

A Report



Roundtable of Vice Chancellors of Open Universities in Asia and Africa

Theme: Open Universities in 21st Century



Organised by
Commonwealth of Learning, Canada

in Collaboration with
Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, India

Supported by
Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India

Prepared by

Shahid Rasool, Manas Ranjan Panigrahi and Sanjogita Mishra
Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA)

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Background

There are 31 open universities across the Commonwealth, contributing to over 4.4 million learners, offering more than 18,000 courses in almost all domains of knowledge and at all educational levels (as per The International Standard Classification of Education). The open university is a 20th century innovation that disrupted the ivory towers of higher education and facilitated learners at the bottom of the pyramid in accessing quality education at low cost and at their convenience. Open and Distance Learning (ODL), as an innovation, now manifests itself as online and blended learning. The boundaries have begun to blur between campus and ODL institutions leading to a convergence of educational delivery. According to the Distance Education Enrollment Report 2017, about 30% of students in higher education in the USA are taking at least one distance education course. The emergence of massive open online courses (MOOCs), another form of distance education, has been embraced even by top-tier research universities. This adoption shows that ODL, the initial disruptor, has been mainstreamed.



The open universities are primarily dependent on media and technology for the delivery of their operations, and we have not kept pace with the

rapid growth of technologies for teaching and learning in the 21st century. We now see Commonwealth Open Universities at different generations: (i) correspondence model, (ii) multimedia model, (iii) tele-learning model, (iv) flexible learning model, and (v) intelligent flexible learning model. With society moving towards the fourth industrial revolution, many face-to-face teaching institutions have started adopting the practices of open universities to meet the needs of Millennials, who form the core of the learners in higher education today. Thus, it is necessary to rethink the operations and practices of open universities to make these relevant to the requirements of today.

Source: Commonwealth of Learning (2019), Open Universities in the 21st Century: Concept Note. Available at: http://oasis.col.org/bitstream/handle/11599/3133/2019_OER_OPENUniv_concept.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Objectives of the Roundtable Conference

The roundtable of the Vice Chancellors of Open Universities in Asia and Africa provide a platform for deliberation on the above issues and challenges face the open and distance education system, in general, and the single mode open universities, in particular. Therefore, the objectives of the roundtable were to:



1. Discuss key developments that are affecting the operations of single mode open universities;
2. Critically examine the appropriateness of the existing models and approaches adopted by open universities in the context of the 21st century;

3. Develop recommendations for the open universities to follow up and implement to remain relevant to the national development goals and aspirations of the society.

Participants

Nineteen Vice Chancellors from eight countries including Bangladesh, Botswana, India, Malaysia, Nigeria, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Tanzania were participated in the Roundtable. The list of participants is at **Annexure I**.

Venue: Conference Hall, Hotel Sheraton, Saket, New Delhi

Dates: 23rd-24th April 2019

Regional Coordination: Commonwealth Educational Media Center for Asia (CEMCA), New Delhi

Session Wise Proceedings

The roundtable of Vcs was designed and structured with systematic 8 business technical sessions one group activity which include: Presentation of the Concept note, Learners in the 21st Century, Impact of Technology on Open Universities, Student Support Services, Quality Assurance for Open Universities, Assessing Outcomes and Competencies, Using Open Educational Resources, Employability, and Future Model and Recommendations as group work. The group activities focused on following five major areas: 1. Rethinking System, 2. Programmes and Teaching-Learning Strategies, 3. Innovative Student Support Services, 4. Innovations in Technology Applications, 5. Quality Assurance. The programme schedule is at **Annexure II**.



Welcome & Opening Session

Date: 23rd April 2019

Time: 10:20am – 11:00am

Dr. Shahid Rasool, Director CEMCA, in his welcome address focussed on the significant role of technology in converging the conventional institutions with the ODL institutions in terms of development and delivery of teaching learning materials. "This", he said, "is offering an exciting opportunity to ODL institutions in increasing their reach; addressing the issue of equity to quality education and increasing the level of acceptability of the ODL degrees." "To address the issue of employability of youth, he stressed the need to integrate skill training or TVET with the existing curriculum of various courses being offered by the ODL institutions and developing need based courses in collaboration with the industry. He informed the august gathering about various CEMCA's recent initiatives which includes Higher Education Institutional Networking for Sharing of Educational Resources (HEINSER), Pilot project "IDEAS for Dark Areas" and advocacy for policy framework "Linking skills with education" and the vice versa.

Dr. Bhadri representing MHRD, Govt. of India thanked Prof. Asha Kanwar for choosing India as the venue for the discussions on role of open

universities in 21st Century. He hoped that some good recommendations emerge out of the 2 days' discussions and debate. He focussed on the flexibility that ODL offers and its appropriateness for Asian and African countries that sustain a high population with limited resources and limited facilities. He focussed on the myths and concerns about ODL systems for its quality and lack of employability which has to be overcome by adopting strict quality guidelines. He also



informed the gathering that Government of India has agreed to launch 100% online courses from July 2019 onwards. He stressed on the need of resources and capacity building for teachers, managers and course validation frameworks. Lastly he described UNESCO's 4-point agenda of Education, i.e., *To know, To do, To live Together & To be*.

Prof. Nageshwar Rao, Vice Chancellor, IGNOU, addressing the gathering, mentioned the possibilities of the future with automation and 100% online assessments and certifications. He said that MHRD in 2018 has taken care of 4 important things for ODL –

- a) Regulation,
- b) Accreditation/Parameters for NAAC for ODL Universities,
- c) Issuing circulars and notices to employers mentioning that degrees awarded through ODL are at par with face-to-face education,
- d) Online Courses.

Addressing the concerns of MHRD, that Skill courses cannot run in ODL system, he stated that the Laboratories and Skill Development centres of conventional universities and industry partners can be used by the ODL institutions for the Skill Component while ODL will only impart the “Knowledge” or academic component.

Prof. Asha Kanwar, President and CEO, Commonwealth of Learning, introduced COL and CEMCA. Thereafter she gave an elaborate Keynote speech about the C-21 model for ODL. She mentioned that GER in Tertiary Education increased from 25% to 35% globally and it is proven through survey that people with higher level of education earn more than people with lesser education. However, employability of youth with tertiary education is less than 50%. Critical Thinking, Decision



Making, Ability to Work in teams and Communication are some of the employability skills desired in youth as identified by a survey by Payscale.com. Using new technologies for deciding “What” and “How” to teach should be the consideration for future of ODL Systems. Learners are 'digital natives' with access to variety of multi-media resources. ODL Institutions must reflect upon the fact that “Are we making responsible global citizens?” ODL which was a disruptor has now been mainstreamed with conventional universities embracing MOOCs in their curriculum. Learners of today need more mobility and skilling and re-skilling. She discussed the concepts of **Multi-Versity** network (where learners can move back and forth from education to society and back). Micro-credentials and need for lifelong learning of faculty and its urgency to be embraced by ODL universities to gear towards the demands of the learners of C-21. Lastly, she discussed technological disruptions & innovations and their implications like MOOCs, micro-credentials badges, Blockchains and OER. She stressed upon creation of Global Classroom, integration of Peer-to-Peer learning and adoption of Adaptive Learning by the ODL who are well placed to be developmental universities driving inclusivity in education.



SESSION - 1

Presentation of the Concept Note

Date: 23rd April 2019

Time: 11.15am - 12.30pm

Chair: **Prof. E. Vayunandan,**
YCMOU VC

Prof. Madhu Parhar, STRIDE, IGNOU, made a presentation based on the background paper prepared by her for the roundtable. Touching upon relevance of ODL in 21st century,

Prof Parhar highlighted how Higher education systems have changed in 21st century. She pointed out that India's GER lags behind world average and is at 25.06%. Therefore, it is pertinent to ponder if open learning is a solution. She mentioned about the Founding Father Syndrome, where open universities today try to follow the path taken by The Open University, UK. The most important aspect she emphasized was the characteristic of 21st century learners. She also described the following points:

- ▶ Active learning
- ▶ Micro credentials backed by digital badge
- ▶ Bite sized learning- smaller modules that will lead to the outcomes. She suggested to make 1-2 learning outcomes, not 4-5 learning outcomes in one module. Such as what 'Dominos' has done, they have created videos of 45 secs for their own employees for on-job learning/training, just so they are able to target the learners' attention span.

She mentioned about outcome based learning; the in thing in today's time- which even got attention by the Finance Minister of India in his previous Union Budget speech. She observed that counselling provided today is not helping the students. The solution is Flip Classroom that gives personalized learning. She said that MOOCs are the way forward and artificial intelligence can be used for evaluation. In the coming time boundaries are going to die between the ODL system and conventional university system. Employability in ODL must focus on getting a job, staying in a job and moving up in a job. She observed one size fits all strategy cannot work now.

Prof. V S Prasad in his presentation highlighted the need for:

- ▶ Public Policy Perspective
- ▶ Institutional Design
- ▶ Building Institutional capacity to actualize these goals.



He mentioned that, there is a lot of ambiguity in the policy space of ODL and we are in a paradoxical situation; we want to better implement ODL, whereas we don't have a policy framework for ODL. We need to educate policy makers. He insisted that consensus building is very important. We all suffer from intellectual laziness. Today it is the system teaching, not the teacher. Transformation is taking place but we need to check if we have the appropriate institutional settings. He said that, structure and leadership relationship is just like the relationship between a car and a driver. Change should come through consensus. We need to build competencies and attractable academics to Open University. He observed that such conferences help us in collectively reflect upon the problems. A detailed note is at **Annexure III**.

Prof. Mannan, VC, BOU agreed with other discussants. He observed that as ODL institutions we provide a lot of inputs to our learners. But we must reflect if the students are capable enough to use it or not. Today the staff does not have adequate knowledge to use technology. Videos created should not be more than 3 minutes, and if the academic is using the prompter in a video then it is evident to the student who quickly loses interest in such videos. He also stressed that the ODL must sufficiently focus on ability of those who are physically handicapped. He suggested that, there is need to establish Knowledge diplomacy: a common platform for commonwealth countries.

Prof. Elifas Bisanda, VC, Open University of Tanzania observed that content is very important in ODL. He said that in "Outcome based

learning" the learning outcomes are important and not the duration of the course, just like in a restaurant, you pay for a cup of tea irrespective of the time one takes to drink it. To support the learners better ODL systems should support "on demand" examination. He questioned, why the old duration of courses is still being imposed on students when they can complete the same course in a shorter duration using technology.



SESSION - 2

Learners in the 21st Century

Date: 23rd April 2019

Time: 12.30pm - 1.30pm

Chair: **Prof. K. Seetharama Rao**, BRAOU VC

Prof. K. Seetharama Rao, VC, BRAOU as a Chairperson summarized the qualities of the learners of the 21st Century. He said that these learners are digital natives, multi-taskers, want freedom, are open to learning through trial and error, Know where to find information and how to get it.

Prof. Zoraini Wati Abas, Deputy VC, Wawasan Open University (WOU), Malaysia talked about need for innovation in WOU to gear towards the needs of learners in 21st Century. She said the drivers for innovation from learners' perspectives are ROI, Skills mismatch and sustainability. She said that, enrolment is declining, which is of great concern to WOU. ODL, today, is attracting younger learners who have short attention span, need bite sized learning, quick results, recognition of efforts, choices of schedule and courses, etc. Learners take longer to graduate since they prefer self-paced learning. Technical Skills & Soft Skills need to be added to the curriculum of cognitive knowledge. She emphasized that to enhance retention which is now at 40%, ODL universities need to focus on student engagement, which leads to student satisfaction, retention and success.

Prof. Hitesh Deka from KKHSOU described the learners



of the 21st century as a generation that does not remember life without internet. He described them as intelligent, independent, having immense comfort with inter-cultural contexts and technology. He then mentioned about 12 skills desirable in the learners for increased employability categorized into 3 groups as mentioned here:

1. Learning Skills
2. Literacy Skills
3. Life Skills

SESSION - 3

Impact of Technology on Open Universities

Date: 23rd April 2019

Time: 2.15pm-3.30pm

Chair: **Dr. Srikanta Mohapatra**, OSOU VC

Prof. Jayant Sonwalkar, VC MP Bhoj Open University traced the history of technological evolution, stressing on the fact that ODL has been leveraging technology historically. He presented 3 major areas that can benefit from technology



- ▶ Learner to content through flash cards, RSS feed, YouTube, F&Q forum,
- ▶ Learner to instructor through lessons, quiz and tests, video conference, emails and
- ▶ Learner to learner through chat, discussion forums, blogs, wikis, etc.

Referring to the latest trends in using technology, he referred to the fact that there should be a shift towards “brain based learning”. Research proves that learning outcomes improve as brainwaves emitted move from beta to alpha to theta to delta waves. Hence, the brain waves can be read and supportive environment should be created for the learner.

Prof. Srikanta Mohapatra, VC, OSOU said that we need more adaptive learning systems, rather than LMS. He referred to “Moodle” as the best open software for LMS. We should focus on university models such as the U21 University which is totally technology based university with no real professors. He also presented the case of OSOU that acts as a course provider to 5-6 conventional universities. He further shared OSOU's innovative attempt to develop and provide online courses although the university is only five years old. Prof.Mohapatra stressed the need of mobile enabled learning and delivery mechanism to engage with the 21st century learner.



SESSION - 4

Student Support Services

Date: 23rd April 2019

Time: 4:20 pm – 5:30 pm

Chair: **Prof. Elifas Bisanda**, Open University of Tanzania VC

Prof. Elifas Bisanda, VC, Open University of Tanzania the chairperson of the session opened the session insisting on the importance of student engagement for student retention. He said that, learners' attendance for

orientation ceremony is always high but unfortunately many don't make it to graduation because of high dropout ratios. Hence, student support services are pivotal to learner engagement.

Prof. Subha Shankar Sarkar, VC, NSOU focussed on the challenges of the state of West Bengal. He said that internet connectivity is poor in the state. He showed the educational Map of West Bengal with which he can create more study centres or strengthen the existing ones. He pointed that enrolment of younger students and girls (especially from muslim community) has increased in the recent years. He provided details of the learners' preferences of learning in the education, Triangle of SLM, F2F and ICT.

Prof. Daniel Tau, VC, Botswana Open University informed that they are a new university started in 2017 with about 7000 learners in a population of 2.5 million which is quite encouraging. He said that they exist not to cater to masses who cannot afford a conventional university, but to support lifelong learning for learners who have been to universities. He agreed that learner support system is the backbone of ODL. He informed that they use an ERP system which is a licensed software developed by South Africa and would like to know if there are any open systems available for the purpose. He mentioned about online library and email support that his university provide to the learners. He said that to attain a scale and speed technology must be leveraged. However, he warned that emerging technology should not endanger the very essence of inclusivity

of ODL. By inducting modern technologies, we should not exclude some learners. He also expressed his concern on low rates of completion of the course in ODL which is as low as 15%.

Prof. Ashok Sharma, VC, VMOU said that ODL has only seen 4 decades in India and yet there are 15 ODL universities. Referring to the MHRD Regulations of ODL, he said that it is not enough. He said India must come out with its own



ODL model. ODL universities must come out with industry backed employment related new courses. Based on location, culture, need and demand of learners and industry, courses must be designed. Peer Assisted Support System (PASS) has been used in OUSL to provide student support system in certain courses.



SESSION - 5

Using OER

Date: 24th April 2019

Time: 10:35 am – 11:05 am

Prof. Asha Kanwar, President, COL, made a detailed presentation on Open Educational Resources (OER). Defining OER using UNESCO's definition which came in 2002, she mentioned about the Paris Declaration on OER which was done by COL in collaboration with UNESCO in 2012. Then COL conducted 6 regional conferences for OER with Governments of Commonwealth Countries. As a result of these conferences, COL published "Key challenges -OER Global Policy". Some of the key challenges that emerged were:



- a. Supportive policy environments,
- b. Inclusive and equitable access,
- c. Building capacity of users to find, re-use, create and share OER
- d. Language and cultural issues

She emphasized through various examples and evidences that OER – reduces costs, increases access and improves quality. In Antigua & Barbuda each student saves 75 to 88 ECD per semester because of OER. 5% of the students also performed well because of various formats in which learning resources was available to them as OER. She then informed the audience about the 5Rs of OER, i.e. Reuse, Revise, Remix, Redistribute and Retain.

She further informed about Creative Commons Licenses which has three codes – Legal code for lawyers, Commons code for general users and Digital code for IT experts. She presented the hierarchy of openness of the CC licenses along with CC Licence Compatibility Chart.

She informed people where to find OER, i.e. through

- a. Search Engines – Google, Bing, Creative Commons Search
- b. Repositories – MIT OCW, Open Learn
- c. Directories – DOER, OER Commons

Some of the websites mentioned were:

- www.doer.col.org;
- www.cnx.org;
- www.saylor.org;
- www.oercommons.org;
- www.commonswikimedia.org;
- www.flicker.com/creativecommons.org

She also shared information about OER Course Design which saves on re-inventing the wheel while acknowledging the source by mentioning Title, Author, Source and providing Link



SESSION - 6

Assessing Outcomes and Competencies

Date: 24th April 2019

Time: 11:27 am – 12:30 pm

Chair: **Dr. Ami U. Upadhyay**, Dr. BAOU VC

Prof Ariadurai, VC, OUSL started by explaining the term “Competency” which varies in the context of education, skills, countries and cultures. He then informed that in Sri Lanka, Competencies are referred to NVQF which was defined in the year 2009 while they were referred to as SLQF Levels which were defined in 2017. He then presented the comparison of NVQF levels with SLQF levels.



With an example of a course he presented the details of assessment as designed by OUSL.

Dr. Srikanta Mohapatra, VC, OSOU in his presentation introduced regulations which is a good move and he emphasised on that ODL students are second chance students and not second rate students. He observed that most ODL students are doing courses to gain knowledge and to get promotion in job.

SESSION - 7

Quality Assurance for Open Universities

Date: 24th April 2019

Time: 12:45 pm – 1:30 pm

Chair: **Prof. V. S. Prasad**, Former Director, NAAC, India

Prof. V S Prasad, chairing this session, began by stating that “Quality” differentiates from person to person, institution to institution and country to country. He raised three pertinent questions in the context of quality of ODL.

- ▶ How to move from QA to Excellence in Quality?
- ▶ What drives QA – is it confirmation or transformational?
- ▶ How to engage the staff for Quality Assurance?

He also compared Plato's theory of motivation with that of Kautilya and opened the discussion for presenters.

Prof. Nageswar Rao, VC, IGNOU said that there are 31 ODL Universities in Commonwealth countries of which 15 are in India. All OUs have their own QA parameters. However, he urged that the QA parameters should be



at par with conventional universities so that there is no problem of parity and equivalence. He again urged to MHRD to allow OUs to impart Skill courses. He said that each OU has its own strengths in certain disciplines like UOU for Yoga. Such strengths of Universities must be recognized and rewarded. Also a documentation of best practices must be done for all universities and consolidated for mutual learning and adoption.

Prof. Rosli Hamir Zorani, Vice President, Open University of Malaysia (OUM) presented on behalf of their Vice Chancellor, OUM. Prof Zorani is involved in the development of Infrastructure for OU Malaysia. Talking about the history of the University he mentioned that Malaysia has 11 Public Universities. These Universities formed a consortium and they established the OUM which is a private university and their revenue is from fees of students. They have currently got about 30,000 students and so far; 80,000 students have graduated from OUM. He further emphasised that we must leverage on the quality of the 11 Public Universities, they have a strict code of practice to maintain their quality.

Prof Luvuyo Lumkile Lalendle spoke about Quality Assurance in Open Universities with key focus on student centric education which has digital promise keeping quality context especially in the Open and Distance Learning Scenario. He further discussed on fourth Industrial Revolution and future of technology which is putting increased pressure on institutions because of the rapidly changing global market dynamics. He further elaborated on the major differences between first Industrial Revolution and Fourth Industrial Revolution. After hundreds of years of a relatively static model, he reiterated that they are seeing significant change around the globe in education especially in South Africa and while the specifics of change may look different around the world, most of the drivers of change are similar; primarily pressures and opportunities are tied to globalisation and application of emerging technologies like cloud computing, mobile connectivity, and data analytics.

The rise of the 4th Industrial Revolution requires that we as educators start thinking ahead and preparing our students for a world much different to the one we live in now. He asked





participants to develop QA systems that address the needs of class of 2030 which is going to have a digital Eco-system, which will have its foundation in open, continuous and convergent learning. He further explained that class of 2030 will focus on Digital Identify, Full Self-Service Learning, Flexible & Customised Learning Programme, Social-Connectedness, ICT Services as basic services, Digital Technologies immersed and Virtual Classrooms which will

eventually develop an effective learning Eco-System. He also discussed about the Digital/Smart model of a university where student, employee, university and exam Management, exam evaluation, academic repository, and content repository are all connected using digitally integrated campus.

SESSION - 8

Employability

Date: 24th April 2019

Time: 2:40 pm – 3:30 pm

Chair: **Prof. Ravindra Kumar Sinha**, Vice Chancellor, Nalanda Open University, India

Prof. Justus A. Sokefun, Deputy VC, National Open University of Nigeria began by saying that employability is one of the major problems faced by ODL universities. He elaborated on this by giving an example of his own university. He explained that the state universities in Nigeria had refused to accept graduates from his own university as employees. The reasons associated with this, according to him is that his university is an open

university. In other words, these state universities don't see open universities at par with conventional universities. Liaising with professional bodies is a major problem of the open universities in Nigeria. Such as most of the law graduates from his university are not admitted by the National Bar council. However, he added, that his university has made attempts to interact with employers to understand their expectations and gauge the quality of the students of his university. He explains that most of the students in his university are working, and also that the university encourages the junior staff to join courses in their own university. It is observed that most of the staff who pursue these courses leave the system and pursue jobs in banks, army, etc.

Prof Vayunandan, VC, YCMOU began by saying that the same problems as discussed by fellow panelist from Nigeria exists in India as well, indicating towards the problem of teaching law through ODL. He observed that ODL system gives a second chance to the students. Most of them get or have a job. They are employed before joining the course or while doing the course. Therefore, most of them use this certification to get promotions in their respective jobs. For example, the Maharashtra police recognises, YCMOU's BA first year equivalent to class 12th certificate. As a result, they see many constables joining this course so that they can use this as a certificate to get promoted to sub inspector and so on. He informed that YCMOU hardly has 5000 students who do not have jobs, who are only learners. He also mentioned about YCMOU's learn and earn scheme. For example, they have launched a BSc Drug sciences, instead of pharmaceuticals, which has a high demand in market as most of the students get employed after doing this course. Same is case with their BBA course. He emphasized on industry partnership for better employability of the students. One key factor for employability is the learner having a job while doing the course.



Some Comments from Participants:



Prof. Mukhopadhyay, ETMA urged that there is a need to differentiate between employability and employment. Employment is just getting a job. But employability is getting a job, sustaining in it and moving upward in the job, i.e. promotion.

Prof. Elifas Bisanda, VC, Open University of Tanzania observed that the problem of “Employability” originates from the fact that universities are still using old curriculum, and the

employers are not happy with it. Technology has changed but the labs still use the old technology. Another issue that he pointed towards was that the graduates from the ODL system are poor communicators. They hardly know how to write application letters for seeking employment. Thus he urged the heads of institution focus on those areas.

SESSION - 9

Future Model & Recommendations

Date: 24th April 2019

Time: 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Group Work Facilitator: Prof V S Prasad

This session was based on group work. Five groups were created to encourage diverse participation in each. The groups were given 5 sub-themes as mentioned below. They were asked to arrive at four recommendations related to the sub-theme assigned to them. This session was facilitated over by Prof. V. S. Prasad. The group details are



available at **Annexure IV**. The group wise major recommendations as per the following:


Group 1: Sub-Theme: Rethinking System

1. Each University or Institution must take a re-look at their Vision and create an ODL Vision of lifelong learning.
2. Decision making should not be person dependent but should be driven by facts and supported by a system
3. Bring in as much automation as possible in regular functioning of the university. This will bring in accountability and also reduce human labour, freeing them up for higher order thinking.
4. Faculty of ODL institutions come from conventional universities. Therefore, they should be oriented towards ODL in such a way that they appreciate the strengths of ODL and carve out its original identity, instead of trying to copy conventional educational system.

Group 2: Sub-Theme: Technology in ODL

1. Institutions must have strong wi-fi and internet connectivity
2. Teacher and student must be provided tablets or laptops
3. Electricity should be available and continuous in ODL institutions
4. Technological applications like ERP and LMS should be available to manage all processes like admission, examination etc. from end to end.

Group 3: Sub-Theme: Student Support Services

1. Adopt a bottom up approach to understand students' needs and preferences with a system in place to capture, analyse and use that data for making informed decisions
 2. Create facility for eCounselling and eTutoring the learner
 3. Create and provide digitized learning resources
 4. Ensure availability of LMS and connectivity at learning centres
- 

Group 4: Sub-Theme: Programmes and Teaching & Learning Strategies

1. Skill based and tailor made courses based on requirement of the grassroots must be captured through survey
2. Entrepreneurship programmes must be emphasized upon and facilitation for financial Linkages and incubation support by university
3. Online platforms must be adopted to support ICT / mobile based learning and peer learning
4. Hands on training and practical oriented learning must be added to as many courses as possible.

Group 5: Sub-Theme: Quality Assurance

Let us build a system which allows:

1. Students to have self-organized learning using the existing content
2. Learners to decide their own curriculum
3. Quick decision making
4. Continuous transformation for lifelong learning opportunities

Concluding the session, Prof. V S Prasad raised his concern for the quality of ODL and sincerely urged everyone to work single-mindedly towards improving it.


SESSION - 10

Concluding Session

Date: 24th April 2019

Time: 5:00 pm – 5:30 pm

Dr. B. K. Bhadri from Ministry of Human Resources Development summarized problems of ODL systems across Asia and Africa and said that they were similar. He then thanked COL for this initiative and commended COL for the work it is doing. He said that ODL Universities can carve their



unique identity by making need based courses for learners. He urged the VCs to make tailor made courses for youth, housewives, old people, service class, etc. He observed that the recognition issue will and always be a major area of discussion but ODL institutions is for a very small group. ODL Universities should increase their horizons and reach to learners of all ages and realms, offering courses relevant to their needs based on geography and culture.

Prof. Nageshwar Rao, Vice Chancellor, IGNOU, confessed that he has more questions in his mind like

- a. What should be the ratio of time spent on online vs Face-to-face counselling?
- b. How to redefine the roles of regional centres and study centres?
- c. How to motivate staff to think and act differently to push excellence.

He requested COL and VCs of ODL institutions to share their experiences, good and bad, which will serve as a learning for other institutions.

Prof. Asha Kanwar, President, COL, thanked all VCs for attending the two-day Round-Table conference. She thanked Director CEMCA, Dr. Shahid Rasool and team for excellent arrangements and the success of the roundtable. She agreed to support the following:

1. Development of a Commonwealth Values programme
2. Publication of ODL Best Practices
3. A single platform for sharing of best practices

Prof Kanwar, said COL will consider the request for Joint Certification subject to COL's internal processes for doing the same and with reference to there on Certification norms.

She requested the participants to deeply introspect on the following facts:



1. Advocacy for ODL at higher policy making level. She shared that ODL addresses the issue of climate Change because Carbon footprint of an ODL student is 1/3rd of a face to face learner. She also said that AIOU saw increase in income of 68% of its learners.
2. Document best practices, deliberate upon return for investment and Value for money in a more scientific and systematic way which will enable COL in advocating the cause of ODL with governments and ministries.

Speaking about the problem of level of credibility of ODL she asked the heads of the institutions to concentrate on marketing and “Communications and Branding” exercise. Giving the example of COL, she said that we have also started Branding and Marketing ODL. She said that ODL institutions have to showcase their strengths as follows:

- ◆ ODL is nimble with expertise in technology
- ◆ ODL has the ability to be relevant and responsive to learners
- ◆ SDG will be achieved by ODL and alternative systems of learning only.

Adding to the recommendations about “Reimagining ODL”, she gave the following thoughts:

- a. Let us think of collaboration rather than competition
- b. Let us try to move forward from QA to excellence
- c. Human Literacy which builds Empathy and Decision Making Values
- d. Data Literacy which helps learners to deal with data which is increasing day by day
- e. Technology Literacy which



builds the ability of learners to learn, unlearn and re-learn the skills to use technology platforms

- f. Let us move from Skills & competencies to Transformational Learning where learners not only learn how to deal with the changes and circumstances of the world, but will also develop the ability to change the circumstances and be leaders.

Vote of Thanks

The roundtable concluded with vote of thanks presented by Dr. Shahid Rasool, Director, CEMCA. He thanked Prof Asha Kanwar in trusting CEMCA with the responsibility to organise the roundtable and constant guidance throughout the roundtable. He expressed gratitude to all the participating VC's for attending the roundtable and making significant contribution to the understanding of 21st century ODL Institutions.



Annexure - 1

List of Participants

Roundtable of Vice-Chancellors' of Open Universities of Asia and Africa

Sl. No.	Particulars	Contact Numbers	Email ID
1.	Prof Elifas Tozo Bisanda VICE CHANCELLOR Open University of Tanzania (OUT) PO Box 23409 Dar es Salaam TANZANIA	+Tel- + 255 22 2668992 +Tel- + 255 22 2668756	elifas.bisanda@out.ac.tz vc@out.ac.tz
2.	Prof Dr. Rosli Hamir Open Universiti Malaysia Jalan Tun Ismail 50480 Kuala Lumpur MALAYSIA	Tel- +603 2773 2010 Fax- +603 2697 8820	rosli@oum.edu.my
3.	Dr. M A Mannan, Vice Chancellor, Bangladesh Open University; Former Professor of Management, Dhaka University, Dhaka 1000, BANGLADESH	Tel- + 8802-01755593377; 01711 523109 (Cell), Fax: 8802-9291122; 8615583;	vcbou@bou.edu.bd
4.	Ms. Zoraini Wati Abas Vice- Chancellor Wawasan Open University Penang MALAYSIA	Tel- + 603 04 2180333	zorainiabas@wou.edu.my
5.	Professor Justus A. Sokefun Deputy Vice-Chancellor National Open University of Nigeria University Village Plot 91 Cadastral Zone, Nnamdi Azikiwe Expressway Jabi-Abuja FCT, NIGERIA	Tel- + 08079917938, 07064701747, 08180139430	jsokefun@noun.edu.ng
6.	Dr. Daniel R. Tau Executive Director Open University of Botswana Private Bag BO187 Gaborone Bontleng BOTSWANA	Tel:- + 26772 783558	dtau@bocodol.ac.bw ; dtau@staff.bou.ac.bw
7.	Prof LL Lalendle, Executive Director , University of South Africa (UNISA) PO Box 392, Pretoria 0003 SOUTH AFRICA	Tel: +27 12 429 2561 Mob- + 27 726352824a	Lalendl@unisa.ac.za
8.	S. A. Ariadurai [PhD] Senior Professor Vice Chancellor Open University of Sri Lanka Nawala, Nugegoda, 10250 SRI LANKA	Tel.: +94 11 285 3731 Fax.: +94 11 280 6577 Mobile: +94 77 761 6138	vc@ou.ac.lk

9.	Padma Shri Prof. (Dr.) R. K. Sinha Vice-Chancellor Nalanda Open University, 3rd floor, Bismaun Bhawan, Gandhi Maidan, Patna-800 001, Bihar INDIA	Tel-+ 91 612-2201013, 2219034 , 2206916	nou@nou.ac.in
10.	Prof. Subha Sankar Sarkar Vice-Chancellor, Netaji Subhas Open University, DD-26, DD Block, Sector - I, Salt Lake City, Kolkata 700 064 West Bengal INDIA	Tel- + 91 33 4066 3210	vc_nsou@wbnsou.ac.in sarkarsubha55@gmail.com
11.	Prof. Om Prakash Singh Negi Vice Chancellor, Uttarakhand Open University, Haldwani Uttarakhand INDIA	Mob.+ 91 8954043377 Tel- + 91 5946-263014 Fax- + 91 5946-262032	vc@uou.ac.in
12.	Prof. E Vayunandan Vice-Chancellor Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU) Dnyangangotri, Near Gangapur Dam, Nashik-422 222 Maharashtra INDIA	Tel- + 91-253-2231714, 2231715 Fax-+ 91 253-2230470	vc.ycmou@gmail.com vc@ycmou.com
13.	Prof. K Sitarama Rao Vice-Chancellor Incharge Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University, Prof. G.Ram Reddy Marg, Road No. 46, Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad-500 033 Andhra Pradesh INDIA	Tel- (VC): + 91-40-23680201, 23544830, 23680201 (Reg.): 23548270, 23544910	vc@braou.ac.in
14.	Prof. Ashok Sharma Vice-Chancellor Vardhman Mahaveer Open University, Rawatbhata Road, Kota-324 021, Rajasthan INDIA	Tel - + 91 744-2471254, (Reg.): + 91 744 2470971	vc@vmou.ac.in
15.	Prof. Ami U. Upadhyay Vice-Chancellor Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Jyotirmay Parisar Opp.Shri Balaji Temple Sarkhej-Gandhinagar HighwayChharodi Ahmedabad-382481 Gujarat INDIA	Tel-+ 91 2717 297170, 2717 297144	baouvc@gmail.com
16.	Dr. Srikant Mohapatra Vice-Chancellor Odisha State Open University (OSOU) G.M. University Modipada, Sambalpur Odisha 768002 INDIA	M- + 91 9040014059	Srikant_mohapatra@rediffmail.com
17.	Prof Nageshwar Rao Vice-Chancellor Indira Gandhi National Open University Maidan Garhi New Delhi -110068 INDIA	Tel- + 91 11 29532484, 29532707	vco@ignou.ac.in vco@ignou.ac.in

18.	Prof Ravindra Kanhere Pro Vice-Chancellor Indira Gandhi National Open University Maidan Garhi New Delhi -110068 INDIA	M- + 91 9406632151	rkanhere56@gmail.com
19.	Dr Hitesh Deka Vice-Chancellor The Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, Block III, Housefed Complex, Last Gate, Dispur, Guwahati-781006 ASSAM	(O): 0361-2235398 (R): 092070-49528	kkh_sou@yahoo.com
20.	Prof. V S Prasad Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh INDIA	M- + 91 7893192146	prasadvs@gmail.com
21.	Dr B K Bhadri Deputy Educational Adviser Ministry of Human Resource Development Shastri Bhawan New Delhi -110001 INDIA	— + 91 9810050763	binod_bhadri@yahoo.co.in bkbhadri.edu@nic.in
22.	Prof. Marmar Mukhopadhyay Founder, ETMA Gurgaon Haryana INDIA	M- + 91 9810217987	marmar.mukhopadhyay@gmail.com
23.	Prof. Madhu Parhar STRIDE Indira Gandhi National Open University New Delhi -110068 INDIA	M- + 91 9810677084	madhu.parhar@gmail.com
24.	Dr. Shahid Rasool Director Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) 7/8 Sarvpriya Vihar New Delhi -110068 INDIA	M- + 91 9818101749	srasool@col.org
25.	Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi Programme Officer Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) 7/8 Sarvpriya Vihar New Delhi -110068 INDIA	M- + 91 9650154010	mpanigrahi@col.org
26.	Ms Sanjogita Mishra Programme Officer Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) 7/8 Sarvpriya Vihar New Delhi -110068 INDIA	M- + 91 9701703717	sanjogitamishra@col.org
27.	Mr. Dalip Kumar Tetri Adviser Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) 7/8 Sarvpriya Vihar New Delhi -110068 INDIA	— + 91 9958244344	dtetri@col.org

Annexure - II

Programme Schedule



**Roundtable of
Vice Chancellors
of Open Universities in
Asia and Africa**

Theme: Open Universities in 21st Century

Organised by:
Commonwealth of Learning, Canada
in collaboration with
Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, India

Supported by:
Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India

Venue : Hotel Sheraton, Saket, New Delhi

Dates : 23rd-24th April 2019, New Delhi

Day-1 : 23rd April, 2019 (Tuesday)

Time	Activity	Resource Person/s
9.50am - 10.20am	Registration and Tea	
10.20am – 11.00am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening Session Welcome to the Guests – Dr. Shahid Rasool, Director, CEMCA Welcome Remarks – Representative of the MHRD, Govt of India Introduction to the Roundtable – Prof. Nageshwara Rao, Vice Chancellor, IGNOU Keynote Address – Prof. Asha Kanwar, President and CEO, Commonwealth of Learning, Canada <p><i>Rapporteur:</i> Ms. Sanjogita Mishra, Programme Officer-Skills, CEMCA</p>	
11.00am - 11.15am	Tea Break	
11.15am - 12.30pm	Presentation of the Concept Note	<p>Chair: Prof. E. Vayunandan, YCMOU VC</p> <p>Presenter: Prof. Madhu Parhar, Director, STRIDE</p> <p>Discussants: (10 minutes each)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prof. V.S. Prasad, Former Director, NAAC, India 2. Prof. M.A. Mannan, Vice Chancellor, Bangladesh Open University 3. Prof. Elifas Bisanda, Vice Chancellor, Open University of Tanzania 4. Comments from Participants <p><i>Rapporteur:</i> Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi, Programme Officer-Education, CEMCA</p>
12.30pm - 1.30pm	Learners in the 21 st century	<p>Chair: Prof. K. Seetharama Rao, Vice Chancellor, Dr. BRAOU, Hyderabad</p> <p>Speakers: (10 minutes each)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr. Hitesh Deka, KKSHOU, India 2. Prof. Zoraini Wati Abas, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Wawasan Open University, Malaysia 3. Prof. Abdulla Adamu, Vice Chancellor, National Open University of Nigeria 4. Comments from Participants <p><i>Rapporteur:</i> Ms. Sanjogita Mishra, Programme Officer-Skills, CEMCA</p>
1.30pm - 2.15pm	Lunch Break	
2.15pm -3.30pm	Impact of Technology on Open Universities	<p>Chair: Dr. Srikanta Mohapatra, Vice Chancellor, OSOU, India</p> <p>Speakers: (10 minutes each)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Professor Naveed Akhtar Malik, Vice Chancellor, Virtual University of Pakistan 2. Dr. Jayant Sonwalkar, Vice Chancellor, MP Bhoj (Open) University, India. 3. Comments from Participants <p><i>Rapporteur:</i> Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi, Programme Officer-Education, CEMCA</p>
3.30pm - 3.45pm	Tea Break	
3.45pm - 5.00pm	Student Support Services	<p>Chair: Prof. Elifas Bisanda, Vice Chancellor, Open University of Tanzania</p> <p>Speakers: (10 minutes each)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prof. Subha Shankar Sarkar, Vice Chancellor, NSOU, India 2. Dr Daniel Tau, Vice Chancellor, Botswana Open University 3. Prof. Ashok Sharma, Vice Chancellor, VMOU, India 4. Comments from Participants <p><i>Rapporteur:</i> Ms. Sanjogita Mishra, Programme Officer-Skills, CEMCA</p>
5.00pm - 6.00pm	Networking	

Day-2 : 24th April, 2019 (Wednesday)

Time	Activity	Resource Person/s
10.00am -11.00am	Recap of Day	Prof. Madhu Parhar and Dr. Shahid Rasool
11.00am - 11.15am		Tea Break
11.15am - 12.30pm	Quality Assurance for Open Universities	Chair: Prof. V. S. Prasad, Former Director, NAAC Speakers: (10 minutes each) 1. Prof. Nageshwara Rao, Vice Chancellor, IGNOU 2. Prof Rosli Hamir Zorani, Vice President, Open University, Malaysia 3. Prof. L L Lalendle, Executive Director, UNISA, South Africa 4. Comments from Participants Rapporteur: Ms. Sanjogita Mishra, Programme Officer-Skills, CEMCA
12.30pm - 1.30pm	Assessing Outcomes and Competencies	Chair: Dr. Ami U. Upadhyay, Vice Chancellor (I/c), Dr. BAOU, Ahmedabad, India Speakers: (10 minutes each) 1. Prof. S A Ariadurai, Vice Chancellor, OUSL, Sri Lanka 2. Prof Kameshwar Nath Singh, Vice Chancellor, UPRTOU, India 3. Dr. Srikant Mohapatra, Vice Chancellor, OSOU, India 4. Comments from Participants Rapporteur: Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi, Programme Officer-Education, CEMCA
1.30pm - 2.15pm		Lunch Break
2:15pm - 3.00pm	Using Open Educational Resources	Speaker: Prof. Asha Kanwar, President and CEO, COL Rapporteur: Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi, Programme officer-Education, CEMCA
3.00pm - 3.30pm	Employability	Chair: Prof. Ravindra Kumar Sinha, Vice Chancellor, Nalanda Open University, India Speakers: (10 minutes each) 1. Prof. Dato' Dr. Ansary Ahmed, President, Asia eUniversity, Malaysia 2. Prof. E. Vayunandan, Vice Chancellor, YCMOU, India 3. Comments from Participants Rapporteur: Ms. Sanjogita Mishra, Programme Officer-Skills, CEMCA
3.30pm - 3.45pm		Tea Break
3.45pm - 5.00pm	Future Model and Recommendations	Group Work and Reporting Facilitator: Prof V S Prasad <u>Suggested Groups:</u> 1. Rethinking System 2. Programmes and Teaching-Learning Strategies 3. Innovative Student Support Services 4. Innovations in Technology Applications 5. Quality Assurance Each Group is requested to come out with four or five suggestions and present the same.
5.00pm - 5.30pm	Concluding Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remarks – Representative of the MHRD, Govt of India Remarks from Prof. Nageshwara Rao, Vice Chancellor, IGNOU Thank you – Prof. Asha Kanwar, President and CEO, Commonwealth of Learning, Canada <p>• <i>Rapporteur:</i> Ms. Sanjogita Mishra, Programme Officer-Skills, CEMCA</p>

Annexure - III

Open Universities in 21st Century (Roundtable of VCs of Open Universities in Asia and Africa, 23rd-24th April 2019, New Delhi) Discussant Observations on Concept Note


By
Prof. V. S. Prasad
Former Director, NAAC, India

1. The Focus

The Roundtable is a good opportunity for self-reflection and self-criticism on 'future phase' of Open Universities in 21st Century in a continuum of 'continuity and change'. It is an opportunity for VCs to reflect on addressing present problems in the light of past experiences and future hopes. Many of our current problems are a result of our failure to draw meaningful lessons from our past experiences and dream the future. It is an opportunity, not to be used for institutional image projections, but for finding shared solutions to our common and specific problems. The Concept Note, in the background of current practices and concerns, has rightly identified the focus areas and some of the questions that need to be addressed in these areas. I have a few observations to make, based on my past experience and future hope, with a qualifier that these are mostly Indian context specific, may or may not be relevant to other contexts. These three observations are related to broad areas of public policy perspective, institutional design and institutional capacity building.

2. Public Policy Perspective

A well-articulated policy incorporating the values of open and distance learning (ODL) is an essential requirement to create the shared understanding among all stakeholders on questions of what is to be done and how it should be done. In broad terms the ODL is 'a multimode technology mediated flexible from self-learning, facilitated by institutions'. The Open University is one of the institutional forms of ODL. The ODL policy should incorporate the ODL value of Openness, flexibility, technology mediation, self-direction and socially relevant outcomes. The



policy perspective should include the strategies to execute the policies. The absence of policies and strategies result in many uncertainties in the path ways of open universities. In history of ODL, we trace the beginnings to Isaac Pitham shorthand programme in 1840s. It is a technology education programme offered through postal system. Ironically, even today in India, the appropriateness of ODL system for offering vocational/ technical programmes is an unsettled issue leading to problems of legitimacy and credibility of technical/ vocational programmes offered by Open Universities. The ODL policy should clear these confusions and help in 'intelligent actions' by ODL institutions.


Action Proposal

Actively engage in advocacy and also provide required knowledge inputs for the development or for the reformulation of National Policy on ODL. The COL may examine the feasibility of constituting an international expert group to develop "ODL Model Policy" as a generic document to be adopted by Commonwealth Countries.

3. Institutional design

The appropriateness institutional design to provide more access to flexible quality education at sustainable cost is extremely critical. The relevance of structures processes and behavior of Open University system needs critical review particularly in the context of increasing competition from conventional universities, private sector and far-reaching developments in technology. Desmond Keegan in 90's observed that in the conventional classroom teacher teaches and in the distance education institution teaches. In the 21st century context of 'unbundling' of educational activities, we are in the phase of 'system teaching'. Transformation from individual teaching to institutional teaching to system teaching has far-reaching implications to the organizational arrangements. Therefore, we have to adjust our structures to this networking and cooperative teaching systems.

In the organizational structures of the OUs we are caught up with many contradictions including centralized learning resources development and decentralized student support services and fast changes in pedagogy and expectations of the learners and slow moving structures. The Darwinian world of digital technology with endless mutations and weeding out of those no longer able to adapt and complete is a challenge to all Open Universities. Here the leadership has to play a very important role in



aligning the structures to the requirements. Harold Wilson used the analogy of a car and a driver to describe the relationship between the organizational structure and leadership. He visualized different type of simulations in car (structure) and driver (leadership) analogy with four types of good and bad combinations. In these combinations, only in one combination of the driver and the car being good, your journey is safe. Like-wise, his advocacy is on proper combination of appropriate structures and effective leadership to realize vision and mission of Open Universities.

Action Plan

Structure is a dynamic element. Therefore, there is a need to critically look at structures and make continuous changes and improvements to meet the changing context of ODL. Choice of right people in right places alone will make the system move forward.

4. Building competencies

Under performance is one of the concerns of Open University system, may be with some exceptions. People make all the difference to the working of the Open Universities like to any other human system. Capacity building of staff to use their competencies to realize the vision and mission of Open University is an opportunity and a challenge. Large organizations have tendency of looking inward and their actions may be guided more by the internal power plays and short-term interests of the internal staff than the long-term goals of the institution. The staff may have competencies, but institutional operating systems may fail to use these competencies for actualization of institutional goals. Many Open Universities in India do not have the 'critical mass' of permanent academic staff. Identifying the motivating factors for developing positive work culture in the institution is a challenging institutional task.

Action Proposal

Put in place embedded systems for capacity building of staff at all levels and institutional leadership to make the system dynamic and context responsive.

To Conclude

"We must be the change we wish to see in the world"
– Mahatma Gandhi



Annexure - IV

List of Participant of Group Activity

Group A: Rethinking System

1. Prof. S A Ariadurai, OUSL, Sri Lanka (Group Leader)
2. Prof. M A Mannan, Bangladesh Open University
3. Prof. K. Seetharama Rao, Dr. BRAOU, Hyderabad
4. Prof. L L Lalendle, UNISA, South Africa
5. Prof. Marmar Mukhopadhyay, ETMA

Group B: Programmes and Teaching-Learning Strategies

1. Dr. Ami U. Upadhyay, Dr. BAOU, Ahmedabad, India (Group Leader)
2. Prof. Elifas Bisanda, Open University of Tanzania
3. Dr Hitesh Deka, KKSHOU, India
4. Prof Rosli Hamir Zorani, Open University, Malaysia
5. Prof. Ravindra, IGNOU

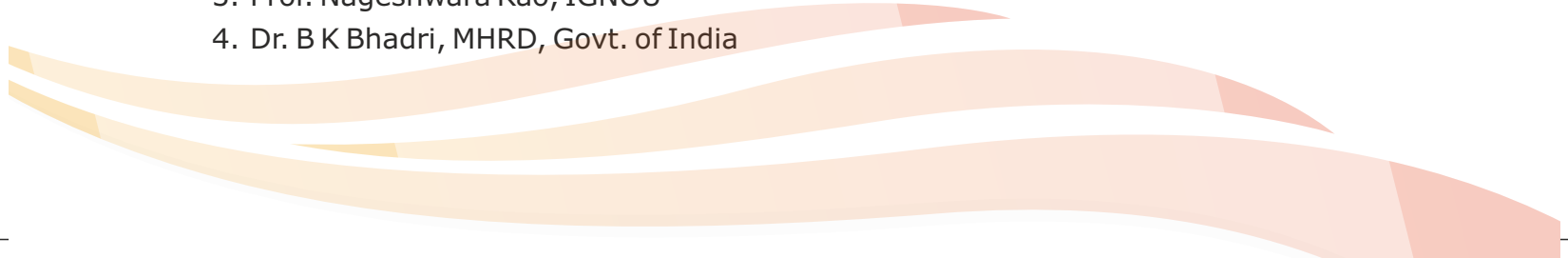
Group C: Innovative Student Support Services

1. Prof Zoraini Wati Abas, Wawasan Open University, Malaysia (Group Leader)
2. Prof. Madhu Parhar, IGNOU
3. Dr. Srikanta Mohapatra, OSOU, India
4. Prof. Subha Shankar Sarkar, NSOU, India
5. Prof. Om Prakash Singh Negi, UOU, Haldwani

Group D: Innovations in Technology Applications

1. Prof. E. Vayunandan, YCMOU (Group Leader)
2. Prof. Justus A. Sokefun, National Open University of Nigeria
3. Prof. Ashok Sharma, Vice Chancellor, VMOU, India
4. Prof. Ravindra Kumar Sinha, Nalanda Open University, India

Group E: Quality Assurance

1. Dr Daniel Tau, Botswana Open University (Group Leader)
 2. Dr. Jayant Sonwalkar, MP Bhoj (Open) University
 3. Prof. Nageshwara Rao, IGNOU
 4. Dr. B K Bhadri, MHRD, Govt. of India
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COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia

7/8 Sarv Priya Vihar, New Delhi-110016 India

Tel: +91-11-2653 7146, 2653 7148

e-mail: admin@cemca.org.in

<https://www.facebook.com/cemcacol>

Website: www.cemca.org.in