

COL-CEMCA UPDATES

March 2026



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia

COL-CEMCA, NAAC and IGNOU Convene National Workshop on Strengthening Quality Assurance in Online Education

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL)-Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), in collaboration with the Special Project Unit at IGNOU, organised a two-day consultative workshop on Quality Assurance in Online Education (6-7 March 2026) at the Electronic Media Production Centre (EMPC), Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)

Held under the theme “Transforming Indian Higher Education through Online Learning: Capacity Building for Improving Quality Assurance Systems,” the workshop brought together 22 leaders from higher education institutions, including vice-chancellors, directors, and heads of Centres for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA), to deliberate on strengthening the quality and credibility of online education in India.

In his special address, Peter Scott emphasised the global importance of strengthening quality assurance in online education, highlighting that the consultative workshop represents a significant collaboration and marks the

beginning of a joint project aimed at improving quality assurance frameworks for online education in India. He underscored India’s central role within the Commonwealth and described the country’s higher education ecosystem as one of the most dynamic spaces for advancing digital and online learning at scale.

Dr. B. Shadrach, Director, CEMCA, emphasised the global significance of India’s higher education system, noting that the country may soon produce one-fourth of the world’s tertiary degrees. As such, ensuring strong quality assurance in online education will be essential for maintaining credibility, supporting learner success, and shaping the future of global higher education.



Glimpses from the workshop,

Addressing participants, Sh. Anandrao Vishnu Patil, IAS, Additional Secretary at the Ministry of Education, Govt of India, emphasised that quality, relevance, and technology integration will define the future of learning in India. Highlighting the role of artificial intelligence and multilingual technologies, he noted that digital platforms can significantly expand access to education and improve learning efficiency across India's diverse linguistic landscape.

During the workshop, participants examined the current status, opportunities, and challenges of online education in India, particularly in the context of the National Education Policy 2020 and efforts to expand the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education. Discussions focused on identifying key quality assurance considerations, analysing institutional capacity gaps, and outlining strategies for strengthening capacity-building initiatives

<https://cemca.org/news/col-cemca-naac-and-ignou-convene-national-workshop-on-strengthening-quality-assurance-in-online-education/>

Workshop on Community Radio Stations Held During 117th Birth Anniversary Celebrations of P.N. Panicker

As part of the 117th birth anniversary celebrations of P. N. Panicker, a workshop on Community Radio Stations (CRS) was organised on 7 March 2026 at Thiruvananthapuram. The event was hosted by the P. N. Panicker Foundation in collaboration with COL-CEMCA as part of the Social Activist Day observances. Delivering the presidential address, Sri. T. K. A. Nair, Advisor to Former Prime Minister, reflected on the remarkable contribution of P. N. Panicker to social development and literacy movements in India. He noted the continued work of the



Lighting of the lamp during the workshop,

P. N. Panicker Foundation in promoting knowledge and community engagement.

Speaking during the session, Ms. Monica Sharma, Programme Coordinator at COL-CEMCA highlighted that COL-CEMCA serves as a nodal agency of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for creating awareness among potential institutions and organisations about community radio in India. She explained the step-by-step process involved in obtaining the required licenses for establishing a Community Radio Station and distributed the CRS manual developed by COL-CEMCA containing detailed guidance for applicants. She also noted that in recent years nearly 200 community radio stations participated in projects supported by government departments such as the Ministry of AYUSH and the Department of Science and Technology.

The workshop concluded with strong interest from participants. A total of 15 organisations submitted Expressions of Interest to establish Community Radio Stations, which will be forwarded to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. COL-CEMCA will provide further support and guidance to these organisations in the licensing and establishment process.

<https://cemca.org/news/workshop-on-community-radio-stations-held-during-117th-birth-anniversary-celebrations-of-p-n-panicker>

COL-CEMCA & YCMOU Strengthen the Link Between Higher Education and Employability

COL-CEMCA, in collaboration with Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU), Nashik, conducted a three-day workshop on “Course Enhancement for Graduate Employability” from 10-12 March 2026, at the YCMOU campus in Nashik, Maharashtra.

Organised under the Graduate Employability Project, the workshop brought together 29 academic leaders, coordinators, and faculty members from YCMOU to strengthen curriculum design with a focus on employability, skills, and industry relevance.

The workshop emphasised the transition from traditional content-driven teaching to outcome-based education using the Results-Based Management (RBM) Framework. Participants engaged in discussions and practical exercises to align learning outcomes with professional competencies and labour market needs.

A major highlight of the workshop was curriculum mapping, where participants examined how existing courses could be aligned with employability indicators and workplace expectations.

The workshop also introduced the innovative REAL approach to assessment design, encouraging participants to move beyond conventional examinations toward assessments that reflect real-world challenges. This approach was widely appreciated for making evaluation more meaningful and application-oriented.

A key outcome of the workshop was the enhancement of fourteen academic courses, including AI for Teachers, Digital Literacy, Entrepreneurship Development, and Introduction to Fintech. These courses were



Workshop in progress at YCMOU

redesigned using structured templates focusing on curriculum mapping, competency-employability alignment, and skill-based frameworks.

Participants also developed competency matrices and conducted skills-to-employment mapping, linking course outcomes with career pathways. The adoption of the RBM framework further strengthened institutional capacity for monitoring and evaluating employability-focused curriculum initiatives.

The programme concluded with participant presentations of redesigned courses and a valedictory session recognising their contributions. Attendees appreciated the practical, collaborative approach of the workshop, which enabled immediate application of concepts.

The initiative marks a significant step toward aligning higher education with evolving workforce demands. The collaboration between COL-CEMCA and YCMOU highlights a shared commitment to advancing employability-oriented, inclusive, and future-ready education.

COL-CEMCA Felicitates Ms. Maya Sherman on Her Farewell Visit

COL-CEMCA bid a warm farewell to Ms. Maya Sherman, Senior Technology and Innovation Advisor, Embassy of Israel in India, during her visit to the CEMCA office in New Delhi.

Ms. Sherman has been a key partner in advancing collaboration between the Embassy of Israel and COL-CEMCA, particularly in the areas of technology and artificial intelligence for social good.



Ms. Maya Sherman at COL-CEMCA Office.

On the occasion, Dr. B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, felicitated Ms. Sherman and expressed appreciation for her significant contributions and continued engagement with COL-CEMCA initiatives. He acknowledged her role in strengthening partnerships across multiple AI-driven projects, including those focused on education and skilling ecosystems.

In her remarks, Ms. Sherman expressed appreciation for the collaborative work undertaken with COL-CEMCA and shared her optimism for future engagements. She emphasised the importance of continued partnerships in emerging areas such as Artificial Intelligence in agriculture, frugal AI solutions and scaling up the “Teacher in the Loop” AI project through dedicated tool development.

She also underscored the potential for greater engagement of the Israeli student community within the GPAI student network, fostering cross-border innovation and knowledge exchange.

The interaction concluded with both sides reaffirming their commitment to continued collaboration, building on the strong foundation established during Ms. Sherman’s tenure.

<https://cemca.org/news/col-cemca-felicitates-ms-maya-sherman-on-her-farewell-visit/>

COL-CEMCA Hosts NCVET Dual Recognition Handholding Workshop for Open Universities

COL-CEMCA organised the first of its Strategic Workshops for Open Universities (OUs), focusing on NCVET Dual Recognition Handholding, in New Delhi on 25 March 2026. The workshop brought together representatives from 14 Open Universities (OUs) to accelerate progress toward achieving Awarding Body status under the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET).

The day began with Dr. B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, highlighting the powerful role Open Universities play in expanding access, especially for underserved communities, and



Workshop in progress.

the urgent need to embed skilling, reskilling, and upskilling into their core mandate.



Group Photograph of the participants.

This was followed by Mr. Amit Sharma (Sr. Consultant, NCVET), who unpacked the NCVET frameworks, emphasising credit-based, flexible learning aligned with NEP 2020—and the opportunity for OUs to evolve into Awarding Bodies with stronger industry linkages.

A key moment came during the Application Audit, where universities openly discussed real bottlenecks:

- Industry validation challenges
- Complexity in application processes
- Limited institutional capacity
- Need for clearer guidance

The Technical Clinic session turned these challenges into action—featuring a live demo of the KaushalVerse platform, one-on-one counselling, and practical guidance on application process, qualifications, job roles, and compliance.

The workshop concluded with each university presenting a 30-day roadmap, toward achieving NCVET recognition with timelines and action plans to complete their applications.

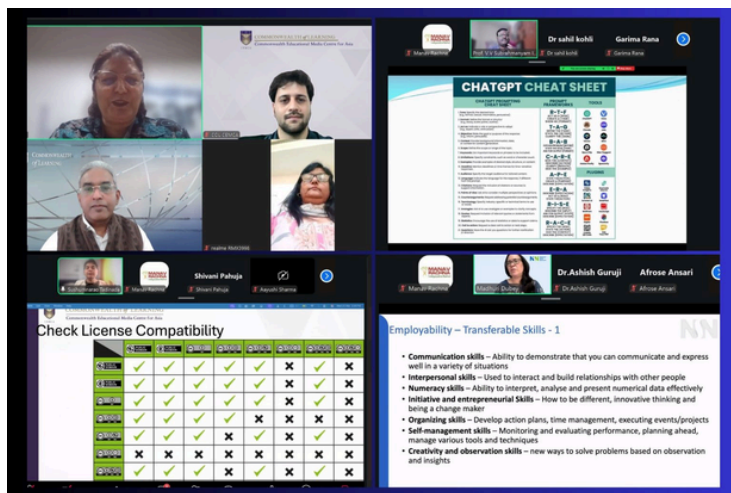
This is a significant step toward positioning Open Universities as key drivers of lifelong learning and employability in India.

[Click here for more details](#)

COL-CEMCA and MRIIRS Conduct FDP on Technology-enabled Learning and Blended Learning

COL-CEMCA in collaboration with Manav Rachna International Institute of Research & Studies (MRIIRS), conducted a five-day Online Faculty Development Programme (FDP) on “Empowering Higher Education Institutions in Technology-enabled and Blended Learning” from 23–27 March 2026, bringing together over 130 faculty members from HEIs across India.

The inaugural session featured insights from Dr. Pardeep Kumar, Pro Vice Chancellor, who highlighted the importance of faculty capacity building, institutional transformation, and the integration of technology to drive innovation and interdisciplinary learning.



Screenshots from the FDP.

In his address, Dr. B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, emphasised the evolving role of faculty—from knowledge transmitters to facilitators of learner success, employability, and lifelong learning—underscoring the need for learner-centred approaches in higher education.

Over five engaging days, participants explored:

- ✓ Salient Features of NEP 2020
- ✓ Technology-Enabled & Blended Learning (with game-based learning)
- ✓ OER, MOOCs & LMS integration

- ✓ AI in education with hands-on tools
- ✓ Graduate Employability & institutional action planning

The programme enabled faculty members to enhance their pedagogical practices, adopt innovative digital tools, and align academic delivery with real-world employability outcomes.

[Click here for more details](#)

Open Universities Pledge 12-Month Roadmap to Revolutionise Graduate Employability

In a decisive move to bridge the gap between academic degrees and workforce readiness, representatives from 15 OUs across India have committed to a rigorous one-year action plan to embed employability into the heart of distance education. The commitment follows a high-level, two-day workshop concluded on 27 March 2026, organised by COL-CEMCA. The meet transformed faculty members into “Graduate Employability (GE) Champions,” tasked with leading a systemic shift in how millions of distance learners transition into the professional world.

Moving beyond theoretical discussions, the university representatives formally pledged to a 12-month implementation roadmap. This commitment marks a departure from traditional “credential-only” education, with OUs now positioning themselves as regional hubs for skill development.

Key commitments made by the institutions include:

- ✓ Embedding employability modules directly into academic programmes.
- ✓ GE Champions will cascade training across campus-based HEIs and faculty networks at state level.



Group photograph of the participants.

- ✓ Continuous Skills Gap Analysis will ensure course alignment with evolving industry needs
- ✓ Adoption of new M&E frameworks will measure success by student employment rates rather degrees.

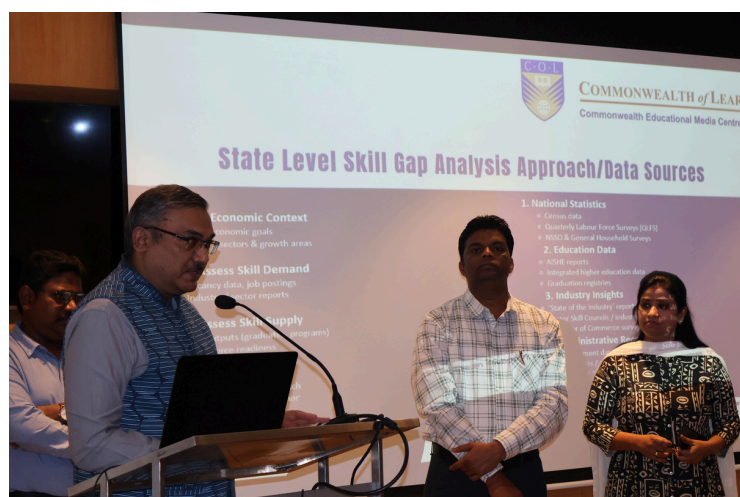
Dr. B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, challenged the representatives to view their roles through a new lens of accountability. He argued that the success of an Open University should be measured by its graduates’ ability to secure jobs or launch enterprises. “Universities must move beyond traditional credentialing,” Dr. Shadrach stated. “Employability should become a Key Performance Indicator (KPI). Success is measured not only by degrees awarded, but by graduates transitioning into meaningful employment or entrepreneurship.”



Glimpses from the workshop.

The workshop, facilitated by a panel of COL-CEMCA experts helped the OU representatives to consider their action plan for the 12-months. The roadmap focuses on micro-credentials and flexible learning pathways, allowing students to acquire industry-specific skills in real-time. By the end of the workshop, the 15 participating universities agreed to establish a permanent cohort of Lead Trainers. These individuals will receive ongoing mentorship over the next year to ensure the “employability-first” agenda is scaled effectively across the vast network of Indian Open Universities.

[Click here for more details](#)



Proceedings at the workshop.

COL-CEMCA Participation in Regional Events

A two-day International Conference on “Reimagining Open, Distance, Online Blended and Self-directed Learning: Innovations, Equity, and Impact in the Digital Era”, University of Jammu, 10-11 March 2026

At the Two-Day International Conference organised by the Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE), University of Jammu, Dr. B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, attended as Guest of Honour and chaired a plenary session. He noted that the global education landscape is increasingly becoming learner-centric, emphasising the need for educators to effectively integrate and coexist with emerging technologies. Highlighting the growing role of Artificial Intelligence in education and everyday life, Dr Shadrach, underscored the importance of adopting AI to support self-directed learners and enhance teaching-learning processes.

LIBWAY-2026: Science, Technology and Information in Libraries, 23 March 2026, Online

Dr. B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, delivered an online session on “Frugal AI for Libraries” at LIBWAY-2026: Science, Technology and Information in Libraries held on 23 March 2026. He emphasised that frugal AI focused on data, computational, and environmental efficiency which can enable libraries to adopt cost-effective, privacy-preserving, and locally deployable AI solutions. The session highlighted practical applications such as automated cataloguing, intelligent OCR for archives, and on-device AI tools, positioning libraries as key spaces for sustainable and inclusive AI innovation.



Technical Note: Reframing Lifelong Learning for Farmer (L3F)
Programmatic Directions for Lifelong Learning for Farmers

Access the full resource here:

<https://cemca.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Technical-Note-L3F.pdf>

UPCOMING EVENTS

10 April 2026

Empowering Community Radio Through Digital Innovation

COL-CEMCA and Reliance Foundation are organising a Capacity-Building Programme for Community Radio Stations (CRS).

11 April 2026

Working Session for the GPAI India Student Community

COL-CEMCA is organising a one-day workshop for the GPAI India Student Community at Essex Farms, New Delhi on 11 April 2026.

15-17 April 2026

Three-Day Workshop on Course Enhancement for Graduate Employability

COL-CEMCA is organising a three-day offline workshop on Course Enhancement for Graduate Employability with Jagat Guru Nanak Dev Punjab State Open University, Patiala.

23-24 April 2026

National Consultative Meeting for State Open Schools

COL-CEMCA is organising a two-day national consultative workshop for State Open School stakeholders on Vocationalisation of Open Schooling.

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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