

# COL-CEMCA UPDATES

August 2024



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING  
Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia

## EDUCATION



### **COL-CEMCA and TNOU Train Open University Faculty Members on Micro-Credentials**

COL-CEMCA and the Tamil Nadu Open University (TNOU) jointly hosted a three-day workshop titled "Micro-credentials: Introduction and Best Practices for Effective Design" in Tamil Nadu, India, from 7 to 9 August 2024. This event marked a significant step in advancing the understanding and implementation of micro-credentials among Indian Open Universities (OUs).

The workshop brought together educational leaders and experts, including representatives from 14 Indian OUs, to explore the evolving role of micro-credentials in education. The event opened with an inaugural session featuring experts from COL-CEMCA, TNOU, the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), Karnataka State Open University, and Charles Darwin University, Australia.

Dr B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, outlined the workshop's objectives in alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. He emphasised the need for OUs to stay competitive by enhancing curriculum quality, delivery methods, and learner support services. Dr Shadrach highlighted the strategic importance of adopting micro-credentials to meet industry needs and close the skills gap, urging OU faculty members to embrace these flexible, stackable learning experiences to remain relevant in India's evolving higher education landscape.

The workshop featured a special address by Professor Sharanappa V. Halse, Vice Chancellor of Karnataka State Open University, who discussed the significance of micro-credentials in supporting career advancement, job transitions, and lifelong learning. Dr. Neena Pahuja, Executive Member of NCVET, and Professor Michael Sankey from Charles Darwin University provided insights into the global and national contexts of micro-credentials.

They discussed how these credentials are being used to address modern demands for specific, immediately applicable knowledge and highlighted the importance of quality assurance and effective design practices.

The workshop concluded with an address by Professor S. Arumugam, Vice Chancellor, TNOU, who commended the collaboration with COL-CEMCA. He also announced future plans, including a follow-up programme in Nashik, Maharashtra, to continue the engagement with OUs and further explore best practices for micro-credentials.



Dr. B. Shadrach and VC, TNOU with the participants at the workshop.

## State Open Universities Strengthen Collaboration

COL-CEMCA organised a significant online meeting of the Vice Chancellors of Indian State Open Universities (OUs) on 13 August 2024, to advance the formation of their consortium. Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, welcomed the participants by reflecting on the progress made since the Ahmedabad Declaration in August 2023. Dr Shadrach praised the strides made by State OUs over the past year, particularly in resource sharing, gaining recognition from the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), and

advancing efforts to integrate skills qualifications and micro-credentials. He emphasised the critical role of State OUs in implementing the NEP 2020 and urged continued advocacy for their recognition in the national higher education agenda.

However, several challenges persist. The participating VCs highlighted delays in the University Grants Commission (UGC) approval process, which hinder State OUs from launching new programmes and maintaining pace with traditional universities. Concerns were also raised about the UGC's stringent norms, and the competition from conventional universities offering Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programmes without adhering to the same standards.

Further, issues such as the lack of institutional recognition, insufficient faculty support, and the challenges posed by private registrations were discussed. Dr Shadrach called attention to the urgent need for forming a consortium of State OUs to address these concerns collectively.

The proposed consortium aims to facilitate collaboration, particularly in sharing study materials and best practices, and to strengthen the voice of State OUs in discussions with the UGC. A committee was suggested to draft the terms of reference for the consortium, and plans for a face-to-face meeting of Vice Chancellors were also discussed. The meeting concluded with a call for unified action to ensure the sustainability and success of State OUs.

## Promoting Inclusive Education through Assistive Technology

In a pivotal move to promote inclusive education in India, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has partnered with COL-CEMCA to develop a specialised course aimed at equipping Indian school teachers with the skills to use Assistive Technology (AT) for the inclusion of children with disabilities (CWD) in mainstream classrooms.

The initiative commenced with a consultative meeting on 14 August 2024 in Delhi. The meeting brought together 21 stakeholders, including teachers, professors, disability experts, and representatives from organisations such as ChangeInkk Foundation and UNESCO Delhi. The primary objective was to assess the current status of inclusive practices in Indian schools and gather insights to inform the course development.

Dr. B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, opened the meeting by emphasising the importance of providing accessible, quality, and equitable education for all children, particularly those in rural areas attending government schools. He highlighted the need to sensitise and empower teachers to use appropriate tools and technologies, setting a nine-month timeline for the course's development.

Professor Yukti Sharma from Delhi University, who moderated the discussion, led an in-depth examination of current inclusive practices. Participants shared their experiences and challenges in integrating CWD into regular classrooms and discussed the potential of AT to address these issues.

Ms. Suman Chaudhary, Consultant at COL-CEMCA, presented a draft outline of the course, which received constructive feedback. The participants provided valuable recommendations to refine the course content, ensuring that it meets the practical needs of

educators.

In closing, Dr Shadrach affirmed that the participants' suggestions would be integral to the course's final development. This initiative aligns with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) and NEP 2020, both of which advocate for the use of AT to enhance the inclusion of CWD in mainstream education. By building teachers' capacity in this area, COL-CEMCA aims to create a more inclusive and equitable educational environment across India.



Pictures from the event.

# SKILLS

## Community Radio Awareness Workshop, Agartala

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (COL-CEMCA), the regional centre of Commonwealth of Learning collaborated once again with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), Government of India (GoI) to organise yet another Community Radio Awareness Workshop at Agartala in Tripura, India, on 29-30 August 2024. The workshop aimed to raise awareness and encourage the establishment of Community Radio (CR) stations across India, particularly in the North-East region. The event attracted over fifty participants from the states of Tripura, West Bengal, Assam, and Manipur, including representatives from various organisations, who gathered to explore the potential of CR as a tool for community development.

Following an ice-breaking session that allowed the participants to know each other, Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, warmly welcomed the attendees during the inaugural session. In his address, Dr Shadrach highlighted the power of Community Radio as a government-backed platform that allows communities to voice their needs and drive local development. He emphasised the supportive legal and regulatory framework that India has built over the past two decades, which included ownership rights, frequency allocation, licenses, funding, and training for CR operations.

Dr Shadrach stressed that CRs play a crucial role in community engagement, emergency response, disaster mitigation, and promoting lifelong learning.

Mr Amit Dwivedi, Project Director at MIB, delivered the inaugural address, focusing on the Ministry's initiatives to promote the growth of CR stations, especially in underserved regions like the North-East. He underscored the pivotal role CRs play in community engagement and development.

The keynote address by Dr Biplab Halder, Vice Chancellor of ICFAI University, Agartala, emphasised CR's potential to drive social change by amplifying local voices and addressing community-specific issues. Dr Halder also expressed interest in establishing a CR station at the ICFAI campus.

The workshop's other sessions featured in-depth discussions on CR concepts, policy guidelines, and the Community Radio Support Scheme, followed by a documentary screening on the CR movement in India. The day concluded with a field visit to the local Friends CR station that provided participants with practical insights into the operational dynamics of a CR station.

The workshop was facilitated by Ms. Monica Sharma, Programme Coordinator, COL-CEMCA. In addition to the insightful sessions, Yormung Commence, an organisation promoting bamboo handicrafts from local artisans and self-help groups, set up a stall near the conference area. This stall reflected the rich bamboo handicraft culture of Tripura, adding a local cultural dimension to the workshop.

The workshop received extensive coverage in the local print and electronic media, including by the Press Information Bureau of the Government of India



Participants at the workshop.

## COL-CEMCA Participation in Regional Events

### AI and Future of Work Event, 24 August 2024, Virtual

Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, delivered the keynote address at the "AI and the Future of Work" virtual event on 24 August 2024, organised by Policy4.0. He shared insights from the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) and addressed participant questions on the implications of AI in the workforce.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Name: 6th Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030  
(APMED 6)

Date: 10 to 13 September 2024

Venue: Bangkok, Thailand

Name: Workshop on Blended Learning

Date: 25 to 27 September, 2024

Venue: KK Handique State Open University, Assam, India

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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