conversion of 'formal courses' can be seen in 'formation of communities of learners around the OER'. In furtherance of the commitment, different organizations and scholars collectively and individually are coming up with Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) in specialized areas and making available to the knowledge-seekers to get certification. However, a high dropout rate in MOOC is a valid concern as raised by George Siemens.

While enough awareness has been created among the educators and students in addition to the knowledge workers, it is time to experiment with the usability of OER in different areas, strengthen the nexus between the OER and knowledge dissemination and come up with solution and additional opportunities for universalisation of knowledge. We need to find ways whereby we can realize the worth of OER in today's knowledge society.

The book has the potential to be used as handbook on OER practices and is a must read for the teachers, students, policy makers, planners and users of ICT for educational purposes.

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How to Offer a Massive Open Online Course

By **Ramesh C. Sharma**

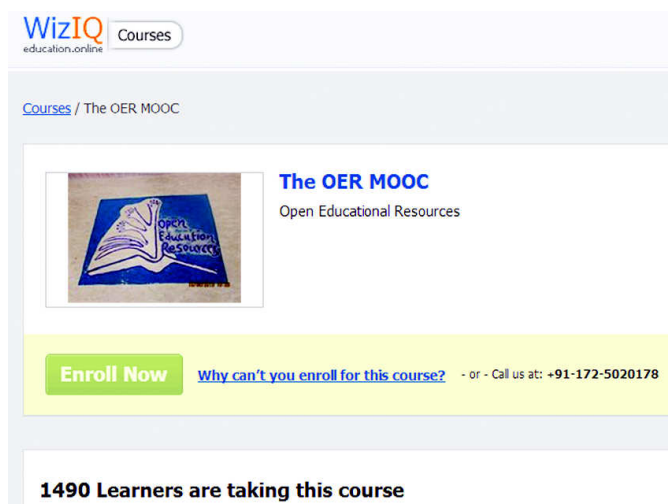
Successful Media and Research Techniques (SMART) Tips is a section where we discuss useful aspects of research and learning. Dr. Sharma presents here an introduction on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and how to start MOOC.

MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) have gained much popularity and many universities have launched MOOCs on different topics. In fact the New York Times declared 2012 as the Year of the MOOC. High enrollments in these courses have caught the attention of educational providers as an alternative and supplement to traditional university courses. MIT, Harvard and Stanford have successfully set the example and pace for others to follow. All sorts of organisations and institutions are trying their hands on offering MOOCs. FutureLearn, edX, Coursera, Open2Study, Udacity etc are providing courses of diverse nature and disciplines (see Worth While Web section in this issue of *EduComm Asia*).

Before we learn how to run a MOOC, let's first understand few basic things about MOOCs.

Emergence

The term Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) was coined by Dave Cormier and Bryan Alexander in 2008 in relation to the course "Connectivism and Connective Knowledge" (also known as CCK08) offered by Stephen Downes and George Siemens. Dave in his blog says, "To the best of my knowledge, the term "MOOC" comes out of a Skype chat conversation I had with George Siemens...". MOOCs are planned as web based courses which the students can take from anywhere, enabling mass enrollment. Initially groups of experts, instructors and educators contributed a variety of content to a central repository where the course material and the course itself are open and free. However, a fee is also changed for those who need a university credit or certification.



The screenshot shows a course page on the WizIQ platform. At the top, it says 'WizIQ Courses' with the tagline 'education.online'. Below that, the breadcrumb 'Courses / The OER MOOC' is visible. The main content area features a blue book icon with the text 'Open Educational Resources' and the course title 'The OER MOOC' in blue. Underneath the title, it says 'Open Educational Resources'. A green 'Enroll Now' button is prominent, followed by a link 'Why can't you enroll for this course?' and a phone number '+91-172-5020178'. At the bottom of the course card, it states '1490 Learners are taking this course'.

Types of MOOCs

Traditionally MOOCs were grouped into two groups: cMOOCs and xMOOCs. cMOOCs are based on the Connectivism (as propounded by George Siemens, Stephen Downes and Dave Cormier) where community building is core to the process. cMOOCs were the first MOOCs created as the next evolution in networked learning. Here the learners set their own goals and kind of engagement. xMOOCs are kind of courses involving

instructions or content offered via "concise, targeted video content" with some sort of inbuilt automated testing for tracking student's understanding while they progress in the course. Mostly students learn in a linear fashion in xMOOCs.

Pedagogical implications

- MOOCs augment peer-to-peer learning as the students are encouraged to create and share their own content.
- Being self-paced, students' progress as per their convenience towards completion (one of the reasons for high dropouts also). Students are trying new courses which were not available to them locally.
- MOOCs promote life-long learning as is evident from the age demography of students being opting for courses from younger to seniors.
- There may be a lack of personal interactions.

Offering a MOOC!

MOOCs are being designed and offered by individuals and institutions. So you may also be planning to organise a MOOC on some theme where large number of learners can enroll. Having been part of the "OER MOOC" (see <http://www.wiziq.com/course/28219-the-oer-mooc>) launched under the banner of LMP Education Trust (and supported by COL), I proffer here some helpful suggestions for you to start MOOC and become part of the new educational revolution. There are some issues to be considered first before organising a MOOC.

1. **Selecting a topic:** The topic should be of such nature which is need based and can attract right kind of learners in large numbers. Since MOOCs are designed for large clients,

MOOCs on popular topics stand a great chance of success. We selected 'The OER MOOC' topic because Open Educational Resources (OER) are being adopted by many in government, non-government, private, business and educational institution. Our MOOC was designed to help impart the knowledge and develop the skills needed to be successful in learning from OERs or teaching the chosen subject to post-secondary students and life-long learners using OERs.

2. **Duration:** We need to decide on the length of the MOOC. It can be as short as for a week or may run into few months. The duration of the MOOC will depend on the theme of the MOOC and the nature and quantity of the content and kind of assessment activities. The OER MOOC was a 4 weeks online programme designed to enhance knowledge about OERs and to equip for effective use of OERs for course offering. The programme also helped learners to create their own OERs and contribute to the pool of OERs. The nominal duration for completing this course was 4 weeks. However, because of the nature of this programme which allows flexibility and personalisation, participants were allowed to take another 2 weeks if they wished to complete the course.
3. **Course Content:** Next step is to assemble a team of content creators who will contribute to the course content. Some of the MOOCs are making use of OERs. The content can be in the form of reading materials or audio or video lessons. Some form of materials can be:

- Introductory Text based materials
- Introductory Video
- Lecture Presentations
- Blog posts for learning materials
- Tweets from time to time
- A resource base of links to relevant resources

These can be uploaded on the course site to help the learners read asynchronously. We also need to plan about assessment activities so that understanding of the learners can be assessed while they progress during the course. There are various ways to do so. Many of the MOOCs prefer collaborative and reflective learning. The learners are expected to read the materials, listen to audio or watch the videos and then make comment on the content (based on the assignment) like in their blogs or on social media through micro-blogging (say Twitter or identica). The students are asked to use some hashtag (#) while making comments so that the aggregators compile all messages or comments at one place for learning or analysis.

4. **Choice of Platform:** There can be different ways to launch a MOOC. It can be synchronous and asynchronous. We adopted synchronous way to run the OER MOOC based on WizIQ online teaching platform. Here we uploaded all materials (OERs) and an international team of speakers took sessions (one hour each) to address a specific issue. Participants attended these live sessions which were also

recorded for later viewing for anyone those who could not attend live session. The recorded video session provide advantage of asynchronous learning opportunities to the students who can access the materials any time. It has been noted that attendance in synchronous online live sessions were not high due to different time zones or timings not suitable for all. There are many platforms to offer MOOC. Even the WikiEducator platform can be used to offer MOOC, and if you so desire, a Moodle course can also become MOOC (as was the case with the first ever MOOC). Those institutions having some LMS implemented on their servers can also mount a MOOC and manage content. You may also use a Blog or a wiki page to launch your MOOC. The platform you use must be able to support different file formats as you may be providing content in the form of pdf, doc files, audio, video lessons, embedded YouTube video, presentations, interactive games etc.

5. **Enrollment:** Adequate publicity is a must for attracting students to your course. Use various social media to tell the world about your course. Sending out messages to different listservs or online groups is a good idea. Ask your colleagues to spread the word about the course. The system you have used to mount your course must be able to handle large enrollments.
6. **Support:** Since MOOCs are online courses with massive enrollments, the students belong to all time zones and they may need support anytime 24x7. Hence we need to make sure of responding to the queries of the participants at the earliest. A welcome message by the course coordinator/s to the participants in the beginning of the course, regular contact during the course and post-course follow up are definitely ways to keep the participants feel involved in the course. We may also create discussion forum where the participants can have peer interactions. For sophisticated platforms, Helpdesk with a ticketing system is welcome and the support service may be reachable through toll free number or SMS or a designated email id.
7. **Certification:** Certification on the completion of course can be provided. This can be with or without a charge to the participant. Online badges (like Mozilla) are actively created to assess the performance of the participants and as soon as they complete an assignment or activity.

MOOCs have emerged as a promising technological and pedagogical model to teach millions of learners. They provide great opportunity to anyone who has something to teach to others. We are witnessing a teaching and learning revolution, and I urge all the readers of *EduComm Asia* to join the bandwagon. Here is an opportunity, and challenge to show to the world, what you can offer. The technology is no more a deterrent. Are you ready to adopt it?

Dr. Ramesh C. Sharma is a regular contributor of EduComm Asia, and can be reached at rc_sharma@yahoo.com

Technology Tracking

Project Loon

By Sanjaya Mishra

In 16 May 2011, a report of the Special Rapporteur was presented to United Nations General Assembly that encouraged all states to ensure universal access to Internet as a top priority. Internet has emerged as an indispensable tool to promote human rights, combat inequality and accelerate developments including providing access to educational opportunities. Over 60 per cent of world population today do not have access to the Internet. The problems of Internet access are largely due to the last mile connectivity to the users. While with the increasing access to mobile telephony, last mile connectivity issues are reduced, broadband connectivity over mobile is yet to grow.

Google, the leading search engine company, has initiated a project called "Project Loon"¹ to provide Internet access to remote and rural areas with limited access to terrestrial connections. Project Loon is a network of balloons placed in the stratosphere, 20 km above earth's surface, to provide wireless connectivity to all.



How Loon Works?

Layers of winds in the stratosphere vary in direction and magnitude. The wind

¹ <http://www.google.com/loon/>

² <http://www.google.com/loon/how/>

layers in the stratosphere are normally steady and slow-moving at between 5 and 20 mph. Using wind data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the balloons are managed to float by adjusting their altitude to a wind layer after identifying the wind layer with the desired speed and direction. Google uses software algorithms to determine where balloons need to go. By moving with the wind, the balloons can be arranged to form one large communications network. Users of the service connect to the balloon network using a special Internet antenna attached to their building. Each balloon can provide connectivity to a ground area about 40 km in diameter at speeds comparable to 3G. For balloon-to-balloon and balloon-to-ground communications, the balloons use antennas equipped with specialized radio frequency technology. Project Loon currently uses ISM bands (specifically 2.4 and 5.8 GHz bands) that are available for anyone to use².

The Balloons

The balloon envelopes are composed of polyethylene plastic about of about 0.076 mm thick. These are specially designed to withstand super pressure, and are filled with helium. A fully inflated balloon stand 15 m (49 ft) across and 12 m (39 ft) tall and carry a custom air pump system that pumps in or releases air. A small box, containing circuit boards that



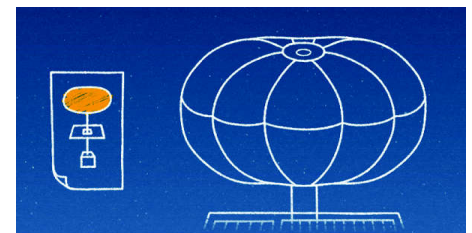
control the system, radio antennae and an Ubiquiti Networks Rocket M2, weighing about 10 kg hangs underneath the inflated envelope. The box also has batteries to store solar power to operate during the night. A parachute attached to the top of the envelope allows for a controlled descent and landing when a

balloon is ready to be taken out of service. The balloons typically have a life of about 55-100 days.

The balloons float in the stratosphere

mostly from west to east at different latitudes providing access to different countries in the same latitude at different point of time. Thus a band of balloons would cover the entire world to provide Internet access to population in different countries. The system intends to provide connectivity to remote areas currently underserved, and also help communication during natural disaster. Notwithstanding the enormous possibilities, the cost of the technology to install balloons over particular latitude may prohibit its wide deployment to assist people in the developed countries.

Before this technology changes status from pilot stage, there are several issues to be considered. Some of these include issues related to permissions for airspace use over several countries, and perpetual availability of the unlicensed spectrum for use by Loon Project. Also, the costs of access to end users as well as maintenance cost need to be very low to attract users have wireless broadband access.



Research Shows...

eLearning in Commonwealth Asia 2013

Snapshots from the Report entitled “eLearning in Commonwealth Asia 2013”

by Dr. S.K. Pulist

Introduction

How is eLearning used in the Asian Commonwealth countries? How are different activities pertaining to eLearning being managed by different institutions? What are the challenges and opportunities faced by institutions for effective implementation of eLearning across disciplines and subjects? To find answers to all such questions, a systematic study was undertaken to track the growth and development of eLearning in Commonwealth Asian countries i.e. Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

eLearning is a broad term generally used to refer to web-based learning, online learning, blended learning, networked learning, distributed learning, flexible learning, etc. However, it is still emerging as a specialized field of education. Analyzing the various definitions of eLearning, for the purpose of this study, eLearning has been defined as use of online technologies for performing teaching and learning in any of the three manners such as:

- completely online,
- blended learning (mix of face-to-face and online), and
- use of online as supplementary to face-to-face for some activities.

Major Findings

The following are major findings of the report.

- The number of male students (52 per cent) outweighed the number of

female students (48 per cent) in eLearning programmes.

- Majority of institutions (54.1 per cent) had adopted an ‘eLearning’ policy which focused on training and staff development (64.7 per cent), eLearning management mechanism (63.2 per cent), content development (61.8 per cent), assessment (58.8 per cent), quality assurance (50 per cent) and copyright/licensing issues (45.6 per cent).
- As many as 28 per cent institutions have adopted a differently-abled friendly policy for eLearning programmes.
- The eLearning activities are coordinated by specified/designated unit (36.1 per cent) followed by committees at central level (30.9 per cent).
- The most used tools of the LMS are communication tools (86.7 per cent), assessment tools (68.9), content uploading tools (68.9 per cent), navigation tools (60 per cent), collaborative tools (58.9 per cent), news and social forums (56.7 per cent), calendar of activities (54.4 per cent), presentation tools (54.4 per cent), administrative tools (42.2 per cent), editing tools (37.8 per cent) and search tools (37.8 per cent).
- The design for eLearning programmes include assignments (80 per cent), e-content available on the LMS (66 per cent), working on projects (57 per cent), quizzes (49 per cent), group discussion (48 per cent) and printed reading material (44 per cent) among others.

- The e-content is provided to the students in a variety of ways including LMS (77 per cent), downloadable from the web or links to OERs (61 per cent), printed books (57 per cent) and through USB pen drive or CD (41 per cent).
- The evaluation system used in eLearning programmes include continuous evaluation through LMS (83 per cent), paper based term end examination (83 per cent), paper based continuous evaluation (78 per cent) and term end examination through LMS (64 per cent).
- Tools for evaluation of student performance used are multi-choice questions (92 per cent), short answer questions (84 per cent) and essay type questions (73 per cent).
- Motivating factors:
 - ◆ Institutional emphasis on promotion of eLearning (78.8 per cent)
 - ◆ User-friendly LMS (65 per cent)
 - ◆ Emergence of new ICT culture in the wake of technological revolution globally (58.8 per cent)
 - ◆ Highly motivated faculty and staff (55 per cent)
- Challenges for implementation of eLearning programmes:
 - ◆ Technical problems (57.3 per cent)
 - ◆ Work overload on teachers (56.1 per cent)
 - ◆ Future plans of educational institutions:
 - ◆ Introduction of more eLearning programmes in the existing disciplines/areas (80 per cent)
 - ◆ Diversification of eLearning programmes in new disciplines/ areas of specialization (56.3 per cent)
 - ◆ Updating and modernisation of existing LMS (56.3 per cent)
 - ◆ Integration of social media with

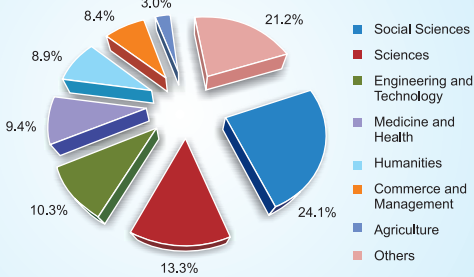


the existing LMS (55 per cent)

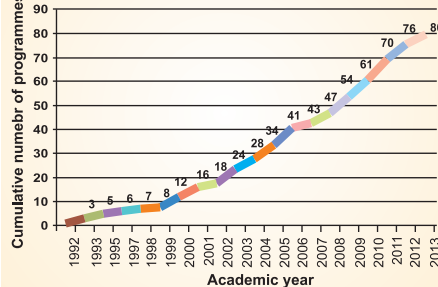
- ◆ Use of mobile technology for imparting instruction/ sharing

information with students in order to provide them enhanced mobility (53.8 per cent)

'Social Sciences' is the most favoured Discipline for eLearning Programmes



Number of eLearning programmes has increased over the years



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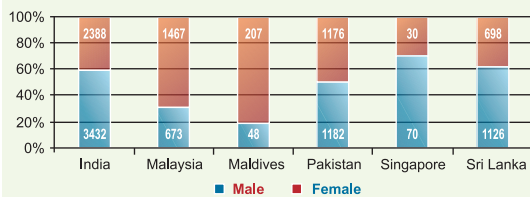
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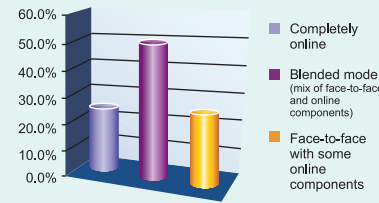
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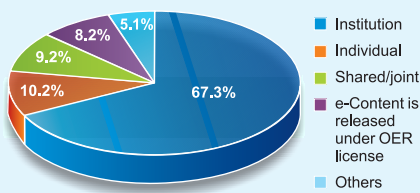
India has shown the highest number of students registered in eLearning programmes



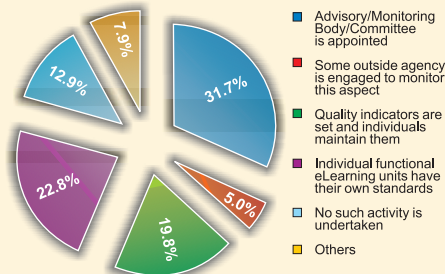
Blended eLearning programmes are most common



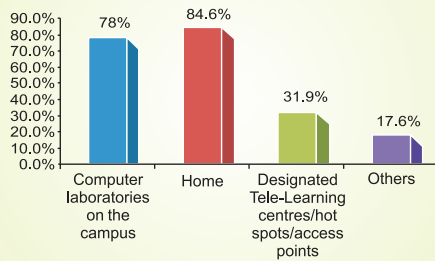
In majority of cases institutions have copyright over the e-content developed in-house



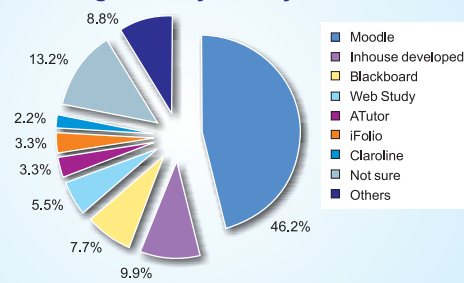
Quality of eLearning programmes is managed in diverse ways



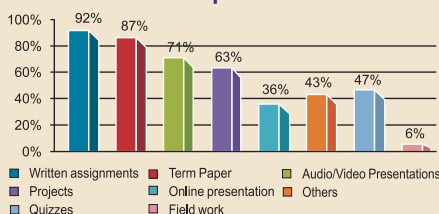
Students prefer to access eLearning platform from home



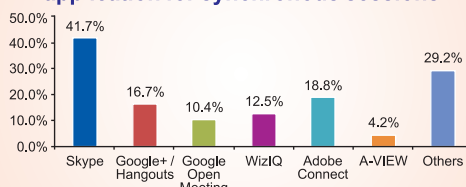
Moodle is the widely used Learning Management System by the institutions



Written assignments are one of the most used tools for assessment of student performance



'Skype' is the most used video conferencing application for synchronous sessions



Forthcoming Events

IDEA Conference 2014



12-14 March 2014, Directorate of Distance Education, University of Jammu, India

Conference Theme: "Quality Assurance And Sustenance of Open Distance Education : Issues, Concerns, Challenges And Developments"

For more information, contact:

DDE,
University of Jammu,
Jammu-181006, J&K,
India.
E-mail:
ideaconferencejammu2014@gmail.com

7th Annual Emerging Technologies for Online Learning International Symposium



The Sloan Consortium®
Individuals, Institutions and Organizations
Committed to Quality Online Education

April 9-11, 2014 · Sheraton Dallas Hotel - Dallas, TX

For more information, visit:

Web site: <http://tinyurl.com/pzx7549>

2nd Regional Symposium on Open Educational Resources: Beyond Advocacy, Research and Policy



June 24-27, 2014, Penang, Malaysia

For more information, contact:

Visit Website:

<http://www.oerasia.org/oersymposium2014>

EdMedia 2014



World Conference on Educational Media and Technology, June 23-27, 2014, Tampere, Finland.

For more information:

Visit Website:

<http://aace.org/conf/edmedia/>

E-LEARN 2014 - World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare & Higher Education



New Orleans, LA: October 27-30, 2014

For more information, see:

Visit Website:

<http://www.aace.org/conf/elearn/>

28th Annual Conference of Asian Association of Open Universities



28-30 October
2014, Hong Kong
SAR, China

Conference
Theme:
Advancing Open
and Distance

Learning: Research and Practice

For more information, contact:

Email: aaou2014@ouhk.edu.hk

Visit Website:

<http://aaou2014.ouhk.edu.hk/>

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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 months, and should be part of the learning and development plan of the candidate. For details visit Knowledge Management page at CEMCA Website.