



Three-day National Capacity Building Workshop on
Institutional OER Policy

Organized by
Commonwealth of Learning, Canada and
Commonwealth Educational media Centre for Asia, New Delhi

In collaboration with
Netaji Subhas Open University, Kolkata

REPORT

Venue
Netaji Subhas Open University, Kolkata
1-3 June, 2016

Introduction

In recent times the movement on use of Open Educational Resources (OER) has received momentum in India as the COL and CEMCA have taken initiatives to make the people aware of the potential impact of OER on higher education. The quality and standard of the resources should be maintained and it should be clearly defined where such resources would be kept. There should be clear cut Institutional policy on open educational resources to make the resources available to the public. Since there is no OER policy at the National level, the higher education institutions may develop their individual OER policies which would be “fit to their purpose”. The OER policy may help the higher education institutes specially the ODL institutes who develop the course materials for their students. The policy may differ from one institute to another according to their needs. Even a particular institute may use different types of licensing policy for different types of courses which may be decided by the respective faculty or dedicated OER Cell/Committee. The CEMCA, New Delhi is taking the leading role in developing Institutional OER policy in India.

Expected Learning Outcome of the Workshop

- Understanding OER and its role in Higher Education
- Developing constructive and flexible FAQs on the OER
- Appropriate implementation of Creative Common licenses in institutional educational resources
- Declaring institutional educational resources as OER materials
- Developing draft OER policy for individual higher learning institute
- Preparing strategic plan and action plan for implementation of OER policy

All the activities involved Group discussion, direct hands-on participation and involvement of the participants.

Participating Universities

The following ten Universities took part in the proceedings:

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad

Central University of Himachal Pradesh, HP

KK Handique State Open University, Assam

Odisha State Open University, Odisha

Pt. Sundarlal Sharma(Open) University, Chhattisgarh

Tamilnadu Open University, Tamilnadu

Uttarakhand Open University, Uttarakhand

UP Rajarshi Tandon Open University, UP

Yashwant Rao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, Maharashtra

Netaji Subhas Open University, West Bengal.

Workshop Facilitators

Professor Mohan Menon, Former Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Wawasan Open University, Malaysia and Former Chairman, NIOS, India

Dr. Manas R. Panigrahi, Programme Officer, CEMCA.

Workshop Coordinator

Dr. Anirban Ghosh, Associate Professor & Officer-in-Charge, School of Professional Studies, NSOU.

Workshop Proceedings

Day I:

Welcoming all to this important national workshop getting under way, **Dr. Anirban Ghosh, Officer-in-charge, School of Professional Studies, NSOU** appropriately set the tone of the deliberations to follow by putting things in the proper perspective defined by the fundamental mission of open education, namely, reaching the unreached which can never be dissociated from the public domain. The public domain is an inevitable and natural destination for open educational resources. The very phraseology implies its public character and thus its potential for impacting not only open education but also the conventional system indeed on a very wide scale. He referred to the World OER Congress held in 2012 and spoke of the absence of a national OER policy in this country. In the circumstances an open educational institution is left to its own devices as far as formulating its OER policy is concerned. For its part NSOU took the trouble to evolve its own OER policy and act on it. Dr. Ghosh expressed his hope that this workshop would break fresh ground in this area.

Dr. Manas R. Panigrahi, Programme Officer, CEMCA who spoke next, briefly presented the broad outlines of the main theme of the workshop. It was gratifying - he observed-that as many as nine open universities and one conventional were taking part in this workshop. Of these, at least one university had its draft policy ready while those of the others were at various stages of preparation. Dr. Panigrahi, for his part, wanted a single licensing system and concluded hoping that the draft policies would acquire a definite shape before the workshop ended.



The Guest of honour, **Dr. B. K. Bhadri, Assistant Education Advisor, MHRD, GOI** had a word of praise for the organizers—NSOU, COL and CEMCA. Dr. Bhadri drew attention to the phenomenon of ups and downs which characterize intake and enrolment in the arena of open education and is not to be observed in conventional education. According to him, this, among other things, clearly brought home to all the need for real hard work to achieve and having achieved, maintain high intake. The entire operational matrix of the education system is heading for a paradigm shift at present as a larger transforming shift is emerging in our lives chiefly due to rapid technological breakthroughs. Even in the emerging knowledge society, however, the universal goal of knowledge acquisition remains undiminished and increases. OER policy, Dr. Bhadri felt, would be but another means to achieve this goal which would bring in its wake a transformation of old attitudes and sensibilities. He touched on the different components of OER

which, in his view, is intended to offer a level learning field to learners and accelerate learning and pedagogical delivery in an ODL environment which could be best summed up as 3A— anyone anytime anywhere learning—apparently child’s play but more challenging and complex below the surface. The learning materials should have a high degree of consistency and be able to promote a sense of connectivity among learners pursuing the Distance mode, he added. He also stated that “OER as Anirban has pointed out right now in his discourse is differently understood in different institutes. There is no national policy behind OER so OER policy has to be unified, it has to be a uniform one and the open distance learning institutes should go hand in hand with the conventional universities so that we can come into a synergy of OER policy involving both institutions which run the distance education type of education on the one hand and the conventional type of education on the other, so we can actually move ahead towards that particular domain and that would definitely give us the perfect form of blended learning in our country.”

For his part, **Shri Siladitya Basu Roy, Joint Secretary, Dept. of Higher Education, Government of West Bengal** wished the workshop all success and assured the assembly that his government would go all the way with NSOU as far as the formulation of an effective OER policy was concerned.

Retracing the path taken by ODL initiatives in the beginning of open education in the country, **Professor Mohan B. Menon**, Education Specialist and internationally known authority on open education, observed that the focus of all efforts was concentrated on courseware development in all directions. Thus their own learning materials were developed by a number of state open Universities in the first powerful flush of enthusiasm. In the backdrop of the recent enormous expansion of ODL, however, OER emerges as a prime, inescapable necessity. Open licensing is more suitable and flexible than other systems, adaptable to various pedagogical needs and environments and contexts. Each University being unique with its peculiar needs in its own context, strategically contextualizing all the educational resources it can have. Two things may happen in the process. First, capacity increases incrementally. Secondly, the ODL matrix— operating through ups and downs - always challenges innovation since practice leads to policy as often as policy leads to practice.

In the interval which followed after Prof. Menon spoke, a course material blending print and audio-visual elements on Tailoring & Dress Designing developed with the financial assistance from CEMCA was released on this occasion by the School of Professional Studies, NSOU and copies were presented to the dignitaries.



Delivering the presidential address, **Professor Subha Sankar Sarkar, Vice-Chancellor, NSOU** also referred to the goal of implementing an OER policy—a priority arising out of the current stage through which ODL is passing in the country which is poised for a staggering quantum leap in education in its totality. In this scene of widening educational priorities and slow growing available options in the conventional mode, stepping up the gross enrolment ratio to 30% by 2020 is an inevitable and awesome challenge which has to be met. In spite of the fluctuations normally associated with it, ODL is the mode which can at least partly resolve the crisis and convert the intimidating challenge into a wonderful opportunity. Taking up the internal issues in the ODL arena Prof. Sarkar observed that the DEB which is an adjunct of UGC wants to reshape ODL Universities in the conventional mould. The question of an ODL institution acquiring 12B status or ranking has to be viewed in this complicated context. Meanwhile the DECI bill is awaiting the nod of Parliament. The basics of open education certainly imply an outreach of the OER variety as each of the three legs of the ODL tripod has an inescapable OER angle and implication, be it personal contact programme, ICT enabled student support services or self-learning materials. There's no national policy as yet, each institution has to fend for itself. Hence, uniformity is desirable. For its part NSOU has adopted an open license template-CC-BY-NC-ND for the ITC-enabled courses. OER impacts both open and conventional learning in diverse ways—opening up the possibilities of blended learning involving both the open and conventional modes. That would be so much the better as ODL by itself still attracts hostile untouchability. OER is the great leveler which has a stratified licensing regime covering areas in terms of which an OER policy is to be evolved. An effective policy should be able to answer questions such as: can we commercialize, translate or develop derivatives? The public domain, inextricable from OER, is the best place to learn as it involves all and sundry, doesn't discriminate and merges the individual learner along with countless others in the wider learning world. Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa Dev unerringly stated the heart of the matter when he observed, of course on a different occasion: "When shall I be? When I and mine vanish."

The first session of this workshop was taken over by Dr. Manas R. Panigrahi, one of the facilitators by outlining the flow of action and expected outcome. In this session one participant from each University presented their institutional profile along with their OER activities.

Annex I: PPTs of Institutional Profile (Folder attached)



After completion of these presentations by the representatives of participating Universities, Professor Menon suggested the listing of relevant terminologies as much as possible on OER to

frame FAQs in respect to institutional OER policy for its adoption and implementation. A standard template was elaborately discussed by Professor Menon and it was circulated among the participants along with few OER materials through mail IDs.

A template of institutional OER policy was also circulated for giving an idea of the proposed institutional OER policy. The facilitators requested all the participants to draw a draft policy following the template suitable for their institutions.

Day-II:

The 2nd day began with the formation of groups to prepare FAQs with respect to institutional OER policy. 15 minutes were allowed to frame the FAQs. One representative from each group of four presented a short list of probable FAQs which was disseminated through dedicated google group entitled *Institutional OER framing Group_CEMCA/ COL& NSOU*. Henceforth, each and every resource would be distributed through this group. In post lunch session, representatives from each university presented a draft OER policy which was critically analyzed by the Facilitators and improvements were suggested where ever required.

Annex II: Proposed FAQs on OER (updated upto 16/6/16)



In the post lunch session, representatives from each university presented a draft OER policy which were critically analyzed by the Facilitators with suggestions where required. Details of the draft OER policy presented by the representative from each university are given in Annex-III.

Annex III: Draft Institutional OER Policy (Folder attached)

Day-III:

On the final day, Dr. Panigrahi explained the terms-strategic plan, Action plan and accomplishment of goals very lucidly. He stressed upon preparing a strategic plan and action plan which could be drawn for the next year. For implementing any course of action we need a strategy which may bridge the gaps in achieving the target. On the basis of the demonstration given by Dr. Panigrahi, the participants from each university presented their Draft Strategic Plan and the Action plan by which the goal could be achieved.

Annex IV: Draft Strategic Plan & Action Plan (Folder attached)

At the end Dr. Anirban Ghosh, Workshop Coordinator from Netaji Subhas Open University placed a summary of the proceedings of the 3-day workshop. In the valedictory Address Prof. Yoginder Verma, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Central University of Himachal Pradesh said that OER is

the future of the higher education system taking into consideration the costs of printing text books and sharing knowledge. The quality of the resources available to all in the public domain should be strictly maintained. This would be the major focus area of the OERs. Dr. Ashit Baran Aich, Registrar (Acting), NSOU reiterated that the OER would replace the text book concept in days to come. Before the conclusion the participants expressed their satisfaction regarding the



proceedings of the 3-day workshop and also conveyed thanks to the organizers for the hospitality provided to them in Kolkata.



Recommendations






As a result of the fruitful and interactive sessions which characterized the 3-day workshop, the following recommendations were made:






- All the higher education institutions in India may adopt and implement the OER policy to get the benefit of OER,
- The licensing policy may differ in terms of forms and formats and from one course to another in the same Institution,
- The HE Institutions may develop their own OER Repository on an appropriate platform by using FOSS based software,
- To organize more such interactive and participatory workshops to follow up on the activities undertaken in the present workshop,
- The development of OER in the local languages may be encouraged,
- Institutions may declare an interoperable metadata schema to organise OER materials in order to share OERs in inter-university environment and
- Institutional OER repository's user interface should have user-friendly environment to retrieve required document.



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Released under:



NSOU & CEMCA

June 2016

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