



CEMCA

**Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU)**  
&  
**Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA)**

## **Three-day Workshop on Blended Learning**



**Dates: 25, 26 & 27 September, 2024**

### **Special Address**

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Colleagues,

Greetings from the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), the regional centre of Commonwealth of Learning (COL)!

It gives me immense pleasure in being a part of a process that strengthens Open learning practices in India through the 17 State Open Universities and the Indira Gandhi National Open University. With careful support and guidance from COL-CEMCA, the Vice Chancellors, who met at Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University in August 2023, spelt out their commitment to open learning through their Ahmedabad Declaration. As you know, the Declaration has ten major areas of intervention. Since then, COL-CEMCA has been supporting the OUs in realising the work programme set out in the Declaration.

First, we helped the OUs to formulate their own collaborative work arrangements towards sharing their valuable resources as Open Educational Resources. Organised by COL-CEMCA and Dr B R Ambedkar Open University in April 2024, we witnessed the OU OERfest and the VCs Roundtable. Followed by this, we set out to embracing skill-based programmes, short and long term courses. Steered by COL-CEMCA, we met up with the officials of the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) in Delhi in May 2024 to understand the requirements towards becoming awarding bodies of NCVET with dual status for awarding as well as assessment.

This was followed by a programme in which COL-CEMCA helped with completing the application process and gaining a deeper understanding of designing skill-oriented programmes at Haldwani in June 2024, organised by the Uttarakhand Open University. And, our next stop was Chennai in August 2024 where COL-CEMCA, together with the Tamil Nadu Open University exposed the OUs to the opportunities presented in the form of Micro credentials. And, in that journey, we are now in Guwahati, thanks to the Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, looking at blended learning practices. As you can see, COL-CEMCA is completely committed to strengthening the Open learning practices brought to the learners in India and abroad through the Open Universities. And, our next stop will be Nashik in December when we would look deeper into the aspect of employability, especially to develop formidable strategies to make our graduates employable.

Blended Learning practices have first been recognised by the OUs and ODL institutions, right in the early 1960s when the first ODL initiative was launched in India in Delhi, care of Delhi University. Ever since, ODL institutions have shown tremendous courage in embracing blended learning techniques in the form of writing textbooks, guides, assessments for the invisible learners to mixing or blending contact classrooms through their study centres. We witnessed learning through country-wide classrooms, through audio and video programmes, and of late, through the web. Now with advanced technologies such as augmented realities, extended realities, artificial intelligence, generative AI and other means, open learning practices are becoming much more interesting.

That said, how do we retain our position as leaders in Blended Learning. And, what is Blended Learning! And, how has the education system accepted blended learning as a norm rather than an exception?

In my brief write-up, I have attempted at providing a simple meaning of the phrase blended learning to mainly reiterate the fact that as ODL institutions, we are best placed to introduce every form of blended learning to make learning easier and effective.

The three main pillars of any ODL institutions are:

- a) Their curriculum design and delivery with quality
- b) Student engagement and support services to ensure that learning leads to engagement and a real world experience
- c) Reaching the last mile in an affordable manner and bringing education at the door-step

Faculty members assembled today are engaged in all the three, but more importantly in the second aspect. Our experts, especially, our Chief Guest, Professor Nageshwar Rao, as the authority in blended learning, will speak to you about the various trends and techniques available.

COL-CEMCA has been providing training in blended learning to the OUs and all ODL institutions for many years now; however, this training is one with a difference. It is being carried out at the backdrop of NEP 2020 which places its bet on blended learning for a variety of things and to realise the overall vision of NEP 2020 itself. Also, this programme is held as a continuum to our Ahmedabad Declaration.

COL-CEMCA, together with the Association of Indian Universities, consulted with over 40 experts and with over 900 institutions to come up with a national draft policy on blended learning. We began the journey in July 2022 at NEIPA, supported by Professor NV Varghese and Professor Marmar Mukhopadhyay, and thereafter, led by the Presidents of AIU and battery of experts, have helped to produce the national draft policy.

COL-CEMCA thereafter has released the institutional level template for blended learning which you would find in your handout today.

I mentioned that this programme is one with a difference, because of the context in which we operate today:

1. Pervasiveness of technologies and a variety of blended learning techniques that are proving to be helpful.
2. The world is moving towards online and digital learning, not just as a result of COVID, but as a natural transition.
3. In India, various institutions are offered licenses to operate ODL and Ops; making it an interesting space for the pioneers such as the OUs.
4. NCVET is looking towards tertiary institutions such as the OUs for spreading skills and have come up with certain guidelines recognising at least seven major components of Blended Learning

In this backdrop, given that sooner than later, each OU will be an awarding body of NCVET as well, the three-day workshop on Blended Learning, shall, I hope, prove to be highly effective in the next phase of our OUs' evolution. I wish you the best as you learn and share over the next three days.

Warmly

B. Shadrach