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# COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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## DEVELOPMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY FRAMEWORK IN OPEN UNIVERSITIES

Organised by

Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia  
(CEMCA) in collaboration with Vardhman Mahaveer Open University (VMOU),  
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7/8 Sarva Priya Vihar,  
New Delhi, 110016  
India



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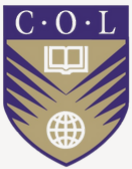
Dear Professor Nageshwar Rao, Former Vice Chancellor of Indira Gandhi National Open University, dear Professor Kailash Sodani, Vice Chancellor of Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University, Kota, Rajasthan, Professor Arun Kumar, the coordinator of this workshop, officials of Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University, faculty members, directors and officials of Indira Gandhi National Open University, Jagat Guru Nanak Dev Punjab State Open University, Uttarakhand Open University, Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon Open University and the Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University, ladies and gentlemen.

I bring greetings from the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, the Asian Regional Centre of Commonwealth of Learning! My special thanks to Professor Nageshwar Rao who has been associated with my organisation for many decades now, and to Professor Sodani for accepting to host this workshop. I consider it my privilege to join hands with them.

As you are aware, COL-CEMCA is dedicated to supporting and strengthening open education institutions in Asia towards delivering high quality education and skills to learners at an affordable cost. Committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, especially the fourth goal that promises 'education for all,' CEMCA works with institutions that are equally committed towards education equity, access, quality, inclusion and accountability.

In its efforts to support institutions involved in Open Education, COL-CEMCA has been working closely with the National Institute of Open School, IGNOU and each of the 17 State Open Universities in India. Recently, we reconvened the VCs of the OUs in Ahmedabad which was also graced by Professor Nageshwar Rao to look at the role of OUs in the implementation of NEP 2020. The August 2023 meeting of the VCs produced the Ahmedabad Declaration.

The Ahmedabad Declaration, a two-page document, highlights 15 points! I must encourage all of you to read the Declaration of the VCs very carefully for it covers all aspects of NEP 2020 and their role in assisting the government in the implementation of the Policy into a reality in the following:

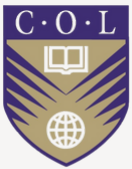


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- It recognizes the current position of the OUs in terms of the contribution to the GER while also taking cognizance of the fact that the OUs are preferred by SEDGs, women and the persons with disability
- It highlights the commitment of the OUs to the achievement of SDG4, SDG5 and SDG8 with an emphasis on SDG4
- It reiterates the commitment of the OUs to the NEP2020 vision of producing future citizens and the workforce in alignment with the 21st Century skills, capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper, and creative imagination, with sound ethical moorings and values. It affirms OUs goal to produce critical, creative, engaged, productive, contributing, and ethical citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by our Constitution.
- Recognising the role accorded to OUs and the online and ODL modes of learning, the declaration promises the OUs commitment to help the government to achieve 50% GER by 2035 without comprising on the quality, especially by turning ODL and online as the 'first choice' education for 'all.'
- The declaration goes a step further by stating that the OUs shall respond to continuous skilling, reskilling and upskilling of individuals to meet the demands of the future of work by creating courses with involvement from the industry and the marketplace, especially for the marginalised groups through flexible pathways, internships, workplace-learning and other apprenticeship opportunities to enhance skills and employability.
- The declaration commits to move our OUs as multidisciplinary, large, and resilient systems that are agile to changing needs and the demands of the learner-centred curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and student support systems with an overall vision of delivering quality education through ODL, while enhancing and extending our outreach to a diverse set of learners.
- The declaration commits to collaborate among the Open Universities by forming a Consortium of Open Universities with the intent of achieving the following:
  - Share best practices and learn from each other.
  - Organise face-to-face and online conferences and workshops to devise implementable strategies and lines of action for realising the vision of NEP 2020.



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- Share resources as Open Educational Resources (OER) on a mutual basis to facilitate the right of universities who enter into such agreements to retain, reuse, revise, remix and redistribute for educational purposes, and to also use upto 40% of OER content in their course development.
- Exchange ideas and strategies, especially towards strengthening our partnerships with government and non-governmental actors towards education and skill development.
- The Ahmedabad Declaration commits to developing a credit transfer framework among the Open Universities to provide flexibility and choice-based educational opportunities to our learners in India by recognising credits earned in our educational systems and enabling learners from Open Universities to obtain credits from each other.
- The Declaration recognizes the need for investing in digital technologies, especially in assistive, adaptive and user-centred technologies to promote blended learning but rapidly move away from massification to universalization of education and skill development. In this the declaration emphasizes upon the use of appropriate technologies, be in community radio to today's generative AI.
- And the final statement squarely discusses the purpose of education by committing the OUs role to innovation, creativity and to develop high quality, employment-oriented, short and long-term courses with flexible exit and entry points as a response to market requirements as well as by way of realising NEP 2020's vision of creating lifelong learners, who have a global outlook and are exemplars of global citizenship, while retaining their pride in being Indians first.

In line with the above, you can see how important this event is in the life of the OUs, especially in realising their own vision enshrined in the Ahmedabad Declaration.