

**Report on the Workshop
delivered on 27-29 May 2015 at
Dr B R Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad**

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PREAMBLE :

This is a brief Report on the Workshop conducted at the Dr B R Ambedkar Open University for professionals in open and distance learning (ODL) to develop their skills in quality assurance for open educational resources (OER). The participants were drawn from universities nationwide in India. They included only those in higher education. The number of participants was kept small so as to promote interactive dialogue with personalised support. Those from outside Hyderabad were able to stay together in a very comfortable hotel in Banjara Hills near to the venue. Being together allowed us to take good advantage of the opportunity to continue our work with discussions there in the mornings and evenings.

The workshop was organised within the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) Three-Year Plan 2012-2015, with the aims to reviewing and improving the quality of ODL and OER.

An official notice of the Workshop has been posted on the COL-CEMCA Website at <http://cemca.org.in/news/national-capacity-building-odl-professionals-oer-quality>

1. INTRODUCTION :

The Programme for this Workshop was largely arranged prior to starting, with the aim of participants creating some OER using the TIPS Framework for quality assessment and assurance. This initial Programme involved three days of powerpoint presentations with some parts for individual and group work. In the event given the experience and job-status of the participants, the goals of the Programme were revised.

The revised aim was thus for participants in small groups to re-use the Author's materials all of which are OER, to create a take-away Workshop that each could re-use in their home university.

There were 21 active participants with 4 key facilitators, and 2 distinguished guest speakers. The facilitators were Manas Panigrahi representing CEMCA, Vunnam Venkaiah as co-presenter, Akash Agarwal as MediaWiki expert consultant, and myself as co-presenter. The distinguished guest speakers were B R Bhadri from the

government MHRD, and V S Prasad former Director of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council of India.

Concerning the gender ratio, overall there were 18 male and 3 female participants, which reflected the gender ratio in senior positions involved in ODL in India. This Workshop was not aimed at beginners in ODL and not aimed at junior faculty, so reflectively there were more male than female participants. There are efforts to close the gender-opportunities gap demonstrated by policies on equality and equity. The challenge has shifted recently to achieve economic development, efficiencies, and accountability - in the expectation that these will contribute to reducing the bias against women in educational opportunities.



FIGURE 1 : The geographical distribution of participants

Concerning the geographical distribution, there were a range of participants from (in alphabetic order) Bhopal (2), Guwahati (1), Hyderabad (12 - half the total, as the host city), Kolkata (1), Kota (1), Mysore (1), Nainital (1), Nashik (1), and from Patna (1) cities - giving a good nationwide coverage as shown in FIGURE 1.

2. METHODS :

The Workshop was scheduled over three full working days. On the first day there was the Registration, Opening Speeches, and then four working sessions. On the second day there were four working sessions with half of these used for MediaWiki. On the third day there were two working sessions in the morning followed by Group Presentations, Awarding of Certificates and the Closing Speeches. Group photographs and on-task photographs were taken throughout the three days.

A total of more than six-hundred presentation slides were prepared as OER (CC BY SA) beforehand (see FIGURE 2), and in a learner-based fashion around half of these were utilised according to the actual wants and needs of the participants. The participants were given a Sitemap of all these slides together with their respective URL links. They were also distributed freely on DVD and flash memory sticks to the participants. Thus all the participants had a copy of the Workshop materiel including access to the pdf text files. Given the time required to search and retrieve on the web and in view of unreliable electricity supply, these Workshop materials were made the content for participants to reuse as OER, and the objectives of the Workshop were re-focused. The new objectives were accordingly decided to be for the participants in small groups to prepare a take-away *Presentation on OER and Quality Assurance* to reuse back home in their respective universities.



FIGURE 2 : Cover slide for the Workshop presentations

The slides were categorised into stages as Sessions for the Workshop, and this list with links given to the participants and downloadable from this link ;-

<http://www.open-ed.net/oer-quality/workshop-2015.pdf>

Links to other slides and texts as doc and pdf files were given out on the day.

An overview of the Workshop was given to the 21 participants, and they were asked for feedback. The consensus was that groups of 3 to 6 members each were ideal, and (after introductory sessions) four groups A-D were formed, physically distributed across the room. How to work in a group was briefly explained such as strictly allocating role functions to each member, and valuing inclusivity with gentle listening skills.

3. RESULTS :

The initial aims of the Workshop suggested four points as potential outcomes :-

- 3.1 Explain the concept and practices of Open Educational Resources
- 3.2 Identify the design issues related to Quality Assurance Guidelines for OER : TIPS Framework
- 3.3 Use MediaWiki Extension for OER Quality using an appropriate subset of the TIPS Framework, and
- 3.4 Develop a strategic plan for implementing the Quality Assurance Guidelines for OER : TIPS Framework in identifying and assuring OER quality

Each participant was nominated to attend by his or her respective open university administration, and it seemed reasonable therefore to consider that the participant would be called upon after the Workshop to give an account and show the outcome to his or her own university. Following some reflection about creating some tangible product and taking into consideration the pre-Workshop expertise of the participants, the objective was then revised to include a fifth point :-

- 3.5 Develop for reusing a workshop presentation on OER and QA for OER

Each of the four groups of participants gave a presentation with slides about their ideas-in-progress and product-so-far using MediaWiki and reusing OER to create a new Workshop on OER and QA for OER. The presentations stimulate a good deal of proactive interest with animated discussions. Many questions were forthcoming and all the participants were interacting impressively. General comments were given to each Group in turn, and discussions continued after each presentation. The facilitators and organisers circulated during the Workshop and engaged with each participant. The outcomes from this Workshop are not yet finalised.

Following the group presentations, the Certificates were awarded to each participant, and then Closing Speeches were given by Manas Panigrahi, A Sudhakar, Vunnam Venkaiah, and M S Hayat. Each expressed their surprise, admiration and appreciation to all the participants on their successful collaboration during the Workshop few days. While the time spent together was short in duration, the participants were keen to continue their collaboration afterwards when they are back in their respective home universities.

Feedback is not yet accumulated from the participants. Each group member took away a copy of the group work to reuse as an OER to give a Workshop in their respective home university. Each participant also took away links to digital copies of the materials to reuse and to develop further in their respective contexts.

The host Dr B R Ambedkar Open University has prepared a site for continuing collaborative development which is email-based at the moment. We may continue at a dedicated MediaWiki site.

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