

# COL-CEMCA UPDATES

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## COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia

### EDUCATION



#### OER Workshop at KKHSOU, Assam, India, Promotes Innovative Teaching

In partnership with COL-CEMCA, the Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU) in Guwahati, Assam, India, hosted a workshop on Open Educational Resources (OER) from 4-6 October 2023. This workshop aimed to equip KKHSOU faculty members with the skills needed to explore, create, and integrate OER into their teaching, fostering a culture of open access to educational resources.

On this occasion, Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, stated, "KKHSOU has been a pioneer in extending educational opportunities to the remote regions of the north-east. The OER workshop would help its faculty members to further democratise access to education in this region." He contextualised the workshop by tracing the origins of OER to the



Dr B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, virtually addressing the participants at the KKHSOU workshop held at Guwahati in Assam, India

Free/Libre and Open Source Software movements, underscoring how OER promotes access to quality learning materials, fosters collaboration among educators, and supports lifelong learning. He also discussed the alignment between OER and Open and Distance Learning (ODL).

Professor Rajendra Prasad Das, Vice Chancellor of KKHSOU, highlighted the university's commitment to high-quality education under their effective collaboration with COL-CEMCA. He encouraged trainers to incorporate practical exercises and simulations, enhancing the learning experience for participants. Professor Das envisioned the workshop as a significant step towards innovation in education.

The workshop concluded with plans for KKHSOU to establish a comprehensive OER repository, benefiting not only its faculty and students but also the broader educational community.

#### Capacity Building Workshop on OER and Moodle Empowers Indian Educators

Thirty-eight faculty members from six Indian universities participated in an intensive professional development programme on OER and Moodle

from 20 to 24 November 2023 at Amity University Haryana (AUH), India. The workshop, organised by COL-CEMCA in partnership with AUH, aimed to enhance faculty skills in OER and Moodle, fostering innovative teaching methods across participating institutions.

The universities included Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gorakhpur University, Jagat Guru Nanak Dev Punjab State Open University, Uttarakhand Open University, MP Bhoj Open University, and AUH. Over the five-day event, educators learned to identify high-quality OER, adapt them to their specific needs, create new content with proper licensing, develop assessment and certification methods, upload content to MoodleCloud, and launch Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

COL-CEMCA Director, Dr B. Shadrach, as the Guest of Honour, underlined the crucial digital competencies required for modern educators, emphasising the importance of learner-centric, practice-oriented approaches. Professor (Dr) P. B. Sharma, Vice Chancellor of AUH, inaugurated the workshop, underscoring the integration of technology in education and the dynamic nature of teaching.

Following the training, faculty from Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gorakhpur University organised a subsequent workshop on December 23, 2023, extending their new knowledge to 30 additional colleagues.

### **COL-CEMCA Hosts 23rd Advisory Council Meeting in New Delhi, India**

The 23rd meeting of the COL-CEMCA Advisory Council (CAC) took place in New Delhi, India, on 7 December 2023. It was attended by CAC members from Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Maldives, and Sri Lanka, and chaired by Professor Asha Kanwar, President and CEO of the COL. During the meeting, Professor Kanwar drew attention to the ongoing mid-term strategic evaluation of COL-CEMCA's initiatives and introduced Professor Peter Scott as the next President and CEO of COL.

Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, presented a detailed overview of the organisation's recent activities. His presentation included the Action

Taken Report, the COL-CEMCA Annual Report 2022-23, and the Achievement Report for July-November 2023. Dr Shadrach highlighted COL-CEMCA's diverse engagements over the past year, which encompassed collaborations with institutions, universities, civil society organisations, and stakeholders across Southeast Asia.

The Council members were, then, invited to discuss regional priorities where COL-CEMCA could make impactful contributions. Suggestions ranged from integrating traditional schooling with open universities, developing AI-enabled training modules, and establishing virtual labs, to enhancing blended learning and aligning with India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Members also focused on the need for gender-inclusive education, improving course materials, teacher capacity building, and fostering youth entrepreneurship skills. Additionally, they discussed the importance of supporting special education, addressing boys' underperformance in schools, and promoting skills development.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks from Mr. Amit Jain, Head of Administration and Finance at COL-CEMCA.

### **COL-CEMCA Advisory Council Explores Educational Innovations at CIET, NCERT, New Delhi, India**

COL-CEMCA organised a visit to the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in New Delhi, India, for its CAC members on 7 December 2023. The distinguished members visited



COL-CEMCA Advisory Council members exploring educational technologies at CIET, NCERT

the Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET), a constituent of NCERT. Engaging in substantive discussions with their faculty members, the delegates gained first-hand exposure to cutting-edge educational technologies employed by the institute.

The visit also entailed an insightful tour of various facilities at CIET, NCERT, providing the delegates with a holistic understanding of the innovative approaches employed in the realm of technology enabled education. The CAC members actively engaged with experts, delving into the nuances of eContent development at NCERT. This dynamic exchange not only broadened their perspectives, but also allowed them to glean through the best practices adopted by them for the dissemination of eContent, which they can adapt and replicate in their respective countries.

## COL-CEMCA and MIT RAISE Launch AI Curriculum for Indian Schools

COL-CEMCA, in association with MIT RAISE (Massachusetts Institute of Technology – Responsible AI for Social Empowerment and Education), introduced an innovative AI curriculum specifically designed for Indian schools at the GPAI 2023 Summit held at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan in New Delhi, India. This initiative, titled 'The Day of AI India', aimed to equip teachers with essential AI knowledge and skills. The launch event was held on 13 December 2023.

Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, inaugurated the programme, emphasising the potential of AI. Initially targeted at primary teachers, the curriculum is expected to expand into advanced educational formats, including programmes for higher classes, boot camps, and hackathons.

Edouard Havis, Future of Work (FoW) Project Leader at the Paris Expert Support Centre, and Dr Matthias Peissner, Co-chair of FoW and Director of Human-Technology Interaction Research at Fraunhofer IAO, stressed the importance of AI literacy for future workforce readiness. They highlighted the need to integrate AI education to prepare students for evolving job markets.

Professor Cynthia Breazeal from MIT's Media Lab detailed the global reach of the Day of AI initiative and its impact in various countries. Monika S. Garg, Additional Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh, discussed the state's AI for All initiative, focusing on embedding AI in school curriculums.

In concluding remarks, Kyoko Yoshinaga from Keio University, Professor Pankaj Mittal from the Association of Indian Universities, and Satish Kumar from the Central Board of Secondary Education reiterated AI's critical role in shaping future careers and its growing relevance across all life sectors.

The course saw an enthusiastic response, with a substantial number of learners enrolling and earning certifications.



Participants at the launch of AI curriculum by COL-CEMCA and MIT-RAISE in Delhi, India

## Faculty Development on OER-based Blended Learning Held in Bangladesh

COL-CEMCA, in collaboration with the Bangladesh Open University (BOU), hosted a three-day workshop from 17 to 19 December 2023, titled 'Faculty Development on Open Educational Resources based Blended Learning'. The event took place at BOU's e-Learning Centre in Gazipur, Bangladesh.

The key objectives of the workshop were to understand OER fundamentals, copyright and licensing; demonstrate effective methods for finding quality OER materials; demonstrate how OERs can be used for creating, sharing and collaborating on blended learning content; demonstrate ways to integrate OERs effectively into educational programmes; explore methods for assessing the impact and effectiveness of OER based blended learning on students' learning outcomes. A total of 32 university teachers and selected academic counsellors of Open School of BOU actively participated in the faculty development programme.

The workshop was inaugurated by Professor (Dr) Syed Humayun Akhter, Vice Chancellor of BOU. In his address, he stated, "Technology plays a crucial role in shaping the future of education, aligning seamlessly with Bangladesh's Vision 2041. This strategic plan is designed to elevate our nation's global socio-economic standing, and initiatives like this workshop are key to realising that vision." As the resource person from COL-CEMCA, Professor (Dr) Manas Ranjan Panigrahi, the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Sangam University, Rajasthan, India, led various engaging sessions throughout the workshop.

## Mainstreaming Inclusion of Students with Specific Learning Disabilities

In partnership with the ChangeInkk Foundation, Delhi, India, COL-CEMCA hosted a Roundtable on Mainstreaming the Inclusion of Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs) on 18 December 2023 in Delhi, India. SLD refers to a neurodevelopmental disorder affecting the fundamental psychological processes related to language comprehension and usage, be it spoken or written and/or mathematics. COL-CEMCA and ChangeInkk Foundation are developing a MOOC tailored for teacher education on SLD. The workshop sought insights from a diverse group of participants, including special educators, regular teachers, parents, and students with SLD to shape the content of this MOOC through their diverse perspectives and real-life experiences and address the capacity building deficit in this area.

On this occasion, Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, mentioned, "Today's workshop addresses NEP 2020's commitment to the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). We face significant challenges due to the scarcity of specialised educators for PwDs. The development of this MOOC is a critical step in bridging this gap by providing accessible and inclusive educational resources for all."

Additionally, Mrs. Noopur Jhunjunwala, Founder and Trustee of the ChangeInkk Foundation, through her engaging presentation, elaborated on the concept of SLD and societal perspective towards it for the participants. The presentations were followed by an interactive discussion on the subject



Educators attending OER based blended learning workshop at Gazipur in Bangladesh

steered by experts and participants. The text and audio-video content of the MOOC are ready.

COL-CEMCA and ChangeInkk Foundation are now entering Phase II of this collaboration. They are developing online tutorials for the BUILD Higher Education Programme, which will be hosted on Malviya Mission Teacher Training Programme Portal. These tutorials may also be made available to any other platforms recommended by COL-CEMCA.

### **Dr BRAOU Achieves a Milestone in Creating Micro-Credential Courses for OER Advancement**

Dr B R Ambedkar Open University (Dr BRAOU) in Hyderabad, Telangana, India, launched seven OERs and eight micro-credential courses developed by its faculty members on 12 January 2024. These courses were created through the technical assistance and professional development offered by COL-CEMCA. The courses, available in English, and some Indian languages, mainly Urdu, Hindi, and Telugu, span diverse subjects – each incorporating a blend of media, including audio, video, and textual content with graphics. Furthermore, they integrate online assessment and outcome measurement techniques for comprehensive learning experiences.

As the Chief Guest, Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, commended the micro-credential courses created by Dr BRAOU faculty members and urged them to continuously refine the resources based

on learners' feedback. Presiding over the launch, Professor K. Seetharama Rao, Vice Chancellor of Dr BRAOU, acknowledged the support provided by COL-CEMCA, emphasising their instrumental role in establishing a robust OER foundation at Dr BRAOU. Professor Ghanta Chakrapani, Director, Academic, and Professor G Pushpa Chakrapani, Director, Centre for Online Education and Learning (COEL), Dr BRAOU, were also present on the occasion along with the course developers and several faculty members.

### **COL-CEMCA and JSOU Collaborate to Enhance Proficiency of LSC Coordinators**

COL-CEMCA partnered with the Jharkhand State Open University (JSOU), India, to host a Capacity Building Workshop for 145 Learner Support Centre (LSC) Coordinators and Staff in Jharkhand, India, on 12-13 February 2024. JSOU is the most recent addition to the list of Open Universities (OUs) in India, so COL-CEMCA signed an MOU with the university to strengthen its ODL system. The primary goal of this initiative was to empower staff and coordinators with essential skills in ODL, fostering growth and developing prospects for distance learners at JSOU.

During the workshop's inauguration, Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, emphasised JSOU's aim to contribute to the State's development through expanded access, improved employability and inclusiveness in higher education. He underscored the pivotal role LSCs may play in achieving these



Launching the OERs and micro-credentials created by Dr BRAOU faculty at Hyderabad in Telangana, India



Dr B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, addressing the participants at JSOU workshop held in Jharkhand, India

goals, serving as the primary interface for JSOU to reach learners in remote and underserved areas.

Professor (Dr) T N Sahu, Vice Chancellor, JSOU, commended the partnership with COL-CEMCA by stating, “Collaborating with COL-CEMCA marks a significant milestone in our journey to establish JSOU as a distinguished institution among India’s Open Universities. We deeply appreciate COL-CEMCA’s unwavering support to ODL institutions across the country, which is instrumental in our ongoing development and success.”

The participants underwent comprehensive training during the two-day workshop, covering various facets of ODL and the pivotal role of LSCs in expanding its reach across Jharkhand. The training methodology employed by COL-CEMCA resource persons integrated situational analysis, presentations, deliberations, discussions, group activities, and participant assessment and feedback, ensuring an immersive and practical learning experience for all attendees.

### **COL-CEMCA and NSOU Collaborate to Advance Blended Learning in West Bengal**

COL-CEMCA and Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU), West Bengal, India, have joined hands to promote the implementation of blended learning in higher education across West Bengal in Phase 3 of their collaborative project. In the first two phases, over 360 higher education teachers were trained, who are successfully implementing these approaches in their respective institutions. This initiative aims to equip educators with the skills to



Workshop on blended learning at NSOU in Kolkata, West Bengal, India

integrate blended teaching methods and advanced technologies into their classroom teaching and learning.

In March 2024, a workshop at NSOU’s Kalyani Regional Centre introduced 50 educators to blended learning strategies and the role of Generative AI in education. At the inauguration of the workshop, Dr B. Shadrach, COL-CEMCA’s Director, mentioned, “Blended learning has evolved to integrate AI and data analytics, transforming how we approach education. This advancement holds tremendous potential to personalise learning experiences and significantly enhance teaching practices, paving the way for more effective and tailored educational opportunities.”

NSOU’s Vice Chancellor, Professor Indrajit Lahiri highlighted the evolving role of teachers in the post COVID era, who now must navigate a landscape where technology and online learning have become integral to classroom instruction.

Another workshop in May 2024 at the Jalpaiguri Regional Centre engaged 51 educators, focusing on leading technological integration within their institutions. It was spearheaded by Professor Anirban Ghosh, who underlined the broader impact of these workshops, aligning with SDGs and NEP 2020.

Both workshops provided practical insights into blended learning, facilitated by experts from NSOU and COL-CEMCA. This collaborative effort marks a significant step towards creating a sustainable, technology-integrated education system in West Bengal, preparing educators to meet the evolving needs of modern learners.

## International Conference on Perspectives and Innovations in Open and Distance Learning

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and COL-CEMCA hosted the International Conference on Perspectives and Innovations in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) at the NIOS campus in NOIDA, Uttar Pradesh, India, from 1-3 April 2024. This hybrid event brought together over 250 participants, including educators, researchers, policymakers, and industry experts from five Commonwealth nations, to explore the latest trends and innovations in ODL.

The Conference featured a comprehensive agenda covering seven key themes: i. Perspectives and Innovations in ODL, ii. Policy Frameworks and Practices, iii. Technology-Enhanced Learning, iv. Pedagogical and Administrative Strategies, v. Inclusive Access, Equity, and Quality, vi. Vocational Education through ODL, and vii. Collaboration and Networking. It included three Plenary Sessions, two Virtual Technical Sessions, 14 in-person Technical Sessions, and an Open House discussion on international collaboration in ODL. The event was orchestrated under the leadership of Professor Saroj Sharma, Chairperson of NIOS, and Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, setting a dynamic platform for global dialogue and collaboration in ODL.

Keynote speakers such as Professor Peter Scott, President and CEO of the COL, and Professor Tony Mays, Director of Education at COL, emphasised the impactful possibilities of ODL to empower learners and provide quality educational support globally. Other notable speakers included Dr Nirmaljeet Singh Kalsi, Chairperson of the National Council of Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Government of India (GoI), and Dr Anil Sahasrabudhe, Chairperson of the All India Council for Technical Education, and a host of eminent Vice Chancellors and Professors.

The Conference stressed on the importance of ODL institutions in collecting evidence of their effectiveness, planning for future goals, and advocating for their unique status and role in the education and skills landscape.

## Workshop Sets Vision for the Future of Delhi University's School of Open Learning

COL-CEMCA and the School of Open Learning (SOL) at the University of Delhi, India, conducted a strategic workshop titled 'Envisioning the Future' from 5-6 April 2024, in Neemrana, Rajasthan. The workshop aimed to develop a forward-looking vision for SOL, a major institution in India's higher education landscape, which serves over 380,000 students annually through ODL.



Prof Peter Scott, President and CEO, COL, delivering the keynote address at international conference on ODL held in NOIDA, Uttar Pradesh, India.



Participants at the 'Envisioning the Future' workshop organised for School of Open Learning, Delhi University, India

Given the national target of achieving a 50 percent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education by 2035, SOL partnered with COL-CEMCA to leverage advanced technology and innovative teaching methods. The workshop's objectives included formulating a strategic plan for SOL and drafting a comprehensive vision document.

The event gathered more than 50 participants, including senior SOL and COL-CEMCA officials, visioning experts, and strategy analysts. Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, highlighted the workshop's significance in shaping SOL's future. Dr Payal Mago, Director of DDCE at SOL, praised CEMCA for their valuable support.

During the workshop, expert consultants, Dr Hari Narayanan, CEO, Penang Skills Development Centre, Malaysia, and Ms. Jasneet Kaur Bhalla, Corporate Trainer, guided participants through interactive sessions, group discussions, and visioning exercises. These activities encouraged teamwork and strategic thinking, focusing on current trends in higher education, such as AI integration and NEP 2020's principles. The participants, divided into teams, engaged in brainstorming and contributed diverse perspectives to refine SOL's vision, mission, values, and objectives. The workshop introduced strategic planning tools like PESTLE and SWOT analyses. While the final vision statement is still under development, the collaborative effort signalled a strong and promising direction for SOL's future.

## Launch of Draft National Policy on Blended Learning at AIU's 98th Annual General Meeting

The 98th Annual General Meeting of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), held from 15-17 April 2024, in collaboration with the ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education (IFHE) at Hyderabad in Telangana, India, marked a significant milestone with the unveiling of the Draft National Policy on Blended Learning (NPBL). This comprehensive policy, a joint effort of COL-CEMCA and AIU, aims to provide structured guidelines for integrating blended learning into higher education.

The Honourable Governor of Telangana and Jharkhand, and the Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry, Shri C. P. Radhakrishnan, presided over the inaugural session as the Chief Guest and officially launched the Draft NPBL. Key figures in the education sector joined the Chief Guest in releasing the policy document, including Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA; Professor G. D. Sharma, President of AIU; Professor Vinay Kumar Pathak, Vice President of AIU; Dr (Mrs) Pankaj Mittal, Secretary General of AIU; Professor T. G. Sitharam, Chairman of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE); and Professor (Dr) L. S. Ganesh, Vice Chancellor of IFHE.

The Draft NPBL was developed by an Expert Committee comprising renowned academics and professionals, responding to the urgent need for





Launch of draft national policy on blended learning at Hyderabad in Telangana, India

structured educational strategies driven by the rapid shift to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The policy outlines the vision, scope, objectives, and implementation guidelines for blended learning, aiming to ensure its effective and sustainable application in tertiary education.

### Empowering Educators with AI: AIOU’s Training Programme in Pakistan

Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) in Islamabad, Pakistan, in collaboration with COL-CEMCA, hosted a transformative faculty training programme titled ‘Empowering Educators: Integrating AI into Teaching Practice’ from 16 to 18 April 2024. This comprehensive training aimed to empower educators to enhance learning experiences and improve student outcomes through AI.

During the inauguration, Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, described the workshop as ground-

breaking, underscoring the need for significant changes at institutional and policy levels to successfully implement AI in education.

Professor Dr Nasir Mahmood, Vice Chancellor of AIOU, stated, “Training programmes like this are vital for equipping our faculty for the future of education. They ensure that we stay at the forefront of educational innovation. We look forward to more collaborations with COL-CEMCA, which is crucial in helping us achieve our academic goals.”

At the workshop, renowned experts from Pakistan, the USA, Ireland, and India led discussions on diverse topics, including AI in education, AI-enhanced learning environments, adaptive learning, and ethical considerations. The sessions also covered designing AI-based curricula and assessing future trends in AI education.

The programme, facilitated by Dr Zahid Majeed of AIOU, saw 256 faculty members from 37 Pakistani universities participate in a hybrid format, with 30-35 attending in person. Over 15 sessions, educators engaged in hands-on AI tool training, culminating in the certification of over 20 Master Trainers, who will further disseminate AI knowledge.

The participants lauded the training’s depth and practical insights, anticipating a significant impact on their teaching practices. The event concluded with the distribution of certificates, marking a step forward in integrating AI into Pakistani education system.



Empowering educators with AI in Pakistan

## OU OERfest: Enhancing Educational Access and Innovation through OER

The Open University Open Educational Resources Festival (OU OERfest), organised by COL-CEMCA and Dr BRAOU, was held from 18-20 April 2024, in Hyderabad, Telangana, India. This significant event followed the commitments made at the State Open Universities' Vice Chancellors' Forum in August 2023, which emphasised the integration of OERs into educational programmes.

The festival aimed to enhance the capacity of open universities to leverage OERs for course development, while highlighting their benefits, such as cost savings, quality improvements, academic freedom, and increased student engagement. Over three days, participants delved into various aspects of OER through ten technical sessions, discussing topics like the current status of OER, policies, and capacity development, as well as their role in skill-based programmes. The sessions also covered demonstration on Bhashini app to address language diversity, and plans for establishing OER repositories.

The event was inaugurated on 18 April 2024, with distinguished guests in attendance. Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, introduced the festival and revisited the Ahmedabad Declaration, urging OUs to embrace roles beyond conventional education and to focus on skill development and resource sharing. Dr Nirmaljeet Singh Kalsi, Chairperson, NCVET,



Participants at the OU OERfest held at Hyderabad in Telangana, India

MSDE, GoI, as the Chief Guest, stressed on the need for open universities to share best practices and develop flexible, on-demand courses to meet learner needs.

Professor K. Seetharama Rao, Vice-Chancellor of Dr BRAOU, highlighted the university's significant contribution to the GER in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, aligning with NEP-2020. In his keynote address, Professor V. S. Prasad, former Vice-Chancellor of Dr BRAOU called for the promotion of OER for public benefit and cautioned against the commercialisation of education.

## Indian OUs Draw Charter for Sharing Resources to Strengthen the ODL Landscape

The OU OERFest concluded with a significant Vice Chancellors' Roundtable on 20 April 2024. Attended



Vice Chancellors' roundtable meeting in progress at Hyderabad in Telangana, India

by Vice Chancellors, faculty members, and officials from 17 state open universities in India, alongside representatives from key educational and skilling agencies of the Indian and Telangana state governments, the roundtable focused on advancing the ODL landscape through strategic use of OER and fostering resource sharing among OUs.

Underscoring the unique position of OUs in the Indian higher education system, Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, stated, “Open Universities play a pivotal role in broadening access to education, especially for marginalised communities and individuals with disabilities. To amplify our efforts and enhance our collective impact, we should move towards forming a consortium of Open Universities. It will empower us to reach and support more learners from diverse backgrounds.”

Professor K. Seetharama Rao, Vice Chancellor of Dr BRAOU, underscored the necessity for a sustainable business model, a national OER policy, and updated accreditation systems aligned with the NEP 2020 and the National Accreditation Framework. Dr Nirmaljeet Singh Kalsi, Chairperson of NCVET, MSDE, GoI endorsed an expansion in skilling initiatives by OUs in line with NEP 2020 priorities. Prof. Nageshwar Rao, Vice Chancellor of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), commended the move toward

offering skills-based courses and highlighted the need for an OER policy to share and manage the existing vast repository of OER including that of IGNOU.

The roundtable also tackled regulatory challenges, the importance of skills-based courses, and the need for greater course recognition. The sessions covered OER policies, faculty development, and inter-university collaboration, featuring insights from experts like Mr. Amitabh Nag, CEO of Digital India BHASHINI Division, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, GoI, and Dr Payal Mago from Delhi University.

### Open Universities Poised to Integrate Skill Courses into Mainstream Academic Programmes

At the OU OERfest, COL-CEMCA successfully persuaded Dr Nirmaljeet Singh Kalsi, Chairperson of the NCVET, to endorse a proposal for OUs to obtain dual status as both awarding and assessment bodies under NCVET. This move aims to enable OUs to offer and independently certify vocational courses alongside their mainstream academic programmes.

To advance this initiative, a strategic meeting was held on 9 May 2024, at Kaushal Bhawan in New



Participants at the workshop elaborating the process to get NCVET dual recognition, held at Haldwani in Uttarakhand, India

Delhi. The meeting was attended by Vice Chancellors and Directors from 17 State OUs, along with senior officials from the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), including Shri Atul Kumar Tiwari, Secretary, MSDE, and Dr Kalsi. It focused on integrating skill-based courses into academic curricula of OUs. Discussions emphasised aligning these courses with local industry needs to ensure their relevance and impact on regional economies. Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, along with other key facilitators, provided insights into the necessary documentation and processes for OUs to achieve NCVET's dual recognition.

Continuing the momentum, a follow-up workshop was held at Uttarakhand Open University (UOU), Haldwani, from 19 to 21 June 2024. Shri Shailesh Bagauli, Chief Secretary of the Directorate of Higher Education, Government of Uttarakhand, underscored the potential of OUs to offer a diverse range of courses in collaboration with industry, thereby supporting youth with livelihoods generation. Professor Om Prakash Singh Negi, VC of UOU, highlighted that the Indian OUs contribute to nearly 11 percent of the GER. He stressed that OUs are well-positioned to provide skill-based education aligned with workforce demands.

Dr B. Shadrach's presentation at the workshop outlined key topics, including the procedures for

OUs to obtain dual recognition by NCVET, the integration of vocational education with traditional academics as envisioned by NEP 2020, and the alignment with national education frameworks like NHEQF, NSQF, RPL, NOS, and NCrf. He also emphasised the importance of blended learning models and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to formally validate skills gained outside conventional education.

At the workshop, the participants engaged in discussions about the challenges and strategies for the application process, sharing insights from peers who had completed it. The workshop underlined the optimism that these initiatives will transform State OUs, positioning them as key contributors to India's skilled workforce development along with dedicated skill universities and institutions, and central and state government agencies engaged in skilling India's workforce.

### **AI Workshop Enhances Teaching Practices of Educators in Sri Lanka**

The 'Workshop on AI for Teachers', organised jointly by COL-CEMCA and the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, was held from 25 to 27 June 2024 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The primary aim of this workshop was to equip educators with the foundational knowledge of AI and explore its practical applications in



Educators at the training on AI in Sri Lanka

education. Key objectives included understanding AI fundamentals, exploring AI tools to enhance teaching and learning, integrating AI into the curriculum, and addressing ethical considerations in AI usage in education.

Led by COL-CEMCA consultant Dr. Kshma Swarnkar, and experts Professor M. M. Pant, former Pro Vice Chancellor of IGNOU, and Professor Vistasp Karbhari, former President, University of Texas at Arlington, the workshop attracted 30 educators from various educational institutions across Sri Lanka. Through a blend of lectures, demonstrations, and hands-on activities, participants gained a deep understanding of AI concepts and tools. They engaged in practical sessions that allowed them to apply AI principles directly to their teaching practices. This practical approach was highlighted by the development of AI-integrated lesson plans, showcasing the participants' creativity and commitment to enhancing their educational strategies.

The workshop emphasised collaborative learning, fostering a sense of community among educators. Ethical considerations and best practices for AI usage were a significant focus, ensuring that participants could use AI responsibly in their teaching environments. By the end of the workshop, participants showed considerable progress in their understanding of AI and its potential impact on education, preparing them to implement

these innovative strategies in their classrooms to create a more personalised and efficient learning experience.

### **Advancing Blended Learning through OER Workshop at Bangladesh Open University**

COL-CEMCA and Bangladesh Open University (BOU) organised a workshop focused on 'OER-Based Blended Learning' at Cox's Bazar City College in Bangladesh from 26 to 28 June 2024. This initiative aimed to empower Higher Secondary Certificate tutors of Open School of BOU (OU-BOU) to create and implement comprehensive blended learning environments using OER. The OU-BOU provides secondary and higher secondary education in ODL mode in Bangladesh, and it successfully adapted to virtual tutorials during the COVID-19 pandemic using platforms like Zoom and Google Meet. The workshop aimed to build on this by equipping tutors with the skills to effectively blend these technologies with conventional methods.

The key objectives of the workshop included equipping tutors with the skills to incorporate technology into traditional teaching; preparing them to apply OER-based blended learning in the open schooling system; enhancing their abilities to create engaging, interactive content for both online and offline use; and encouraging collaborative resource sharing to improve instruction in ODL.

The workshop's expected outcomes were raising awareness about OER-based blended learning, training tutors to contribute OER content, establishing standard operational practices, and fostering resource sharing. Conducted by COL-CEMCA consultant, Dr Barnali Roy Choudhury, it was attended by 30 educators of OU-BOU.

The workshop also employed a pre-survey to assess participants' understanding of OER and tailored activities to address their needs. It featured collaborative sessions on creating and curating OER-based content, particularly videos. Participants were guided through developing practical plans to integrate blended learning into their teaching practices.



# SKILLS

## MRU and COL-CEMCA Launch Lean Six Sigma MOOC to Inculcate Business Excellence in Learners

CEMCA collaborated with Manav Rachna University (MRU), Haryana, India, to offer a MOOC on Lean Six Sigma Foundation course. The MOOC, designed to be comprehensive and application based, was formally launched on 7 November 2023 in the presence of MRU and COL-CEMCA officials.

In his inaugural address, Dr B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, highlighted the importance of Lean Six Sigma methodology, "It is a global standard for achieving operational efficiency and excellence across various industries. It empowers organisations to minimise defects, reduce waste, and enhance overall quality. By partnering with MRU, we are ensuring that the learners and professionals have access to world-class education and resources in this field."

Speaking on the occasion, Professor (Dr) Sangita

Banga, Pro Vice Chancellor, MRU, referred to the strategic MoU between MRU and COL-CEMCA as the union of two esteemed organisations that share a common vision of empowering youth with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in the ever-evolving business landscape.

The MOOC includes both theoretical and application based components, enabling students and professionals to apply their knowledge effectively in real-world situations. It would benefit not only students, but also the industries and organisations they will eventually serve.

## Harnessing the Power of Sports for Value-based Education

In a pioneering effort, COL-CEMCA, UNESCO New Delhi, and WordsWork LLP have partnered to create multimedia content for value-based education through sports. This collaboration focused on leveraging sports to instil essential 21st-century skills and values such as respect, equity, and inclusion. Guided by UNESCO's Toolkit, which provides a comprehensive framework for integrating these values into education, the project aimed to produce engaging modules that weave ethical considerations seamlessly through sports.



Virtual launch of lean six sigma MOOC by COL-CEMCA and MRU

These modules include interactive videos, practical exercises, and engaging narratives to promote not only physical development but also crucial life skills and moral values. By using sports as a platform, the initiative emphasises the importance of teamwork, diversity, and a sense of community. Furthermore, it focuses on developing key competencies such as leadership, communication, and problem-solving, ensuring that students are prepared for modern challenges.

This collaboration commits to nurturing individuals who are both physically fit and socially responsible. As the project progresses, it promises to transform education, embedding values and skills that extend beyond the playing field, ultimately shaping a generation equipped for the complexities of the 21st century.

### **COL-CEMCA Partners with NIRDPR to Enhance Digital Training for Rural Development**

CEMCA is collaborating with the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) to elevate the quality and impact of digital training materials aimed at Gram Rozgar Sevaks (GRSs). These GRSs are pivotal in driving rural development across India, as they are responsible for implementing and managing employment schemes at the village level.

The project involves a comprehensive assessment and enhancement of the online and digital resources

developed for training and certifying 2,50,000 GRSs. Recognising the critical role these materials play in equipping GRSs with the necessary skills and knowledge, COL-CEMCA's support focuses on refining and strengthening the content to ensure it meets the highest standards.

As part of this initiative, thirty-five modules of digital content were meticulously reviewed by COL-CEMCA. The review process addressed technical, aesthetic, and content-related aspects to identify areas for improvement. These enhancements are designed to make the modules more engaging and effective for learners, ensuring that GRSs can fully benefit from the training.

By improving the quality of these educational resources, the collaboration between COL-CEMCA and NIRDPR aims to empower GRSs to perform their duties more effectively, ultimately contributing to the sustainable development of rural communities across India.

### **Empowering Youth: COL-CEMCA and PSD Advance 21st Century Skills through Sports**

COL-CEMCA is at the forefront of a pivotal initiative to equip physical education teachers with the knowledge to harness the power of sports to impart 21st century skills to students across India. In collaboration with Global Pro Sport Development (PSD), Delhi, India, COL-CEMCA is embarking on



COL-CEMCA and PSD use sports to inculcate 21st century skills in youth

the second phase of an ambitious project aimed at integrating sports into education to cultivate essential 21st-century skills.

The project focuses on creating content for the online self-learning course titled 'Developing 21st Century Skills through Sports'. This initiative leverages the dynamic nature of sports to teach critical skills, such as teamwork, leadership, communication, and problem-solving, which are indispensable in today's fast-evolving world.

The first phase of the project involved meticulous planning and the creation of comprehensive modules. With the content now fully developed, the project has moved into the multimedia production phase. This stage involves transforming the course materials into engaging and interactive multimedia formats, tailored for a MOOC platform for wider dissemination.

This initiative represents a move towards innovative educational methods that leverage sports to promote holistic development, equipping the next generation to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of the 21st century.

### **COL-CEMCA, GPAI and Stakeholders Collaborate to Promote AI Literacy among Factory Workers**

COL-CEMCA and GPAI hosted a consultative meeting in New Delhi, India, on 27 February 2024 to discuss the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on small, mini, and micro-enterprises, with a particular focus on workers in the informal sector. The meeting also aimed to develop an AI literacy course tailored for these workers. It brought together over twenty experts, educators, and development professionals to address the challenges and opportunities AI presents to these sectors.

Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, initiated the discussion by referencing the Global Risk Report 2024 and the OECD Employment Outlook 2023. He emphasised, "There is an urgent need for upskilling and reskilling workers in the informal sector to cope with the rapid advancements in AI and other emerging technologies. These technologies are transforming the nature of work and necessitate new skill sets."



Consultative meeting on AI literacy for factory workers held in Delhi, India

Moderated by Professor Shuchi Sinha from IIT Delhi, the meeting focused on defining the scope of interventions and identifying the target demographic for AI literacy initiatives. Participants discussed the development and delivery of AI curricula, the inclusion of relevant case studies, and effective outreach strategies.

Attendees actively contributed ideas and were invited to join the Advisory Group to oversee the project's advancement. The meeting concluded with Ms. Maya Sherman, AI Literacy Lead at GPAI, and Co-lead of the project, thanking participants for their contributions and commitment to advancing AI literacy for factory workers. The meeting proved to be a stepping stone for creating AI literacy course for these workers, which is currently being developed by an expert group.

### **COL-CEMCA and TWY Boost Employability Skills for Sri Lankan Youth**

To enhance the employability of Sri Lankan youth, COL-CEMCA partnered with Together with Youth (TWY), Sri Lanka, to improve soft skills and spoken English proficiency among them. This initiative also aimed to train trainers from the National Youth Service Council (NYSC), Sri Lanka, in these critical areas that influence the scope of employability.

From 14 to 20 March 2024, NYSC hosted the first Training of Trainers (TOT) programme, culminating in a ceremony attended by officials from COL-CEMCA, the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC), NYSC, and TWY. Dr B. Shadrach, Director of





A glimpse of the training of trainers organised in Sri Lanka

COL-CEMCA, praised the initiative, highlighting its alignment with Sri Lanka’s expanding skills sector under the National Policy Framework - Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour. He congratulated the trainees, calling them ambassadors who will now impart essential life skills to Sri Lankan youth.

Dr Janaka Jayalath, Deputy Director General of TVEC, lauded NYSC for pioneering such a programme within the TVEC sector. He discussed the programme’s significance for securing the future of Sri Lankan youth and congratulated TWY for effectively executing the TOT, enabling NYSC to deliver the training to over 6,000 students. The participants found the course highly relevant for enhancing the job market success of Sri Lankan youth, marking a significant step in the nation’s educational and vocational advancement. Based on the course, CEMCA is also developing six audio-video resources in English language.

### **Adapting Elderly Care Training for India: COL-CEMCA Launches Skill-based MOOC**

COL-CEMCA has adapted and repurposed 180 minutes of multimedia content originally developed for the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) in Sri Lanka, focusing on training

caregivers for the elderly. Recognising the unique needs and context of India’s elderly care sector, COL-CEMCA is tailoring this content to better serve the Indian audience.

The original multimedia training materials were thoroughly reviewed and assessed to ensure that they align with the cultural and practical realities of caregiving in India. This evaluation process led to the creation of a structured framework for a skill-based MOOC, designed in accordance with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) guidelines. The MOOC aims to equip caregivers with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide high-quality care to India’s growing elderly population.

The adapted course was officially launched on 25 March 2024, and has since attracted a diverse group of learners committed to enhancing their caregiving abilities. This course not only addresses the technical aspects of elderly care but also empathy, cultural sensitivity, and effective communication—crucial skills for Indian caregivers. By repurposing and contextualising these training materials, COL-CEMCA is contributing to the development of a skilled workforce capable of meeting the needs of India’s aging population. This course is available in English, Sinhala, and Tamil languages.

## Pilot Model Village Leverages Skills to Achieve UN Sustainable Development Goals

COL-CEMCA, in partnership with Joygopalpur Gram Vikash Kendra (JGVK) in West Bengal, India, has launched a ground-breaking initiative to create a model village aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This project is steered by skill development across various sectors of the rural economy, i. e., organic farming, aquaculture, animal husbandry, and energy solutions to create a pilot model village. The programme was launched in two phases – Phase I commenced on 30 April 2023, while Phase II was inaugurated on 18 April 2024.

Four tailored training modules, developed with expertise from NSOU, West Bengal, India, equipped 82 villagers (46 males and 36 females) with the necessary skills. The training embraced the ‘3H approach’—Head-on, Heart-on, and Hands-on—integrating theoretical knowledge with practical, on-site applications. Post-training, a workshop on business plan development was held on 18 May 2024, and tools and resources were distributed to support the trainees’ transition from learning to implementation. This led to about 30 percent of Phase I participants successfully creating their own business plans.



A trainee sharing details about her compost pit with experts

The initiative has significantly impacted the community through empowerment and inclusion, and practical application of the training. Farmers reported increased incomes through sustainable practices, sparking wider community interest. Certified trainees also advanced in paddy and legume cultivation and adopted innovative fish farming practices, integrating them with crop cultivation. It is a shining example of how targeted skill development can drive sustainable rural development, enhancing livelihoods and fostering environmental stewardship.



Felicitation of winners of CMC 2023 and exceptional community radios in Delhi, India

## Students Trained on Using AI for Documentary and Film-making



Students at the workshop on using AI for film making held in Delhi, India

COL-CEMCA partnered with UNESCO New Delhi and Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), Delhi, India, to organise a workshop on 'Documentary and Film-making' for students from several Indian institutions and Universities on 23 November 2023 at New Delhi, India.

On this occasion, Dr B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, posited that artificial intelligence (AI) has disrupted all sectors and film-making is no exception. "From computer generated images and graphics to using AI in all aspects of film-making including script writing, it has come a long way, and several AI powered apps have completely revolutionised amateur film-making," he mentioned. In her special address, Dr Anupama Bhatnagar, Director General, IIMC, mentioned that the Community Media Challenge 2023 gave students an opportunity to showcase the potential of community media through the art of film making.

The inauguration culminated with the screening of a selection of entries from the Community Media Challenge 2023 (CMC 2023) and insightful experience sharing by some of the award winners. In the workshop following the inauguration, 50 students were provided hands-on training on various features of documentary and film-making. They also explored multifaceted aspects of using AI in filmmaking, encompassing areas such as fact-checking and social media monitoring, advanced search techniques, and information retrieval

techniques. For them, the workshop served as a platform for holistic learning and skill enhancement in leveraging AI's potential within the domain of filmmaking.

## CMC 2023 Winners and Exceptional Community Radio Stations Felicitated at Award Ceremony

Eight winners of Community Media Challenge (CMC) 2023 and 20 Community Radio Stations were felicitated during an award ceremony hosted by COL-CEMCA in partnership with UNESCO New Delhi. The event was held at UNESCO office in Delhi, India on 24 November 2023.

This year, CMC 2023 expanded its horizons to include all forms of media under the theme "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav" (AKAM), symbolising the celebration of freedom. The call for entries for CMC 2023 resonated strongly with students at all levels and a total of 45 entries were received by COL-CEMCA and UNESCO. The submissions underwent meticulous review by a prestigious panel of jury chaired by Professor Ashok Ogra, Advisor (Mass Communication), Apeejay Educational Society. The award winning videos can be viewed at <https://www.cemca.org/crvc/result.php>.

The Community Radio Stations were felicitated for excelling in the International Yoga Day 2023 celebrations. They were awarded for excelling in five categories: 1. Creating sustainable learning opportunities for all; 2. Innovative communication practices; 3. Innovative learning methods; 4. Sustainable CR practices; 5. Graduating listeners to lifelong learners; and 6. Maximum registrations on the portal developed for International Yoga Day by the MOA, GoI.

The award ceremony was organised in the presence of representatives from COL-CEMCA, UNESCO New Delhi, Ministry of Ayush and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, and the award winners from various Indian states. After the award ceremony, award winning CR stations shared their experiences of empowering local communities through the medium of community radio.

## Empowering North-eastern Communities through Community Radio Awareness

COL-CEMCA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), Government of India, organised two workshops in Guwahati, Assam, focusing on community radio (CR) empowerment in North-eastern India.

The first workshop, held in October 2023 with KKHSOU, aimed to familiarise participants with CR's revolutionary potential. On this occasion, Dr B. Shadrach from COL-CEMCA highlighted its significance in underserved regions, while Dr Rajendra Prasad Das, KKHSOU's Vice Chancellor, emphasised CR's educational role. Mr C. Senthil Rajan, MIB Joint Secretary, discussed CR's growth in India.

In February 2024, the second workshop, in collaboration with Radio Luit and Gauhati University, delved deeper into CR's benefits and establishment. Dr Shadrach stressed CR's role in disseminating information and community engagement, echoed by Dr R. Sreedher, a CR expert. Mr Aseem Kazi from Akashvani discussed CR's importance in reaching marginalised populations.

Both workshops included sessions on CR station setup, license procurement, and infrastructure requirements. They showcased existing CR stations through posters and practical demonstrations. The participants visited operational community

CR stations to receive hands-on training in their operation and management. The events spurred interest among participants from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, West Bengal, and Manipur to establish CR stations in their communities.

Overall, these workshops mark significant steps toward empowering North-eastern communities through CR. By amplifying local voices and providing access to vital information, CR emerges as a potent tool for social transformation and development in the region.

## COL-CEMCA and SMART NGO Introduce Climate Literacy Curriculum at Radio Festival 2024

COL-CEMCA and Seeking Modern Applications for Real Transformation (SMART NGO) unveiled the 'Climate Literacy for Community Media: A Systematic Learning Curriculum' during the inaugural session of the Radio Festival 2024, organised by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India (MIB-GoI), Prasar Bharati, UNESCO New Delhi, and SMART NGO in New Delhi, India, on 13 February 2024.

During the event, Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, underscored the transformative potential of community radio as an educational tool, capable of fostering lifelong learning among its listeners. He considered the curriculum's launch as an opportunity to leverage radio and audio communication to spur grassroots action in mitigating the adverse effects



Participants at the community radio awareness workshop held at Guwahati in Assam, India



COL-CEMCA and SMART NGO introduce climate literacy curriculum at the Radio Festival organised in Delhi, India

of climate change and advancing climate action.

Mr. Sanjay Jaju, Secretary, MIB-GoI, emphasised the positive impact of programmes informed by grassroots feedback, underscoring the pivotal role of community radio in this context. He also highlighted the Ministry's commitment to nurturing the growth of all three forms of radio (public, private and community) in India.

This curriculum, jointly developed by COL-CEMCA and SMART NGO, addresses the pressing need for educational resources to equip community media professionals and communities with an understanding of the science behind climate change, its regional impacts, and the significance of mitigation and adaptation measures. Divided into ten modules, the curriculum centres on Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate Action, India's vulnerability to climate change, community-led solutions, and the Lifestyle for Environment Mission (LiFE Mission), a global initiative pioneered by India to promote sustainable lifestyle changes. The curriculum is currently being converted into audio-video and podcast resources.

### Community Radio Workshop Focuses on Content Curation and Ethics

Content curation is vital for community radios (CRs) as it ensures the selection and presentation of relevant, and engaging content as per the local audience's interests and needs, and in compliance with legal and ethical standards. In this context, COL-CEMCA and the Community Radio Association (CRA) held an online 'Content Curation Orientation Workshop for Community Radio Stations on 14 June 2024.

The workshop aimed to equip participants with the skills to discover, gather, and present relevant content while emphasising ethical considerations such as accuracy, fairness, and impartiality. It provided an understanding of copyright laws and the strategies for maintaining integrity and credibility through fact-checking. It guided the CRs in curating a mix of local, regional, and national content. The participants were also familiarised with digital tools for efficient content collection and organisation. The workshop created an interactive environment for sharing experiences and best practices and facilitated networking among CR practitioners. It resulted in better equipped participants to lead the CR movement in the country

Delivering the opening remarks, Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, emphasised the crucial role of CRs in disseminating information and fostering community engagement. He outlined the workshop's objectives, focusing on the skills and knowledge needed for effective content curation. Mr. G.S Kesarwani, Additional Director from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, highlighted the importance of ethical practices and assured ministry support for community radios.

The workshop was attended by 170 participants, including station managers, producers, and content creators. Sessions by experts such as Ms. Philomena Gnanapragasam from the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) and Dr. R. Sreedher, a Tele Learning and Community Radio Practitioner, provided insights on content curation basics, ethics, and legal considerations.

# NEW PUBLICATIONS

## Discussion Paper: Towards a Blended Learning Policy for Agriculture Higher Education in India



**Authors:** Dr B. Shadrach, Prof M. M. Pant, Dr Nikhil Raj, and Ms. Sheriya Sareen

The discussion paper deliberates on why a blended learning policy is crucial for Agriculture Higher Education to bridge the gap between traditional education and practical application. By integrating online and face-to-face instructions, it shortens the learning curve for agriculture students, faculty, and research institutions. The paper also underlines the advantage of blended learning approach in equipping last-mile extension agents with timely, relevant knowledge, driving the sector's transformation.

## Towards Developing Blended Learning Policy at the Institutional Level: A Discussion Paper



**Authors:** Dr B. Shadrach and Ms Sheriya Sareen

In recognition of the dynamic and evolving landscape of education, and with the aim of providing inclusive, innovative, and accessible learning environments, COL-CEMCA has come out with a Discussion Paper titled 'Towards Developing Blended Learning Policy at the Institutional Level'. It is designed to guide and seek commitment from the Indian HEIs, both ODL institutions and dual-mode colleges and universities, in effectively implementing inclusive blended learning practices for creating a comprehensive and enriched teaching-learning experience for students and teachers.

## Report on International Conference on Perspectives and Innovations in ODL



**Authors:** Mrs Kanta Vadehra, Mr Aflaq Ahmad Shah, Ms Ayushi Choudhary, Ms Shipra Sharma, and NIOS Team

NIOS and COL-CEMCA hosted the International Conference on Perspectives and Innovations in Open and Distance Learning from 1-3 April 2024, at the NIOS premises in NOIDA, Uttar Pradesh, India. The hybrid Conference convened educators, researchers, policymakers, and industry experts from across the globe to facilitate a robust exchange of insights, best practices, and cutting-edge innovations shaping the global landscape of ODL in education and skills.

# COL-CEMCA AWARD

In a concerted effort to foster gender inclusivity in the dynamic realm of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), COL-CEMCA has instituted an Award for Excellence in Media and ICT-related Academic Pursuits among Women. This initiative aims to catalyse greater female participation in these disciplines at the post-graduate level across Open and Distance Learning (ODL) institutions.

During the 37th Convocation of the IGNOU held on 20 February 2024, Ms. Chamanpreet Kaur Sodhi was the recipient of the COL-CEMCA Award for her excellent performance in the Master of Computer Application course at IGNOU. Professor Nageshwar Rao, the Vice Chancellor of IGNOU, and Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, presented Chamanpreet with a citation and cash prize of Rs. 25,000/-. Her win exemplifies the importance of

empowering female talent in the ICT domain, paving the way for a more inclusive digital future.

Presently, Chamanpreet is working as a software engineer at Capgemini India, where, in the field of innovation, she and her team are working with technologies like Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning, Blockchain and Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality. On her achievement, she remarked, "Thank you so much for this award. This initiative of yours to encourage young minds in the field of technology is really important and appreciated. I feel really honoured to have achieved this award." Regarding her future plans, she shared, "I am focusing on exploring more in the blockchain domain and want to become a web3 developer." CEMCA extends best wishes to her for all future endeavours.



# CEMCA PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL EVENTS

## **South Zone Vice Chancellors' Meet, Visvesvaraya Technological University, Belagavi, Karnataka, India, 26-27 October 2023**

Dr B. Shadrach participated as a Panellist in Technical Session 1: The future of credentialing: Digital badges, micro-credentialing and online degree during the South Zone Vice Chancellors' Meet. In his presentation, he stressed on the need for investment in skilling, reskilling, and upskilling due to the rapidly changing requirements in the job market. He highlighted the shift towards micro-credentials as a solution to bridge the gap between university outputs and labour market demands, driven by new, shorter, and more flexible credentials, the growing nexus between education and work, new competitors and models, and omni-channel learning approaches.

## **Student Felicitation Ceremony, Sangam University, Bhilwara, Rajasthan, India, 22 November 2023**

At a Student Felicitation Ceremony organised by Sangam University, Bhilwara, Rajasthan, India, for successful completion of skill-based courses and adding value to academic achievements, held on 22 November 2023, Dr B. Shadrach delivered the Special Address. He mentioned the increasing importance of skills in the context of NEP 2020.

## **Webinar on AI and School Libraries: Possibilities and Challenges, 2 December 2023**

Dr B. Shadrach was one of the Speakers at a Webinar on AI and School Libraries: Possibilities and Challenges, organised by School Library Association, India, for SLA members on 2 December 2023.

## **Capacity Building Programme for Young Social Science Faculty on Trans-disciplinary Social Science Research, NSOU, West Bengal, India, 4 December 2023**

Dr B. Shadrach delivered a speech at the Capacity Building Programme for Young Social Science Faculty on Trans-disciplinary Social Science Research organised by Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU), West Bengal, India, on 4 December 2023. He underscored that the idea of cultivating collaborative and multi- and trans-disciplinary thinking alone can drive India towards becoming Atmanirbhar Bharat.

## **AI Education and Skilling: Bridging the Talent Gap, GPAI Summit 2023, Bharat Mandapam, Delhi, India, 13 December 2023**

In the session on AI Education and Skilling: Bridging the Talent Gap at GPAI Summit 2023, held in New Delhi, India, Dr. B Shadrach highlighted the skilling gap in the informal sector, especially among female workers, who constitute more than 90 per cent of the workforce in this sector, and emphasised on the need to create a 'Pink Curriculum' and innovative delivery methods using AI for skilling, reskilling and upskilling them, considering their lack of technical skills and, in majority of cases, inaccessibility to digital devices.

## **G Ram Reddy's Memorial Lecture, Dr BRAOU-Hyderabad, Telangana, India, 12 January 2024**

During the Professor G Ram Reddy's Memorial Lecture delivered at BRAOU-Hyderabad, Telangana, India, on 12 January 2024, Dr B. Shadrach articulated how OUs, bolstered through NEP 2020, can support



the Education 4.0 framework proposed by the World Economic Forum, which emphasises skill development from an early age, recognising skills like Global Citizenship, Innovation, Technology, and Interpersonal skills as essential for the future workforce.

### **Radio Festival 2024, New Delhi, India, 13 February 2024**

On the occasion of 11th World Radio Day celebrated at the Radio Festival 2024, organised by SMART NGO and UNESCO New Delhi in Delhi, India, on 13 February 2024, Dr B. Shadrach highlighted the transformative potential of community radio as an educational tool, capable of fostering lifelong learning among its listeners.

### **Open Access as a Knowledge Platform for SDGs, Ashoka University, Haryana, India, 6 March 2024**

Dr B. Shadrach delivered a talk at one-day International Conference titled Open Access as a Knowledge Platform for SDGs organised by Ashoka University, Haryana, India, on 6 March 2024.

### **Webinar on 'Empowering Library Professionals in the Digital Age: Essential Skills for a Technology-Driven Environment', New Delhi, India, 8 March 2024**

In a panel discussion on 'Unlocking the potential of AI and other digital technologies by Libraries and Information Centres' during a webinar on 'Empowering Library Professionals in the Digital Age: Essential Skills for a Technology-Driven Environment' organised by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), IGNOU, and UNESCO New Delhi on 8 March 2024, Dr B. Shadrach talked about how AI and digital technologies can help in managing and handling knowledge resources including OERs, and why digital, data, and media literacy is important.

### **Capacity Building Programme, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, New Delhi, India, 12 March 2024**

Dr B. Shadrach delivered the Guest of Honour address at the two week Capacity Building Programme organised by the University School of Mass Communication, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, New Delhi, India, on 12 March 2024. He emphasised the importance of continuous professional development of educators, as the future of Indian workforce lies in their hands. The way they shape them up would enable the industry sector to harness their potential.

### **LIBWAY 2024 Conference, Novosibirsk Region, Russia, 18 March 2024**

During the AI Session at LIBWAY 2024 conference held in Novosibirsk Region, Russia, on 18 March 2024, in his keynote speech, Dr B. Shadrach drew attention to the potential of AI algorithms to enhance the efficiency of knowledge workers by saving time and directing them to relevant knowledge resources, thereby enabling them to provide personalised recommendations to the knowledge seekers.

### **Seminar on Elderly Issues, Sangam University, Bhilwara, Rajasthan, 20-21 March 2024**

Dr B. Shadrach was the Guest of Honour at the state-level Seminar on Elderly Issues organised by Sangam University and sponsored by National Institute of Social Defence, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, New Delhi, on 20 and 21 March 2024. He appreciated the timeliness of the MOOC on training elderly caregivers in the context of India's aging population.

### **Presentation on Community Radio, Management Education and Research Institute (MERI College), New Delhi, India**

Ms. Monica Sharma, Programme Coordinator, COL-CEMCA, delivered a presentation at the Management



Ms Monica Sharma, Programme Coordinator, made a presentation on Community Radio at MERI COL-CEMCA college.

Education and Research Institute (MERI College) in New Delhi, India, on the contribution of radio in day-to-day learning. Ms. Sharma's lecture not only shed light on the educational potential of radio, but also underscored the collaborative efforts needed to bolster inclusive learning opportunities for all.

### Panel Discussion on 'Promoting Rural Women Entrepreneurs through Digitization', Foundation for MSME Clusters, New Delhi, India, 4 April 2024

Dr B. Shadrach was invited as a Guest Speaker in the Panel Discussion on 'Promoting Rural Women Entrepreneurs through Digitization', organised by the Foundation for MSME Clusters, and held at the India International Centre, New Delhi, India, on 4 April 2024.

### 98th Annual General Meeting and National Conference of Vice Chancellors: Higher Education @2047, Hyderabad, Telangana, India, 16 April 2024

Dr B. Shadrach was a Panellist in Technical Session III on Digital Transformation in Higher Education at the 98th Annual General Meeting and National Conference of Vice Chancellors on the theme 'Higher Education @2047' in Hyderabad, Telangana, India, on 16 April 2024. In his presentation, he stressed the importance of providing innovative learning experiences and preparing the future workforce, catering not just to conventional students but also 800 million lifelong learners.



### 'Each One Enable One' Programme, Institute of Home Economics, University of Delhi, India, 26 April 2024

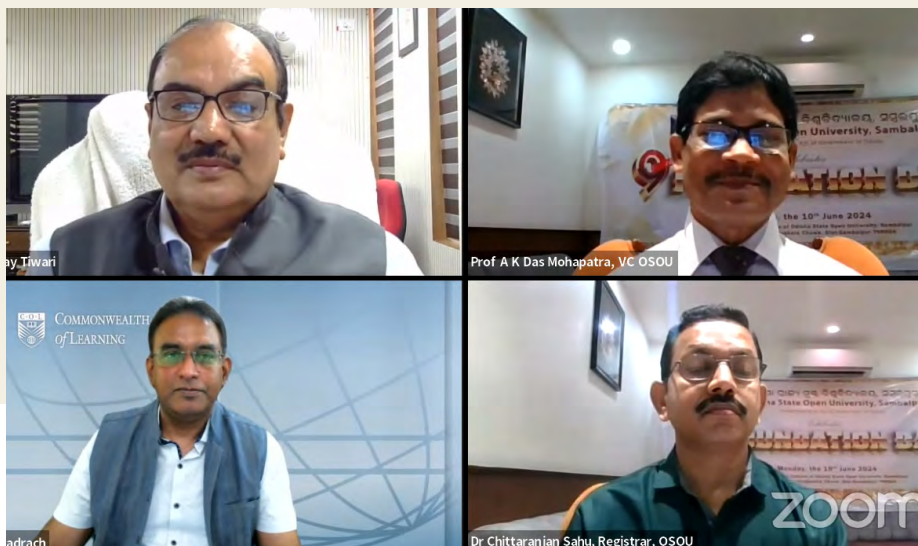
Dr. B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, was invited as the Chief Guest at the 'Each One Enable One' Programme, organised by the Institute of Home Economics, University of Delhi, India, on 26 April 2024. In his special address,



Dr B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, inaugurating the each one enable one programme at Institute of Home Economics, Delhi, India

Dr Shadrach emphasised the need for a nationwide effort to promote digital literacy amongst citizens. He noted that women already have triple responsibilities – social, economic, and biological and deserve the autonomy to make informed decisions and pursue their goals independently.

**9th Foundation Day, Odisha State Open University, Sambalpur, Odisha, India, 10 June 2024**



COL-CEMCA Director, Dr B. Shadrach's virtual address at the 9th Foundation Day of Odisha State Open University, India

In his Foundation Day Lecture on the occasion of 9<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day of Odisha State Open University (OSOU), Sambalpur, Odisha, on 10 June 2024, Dr Shadrach lauded the achievements of OSOU. He stated that it is catering to the needs of both traditional and modern Odisha by responding to the requirements of Odia populace, 21<sup>st</sup> century youth, NEP 2020, and manpower of the state and nation.

**Radio Conclave, JIMS-Rohini, Delhi, India, 25 June 2024**

Ms. Monica Sharma, Programme Coordinator, COL-CEMCA, participated in the Radio Conclave organised by the Jagan Institute of Management Studies (JIMS) Community Radio 96.9 FM, Rohini, Delhi, in association with the Community Radio Association, to discuss the role of Community Radios in the upliftment of community on 25 June 2024.



Ms Monica Sharma, COL-CEMCA, speaking at the Radio Conclave organised by JIMS Community Radio 96.9 FM, Rohini, Delhi

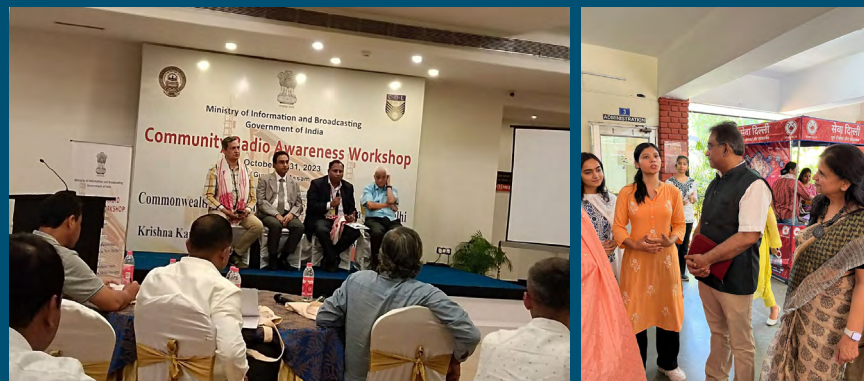
# UPCOMING EVENTS

Name: Open Educational Resources (OER) and Licenses (Hindi)

Date: 22-26 July 2024

Venue: Online

## MOMENTS



# COL-CEMCA UPDATES

OCTOBER 2023-JUNE 2024



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING  
Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia

COL-CEMCA, a Regional Office of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) Vancouver, Canada, is an international agency.

COL-CEMCA's mission is to promote meaningful, relevant and appropriate use of ICTs to serve the educational and training needs of Commonwealth Member States of Asia.

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