

Launch of Wikieducator: India Chapter

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India International Centre , New Delhi

Report By Rukmini Vemraju

November 15, 2008 was a special day for proponents of open education resources and knowledge sharing as the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) formally launched the Wikieducator: India Chapter by Honorable Member of Parliament and renowned Agriculturist and Social Reformist, Professor M.S.Swaminathan in the presence of Shri Jainder Singh Secretary, Department of Information Technology, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.

The event was supported by Global knowledge Partnerships –South Asia, One World South Asia and Acharya Narendra Dev College, whose Principal, Dr.Savithri Singh is a Wiki Council member.

The event started on a high note, by connecting live with Dr.Wayne Mackintosh, Education Specialist from Vancouver Canada who made a presentation on the philosophy and genesis of wikieducator and interacted with the august gathering via Skype.

Welcoming the delegates, Dr.Sreedher, Director, CEMCA, reaffirmed COL –CEMCA’s commitment to knowledge sharing and promoting the use of free and open source software.

Ms.Gita Bharadwaj, representing One World South Asia highlighted the significance of collaborative content creation and knowledge sharing among learning communities. OWSA lend support to the content creation of wiki language pages.

Supplementing Wayne Mackintosh’s overview, Dr. Savithri Singh made a comprehensive presentation that further traced the progress of wikieducator, showcased the learning for content initiatives and projects and provided several useful wikieducator links.

Shri Jainder Singh, Secretary, Department of IT, noted the apparently extraordinary trend of “Giving Knowledge for Free”, touching upon some aspects and programs which would enhance the usefulness of free content. Elaborating the “National Roll Out Plan”, Project of Technology Development for Indian Languages (TDIL) he spoke of content generation and management

tools such as Multilingual Dictionary and Content Management Tools in Indian Languages that have been developed which can be downloaded from Indian Language Data Centre Website <http://www.ildc.gov.in> and the ambitious Government project to establish a hundred thousand village Internet kiosks.

Presenting the key note address, Professor M.S.Swaminathan, underscored the importance of harnessing ODL technologies like wikieducator among others, along with traditional methods to ensure that the fruits of knowledge reached everyone equitably. He observed that despite several endowments and laudable programmes like Food for All, Education for All, we continue to have huge backlogs in reaching the last mile. The education system, with its rigid methods of selection, creates “push-outs” from the system, rather than “drop-outs”, he observed. Flexibility in education, that allows learners to overcome their initial handicaps are needed he said and noted the role ODL technologies can play in this regard. He observed that flexible education systems can better address the Three 3 Cs, content, connectivity and capacity and provide dynamic and demand driven knowledge to people. He appreciated the wikieducator concept of “social software” that denoted the ease with people can adapt to it.

Professor Swaminathan formally inaugurated the wikieducator India Page and displayed the language pages. Language pages were created in Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil, Hindi and Gujarati.

Avid wiki enthusiasts, Mr.Anil Prasad, Nodal Officer, Government of Kerala, Professor Ramkrishnan Srinivasan, Department of English, Sri JCBM College, Sringeri, and Wikieducator Council member Dr.Pankaj Khare, Director, International Division, IGNOU, participated in the launch event.

The session ended with an interactive question and answer session and Ms.Rukmini Vemraju, Programme Officer, proposed a formal vote of thanks.