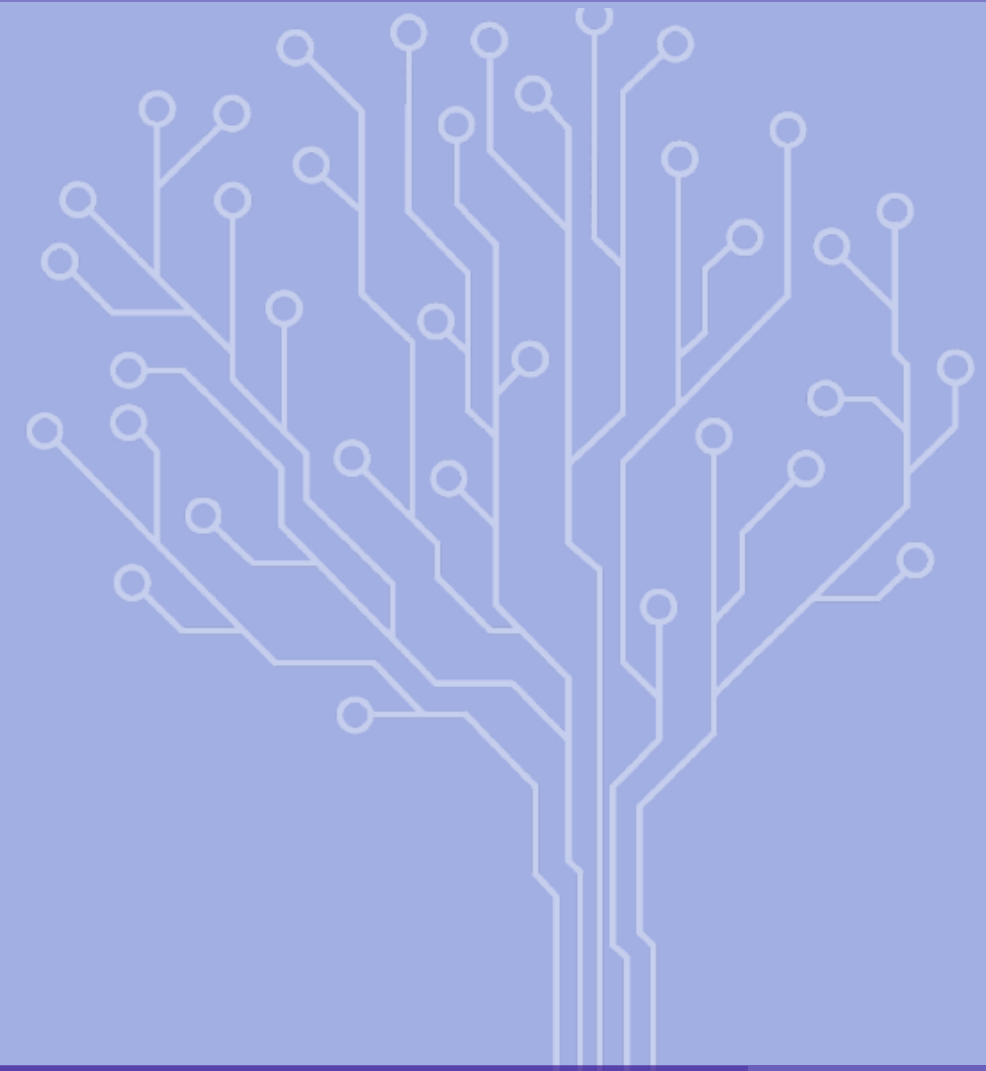


# Keynote Session 2: Quality Concerns in Distance and Digital Learning: Experiences of Different Countries and Institutions



**Tony Mays**

**Director: Education, COL**

*Emerging Trends and Challenges in ODDBL*

***Campus of Open Learning, University of Delhi***

Vigyan Bhawan, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2026





# COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING



To help Commonwealth governments and institutions use ODL and technologies to improve and expand access to education and training

# Overview:

A journey through  
ODDBL

About Quality

About Quality in  
ODDBL

Recurring  
Challenges

Current Trends  
and Opportunities



Open Educational Resources Convening  
(16 - 18 May 2011)

Thank You for Participation & Contribution!



# Purpose of Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

- Delors (1996)
- *Learning: the treasure within*
- Learning to know
- Learning to do
- Learning to be
- Learning to live together

- Sobe (2021)
- Learning to study, inquire and co-construct together
- Learning to collectively mobilize
- Learning to live in a common world
- Learning to attend and care

South Africa:  
definitions of  
HE quality  
(CHE, 2001,  
2004, 2021)

(i) Fitness of purpose;

(ii) Fitness for purpose;

(iii) Value for money; and

(iv) Transformation as it refers to social equity, quality and fundamental institutional cultural and academic change.

The NADEOSA  
Quality Criteria  
for Distance  
Education in  
South Africa  
(NADEOSA,  
Welch & Reed,  
Eds., 2010,  
c2021)



1. Policy and Planning  
(Finances)

2. Learners (Student  
Information)

3. Programme Development

4. Course Design

5. Course Materials (Materials  
Development)

6. Assessment

7. Learner Support (Student  
Support)

8. Human Resource Strategy

9. Management and  
Administration (MEAL)

10. Collaborative  
Arrangements

11. Quality Assurance

12. Information  
Dissemination

13. Results (Provider  
Outcomes)

• + Case Studies

# National, Regional and International impact

- *Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities in the Context of an Integrated Postschool System* – (RSA, 2014, p.6)
  - Distance education provision needs to rise to the triple challenge of providing greater access (1) (in terms of both numbers and diversity), in ways that offer a reasonable expectation of turning access into success in courses or programmes of proven quality (2) that are also affordable (3).
- *Distance Higher Education Programmes in a Digital Era: Good Practice Guide. CHE (2014)*
- NADEOSA guidelines widely used regionally and internationally
- However, in other contexts unfamiliarity of regulatory authorities or implementing staff with ODDBL may result in tensions (Pandey, 2024, Thurab-Nkhosi, 2025).

# Access with a reasonable chance of success



- COL OAsis Quality = 4,380
- COL OAsis Quality Assurance = 1,893



## Three seminal publications:



1994 Quality Assurance in Higher Education (4 CS Australia and New Zealand importance of QA)



1997 Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Selected Case Studies (7 CS – importance of QA in context)



2006 Towards a Culture of Quality (12 CS – internal/external factors and ODL for all education sectors)

# External Recognition

## Micro-courses for Success

Building 21st century skills for teaching, learning and employability

[Join for Free](#)

<https://colcommons.org/>

## Awards



Open Educational Resources Learning Portal for ROI Determination



The Micro-courses Platform: COLCommons.org



The Micro-courses Platform: COLCommons.org



The Micro-courses Platform: COLCommons.org



Universal Design for Learning (UDL)



The Micro-courses Platform: COLCommons.org



The Micro-courses Platform: COLCommons.org

“The OER course provides foundational understanding about free/open access to global quality education materials.”

**Chawapa Thabo**  
Botswana

“The content, presentation and design of the course helped me develop a foundation for using OER.”

**Dr. Trisha Dowerah Baruah**  
Assistant Professor, KKI IS Open University, India

“An enjoyable way to discover and experience the elixir of online education.”

**Dr. Nisha Singh**  
Deputy Director, IGNOU, India

# Recent Open Courses

Free capacity development for Pacific teachers

<https://pacificopencourses.col.org/>



COURSE CATEGORY

## Quality assurance for ODFL – Part 1

Course overview Learning outcome On successful



COURSE CATEGORY

## Learner support for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning



COURSE CATEGORY

## Empowered digital teacher for online learning

## Microcredentials

Upskill with our growing range of microcredentials. These professional development short courses are designed to help you quickly build in-demand career skills and knowledge to stay up to date with relevant and emerging practices, progress in growing industries, and get ahead.

[Find out more](#)



## Futureproof your career with a microcredential

Gain specialised skills in just 10–12 weeks with flexible online learning delivered on our social learning partner platform, FutureLearn.

Created by world-class OU academics and with many endorsed by leading industry partners, microcredentials offer a perfect balance of academic excellence and workplace relevance.

With 10–13 hours of study a week, you can gain:

- cutting-edge knowledge in a specialised subject, informed by world-class academics
- practical skills you can immediately apply to your work or boost your CV
- undergraduate or postgraduate credit you could use in the future towards further study by [counting microcredentials towards OU qualifications](#).

You can start your learning in March, June/July or October. Prices from £250. [See our FAQs](#) for more about microcredentials.

Delivered in partnership with FutureLearn



# Other recent quality assurance practices

## Benchmarking

Benchmarking  
(Mapolisa, 2022)

## Interviewing

Interviewing core  
staff on how QA  
evolves in practice  
(Ferdousi, et al.,  
2022)

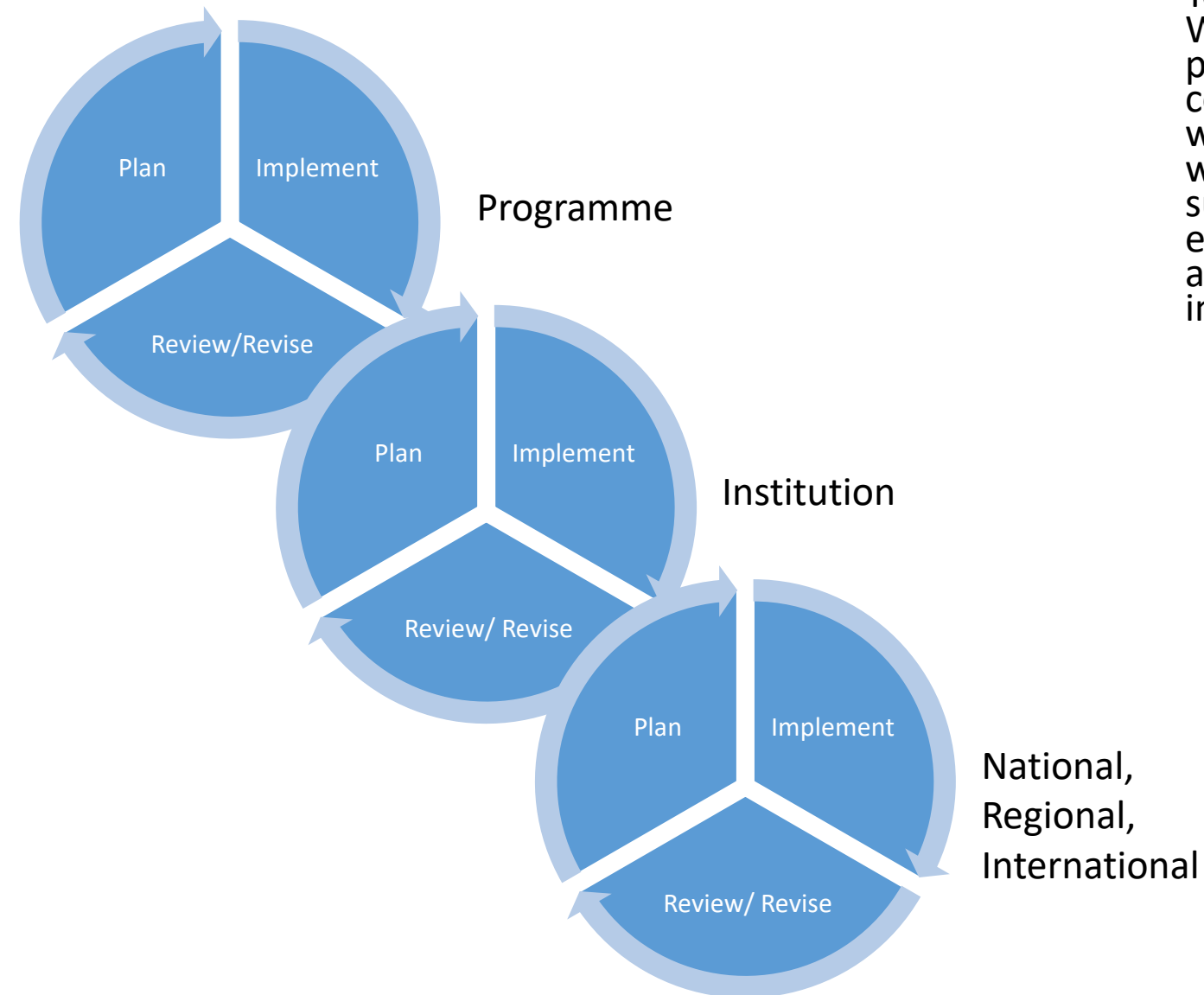
## Interviewing

Interviewing tutors  
and students and  
closing the feedback  
loop into improved  
practice (Maijo &  
Mrema, 2024)

## Culture

Moving away from  
compliance to  
culture in an  
ecosystemic way  
(Jung, 2022).

# Ecosystemic QA



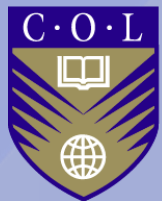
To support such processes, we should build QA Wisdom Communities which respect wise people's practical knowledge and judgement, build communities of practice. communicate in multiple ways, use appropriate technology in appropriate ways, engage distributed co-mentoring, provide support for continuous professional development, engage in problem-solving and collaborative enquiry, and aim at transformational change that is culturally informed (Gunawardena, 2020)



# References

- Council on Higher Education (CHE). (2001). *Higher Education Quality Committee Founding Document*. CHE. <https://www.che.ac.za/publications/higher-education-quality-committee-heqc-founding-document>
- Council on Higher Education (CHE). (2021). *A Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for Higher Education in South Africa*. CHE. <https://www.che.ac.za/publications/frameworks/quality-assurance-framework-qaf-higher-education-south-africa>
- Ferdousi, F., Ahmed, A., Momen, A. (2022). Evolution of quality assurance practices in enhancing the quality of open and distance education in a developing nation: a case study. *Asian Association of Open Universities Journal (AAOU)*, 17(2), pp. 147-160. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AAOUJ-02-2022-0025>
- Gunawardena, C. N. . (2020). Culturally Inclusive Online Learning for Capacity Development Projects in International Contexts. *Journal of Learning for Development*, 7(1), 5–30. <https://doi.org/10.56059/jl4d.v7i1.403>
- Jung, I. (2022). Quality Assurance in Online, Open, and Distance Education. In O. Zawacki-Richter, I. Jung (eds.), *Handbook of Open, Distance and Digital Education*, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-0351-9\\_39-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-0351-9_39-1)
- Maijo, S. N. & Mrema, K. J. (2024). Quality Assurance Practices in Open and Distance Learning Programme at the Institute of Adult Education, Tanzania. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 50 (9). pp. 124-135. ISSN 2581-6268. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2024/v50i91574>
- Mapolisa, T. (2022). Chapter 12: Quality Assurance Practices in Open and Distance e-Learning (ODEL) Institutions. In Majoni., C. Ed. *Leading and Managing Distance e\_Learning (ODEL) Institutions in Africa* (pp. 193-217). Vernon Press. <https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=gj-MEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA193&dq=quality+assurance+of+ODL+in+the+digital+era&ots=h5b3sfDCq7&sig=ghiheAnxNrohTGlx2Wj8SAmVKY4>
- NADEOSA. (2010). The NADEOSA Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa. <https://www.nadeosa.org.za/documents/NADEOSAQCSection2.pdf>
- NADEOSA. (c.2021). Designing and Delivering Distance Education: Revised Nadeosa Quality Criteria. <http://www.nadeosa.org.za/documents/60dc67f2bbbb4.pdf>
- Pandey, J. (2024) 9 Quality Assurance and Governance in Teacher Education through Open and Distance Learning (ODL): A Critique of Policy Initiatives and Identity Challenges. In Panda, P. Ed. (2024). *Teacher Education Landscapes in India*. Taylor & Francis. <https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=EbFaEQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT172&dq=quality+assurance+of+ODL+in+the+digital+era&ots=WY07oDzh65&sig=Yghugp3dbWxk3GXXzzzIQR-4q8s#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- Republic of South Africa (RSA). (2014). *Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities in the Context of an Integrated Postschool System*. *Suth African Government Gazette*. [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/201409/37811qon535.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/37811qon535.pdf)
- Council of Higher Education (CHE). (2014). *Distance Higher Education Programmes in a Digital Era: Good Practice Guide*. CHE. <https://www.che.ac.za/publications/distance-higher-education-programmes-digital-era-good-practice-guide>
- Sobe, N. W. (2021, 10 February). *Reworking Four Pillars of Education to Sustain the Commons*. UNESCO. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/reworking-four-pillars-education-sustain-commons>
- Thurab-Nkosi, D. Quality Assurance in Course development and Delivery in a Post-Pandemic World: Riding the Wave of Technology Transformations. *Caribbean Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 4 (1), 1-16. <https://cjms.utt.edu.tt/ojs/index.php/cjms/article/view/97>
- UNESCO. (1996). *Learning: the treasure within; report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000109590>
- Welch, T. & Reed, Y. (Eds). *Designing and Delivering Distance Educations: Quality Criteria and Case Studies from South Africa*. Johannesburg: National Association of Distance Education Organizations of South Africa (NADEOSA). <http://www.nadeosa.org.za/resources/reports/NADEOSA%20QC%20Section%201.pdf>.

# Thank you



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING  
[www.col.org](http://www.col.org)

The contents of this presentation, with the exception of logos and graphics which are the property of the respective owners, is made available under Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0).