



# Newsletter

of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia

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## From Director's Desk

**W**e are happy to present to you the May 2015 issue of CEMCA Newsletter, and thank you for the appreciation

provided for the January Issue. This issue has a guest column by Prof Ormond Simpson examining how the distance education institutions are moving towards online modes of educational delivery. You can read about Maldives National University in the 'Spotlight On' section. Flicker of Farmer: Digital Green narrates how rural communities are being empowered and improving their livelihoods through knowledge exchange. Under Technology Tracking, we bring to you the Do It Yourself tips on creating Android based Apps through the App Inventor. Further, you will learn about SkillsRec Model which uses the Latent Semantic Analysis to identify learner skills through semantically analyzing teacher competencies and learner interests. Finally, in the 'Successful Media And Research Techniques (SMART) Tips' section you can learn about how to maintain fluency in academic and report writing.

With June 2015, our current Three Year Plan (2012-15) is coming to an end. When we look back at these three years, we feel happy in reporting to you, our esteemed reader, that we were able to achieve almost all our targets, even in some cases we exceeded. The focus of our activities is course development, capacity building, quality assurance, development of toolkits, and development of open and distance learning (ODL), information and communications technology (ICT) and open educational resources (OER) policy. Collaborative

partnerships were created in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

An Industry linked course on Sound Assistant was launched in collaboration with NIOS. OER based eLearning was adopted by Uttarakhand Open University, India; Open University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka; and Wawasan Open University, Malaysia. A Community of Practice platform has been put in practice for ICT integration. An innovative Media Wiki extension for OER quality has been developed. We are working with AIOU, Pakistan on creating skills based courses. We helped initiating policy level intervention at Maldives, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Maldives Broadcasting Commission is working on policy on community broadcasting as a result of our initiatives. The DIET Teacher Educators of Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh were benefited from ICT integrated teacher education programmes. Initiatives were undertaken on mobile educational app development. This is just a glimpse of our activities carried out to meet the planned outcomes.

In our Six Year Plan (2015-21) we shall continue helping Commonwealth Asian member countries to improve the scope, scale and quality of teaching and learning at all levels through the use of media and educational technologies to extend and improve educational systems.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue. We welcome your comments and feedback on what you would like to be in the future issues of the Newsletter. We also encourage you to be a contributor of articles, research and media tips and news on ICT and OER happening in your region.

With best wishes  
**Ramesh C. Sharma**



## My car is my Bond...

By Prof. Ormond Simpson

Many years ago when I was a student in the UK, I was a member of the Bond Minicar Club. The Bond Minicar had no connection with the dashing fictional secret agent of that name James Bond; it was a response to the need to provide the cheapest possible form of transport in a Britain that was still in post-war austerity. It was a tiny three-wheeled two-seater car with a 175 cc motorcycle engine based on the single front wheel. It had a top speed of about 45 mph downhill with a following wind. The motto of the Bond Minicar Club was - not surprisingly - 'Festina Lente', Latin for 'Hasten slowly'.

I often think of that motto when I read yet another article about the future of distance education and the Internet. What I think concerns me is the speed at which some distance institutions are moving towards very largely online modes. I understand for instance that those two giants of the Asian distance education scene, the Indira Ghandi National Open University and the Open University of China, are both moving in that direction.

### Moving into e-teaching

Of course many other distance institutions are moving into e-teaching (I don't like to use the term e-learning. What distance institutions are doing is e-teaching. E-learning is what students are doing. It can be a mistake to confuse proposed means with hoped-for-ends. Such a confusion is what the philosopher Gilbert Ryle would have called a 'category error' - befuddling two things that are essentially different).

The concern for me about e-teaching is that it is not clear just how effective it is as yet, nor whether it increases student access, or even saves money. Take my old institution the UK Open University for example. Since it started to move into e-teaching its graduation rate has dropped from around 40% down to about 13%. In addition it is now failing to reach the more than 20% of the UK population that does not have household broadband internet access. Finally, it has recently started running a financial deficit. Whilst there must be many factors



responsible for these declines, it does suggest that 'pure' e-teaching or online education has not been a huge success for the UKOU.

### One exception

Curiously there is one Asian distance university that has not yet moved to pure online education. It is the Korean National Open University (KNOU). Whilst South Korea has household internet access of 97% and a broadband speed of 82Mbps (compared with example with the UK's 80% access and 29Mbps) it nevertheless still requires its students to experience some compulsory face-to-face (f2f) teaching at the beginning of its courses. As the KNOU introductory 2014 guideline manual for freshmen states:

"To overcome limitations in distant education and to encourage interactions between faculty members and students and also among students, KNOU requires its freshmen through juniors to take face to face classes for three courses, and seniors are required to take face to face classes for three courses at their regional campuses (*generally students are supposed to take 6 courses a semester - author*). These face to face classes are held consecutively for two or three days in a semester and there are tests at the end of the classes."

The decision to retain some f2f teaching was also partly made on the results of a student survey. In the survey KNOU students responded that they valued the f2f sessions mostly because of difficulties in understanding study materials on their own. They also wanted to overcome feelings of isolation from studying alone. Some 50% felt the current proportion of f2f sessions was appropriate whilst another 40% wanted more of them.

### Other institutions' concerns

The KNOU approach is similar to that of a much smaller institution, the Dublin City University Connected (DCU Connected) in Ireland which offers students the options of all tutorials f2f, all tutorials online or a mixture of both. Due to concerns about socialisation, they insist *new* students take the 'mixture' option. They are greatly concerned about the future of f2f teaching as they find that there is not the level of online interaction in online classrooms that one gets in f2f classes and, as mentioned previously, they are concerned about socialisation between students. There are other distance institutions such as



German FernUniversität where teaching is based on a blended learning concept with written study materials, ICT and media and f2f teaching and learning. There are compulsory seminars and optional tutorials or other supportive events and lectures. The FernUniversität certainly intends to maintain its f2f teaching programme.

### How good are the students?

In addition to my concerns about the effectiveness of pure e-teaching I wonder about how good students are at e-learning. There has long been a belief in distance education institutions that young people brought up in the age of the internet (the 'Google Generation') have a high level of skills in using the Web for learning. However a report commissioned by the UK Joint Information Systems Committee (Rowlands et al, 2008) claims that although young people demonstrate an ease and familiarity with computers, 'they rely on the most basic search tools and do not possess the critical and analytical skills to assess the information that they find on the web'. The report suggests that 'research-behaviour traits that are commonly associated with younger users – impatience in search and navigation, and zero tolerance for any delay in satisfying their information needs – are now the norm for all age-groups, from younger pupils and undergraduates through to professors'.

A more recent study from Spain (Garcia, Escofet and Gros, 2013) also found that 'although most university students have a basic set of technological abilities, these do not necessarily translate into sophisticated skills in the use of other technologies or information literacy in

general'. I do not know of any studies of Asian students' e-learning skills, but it would seem to be an area that any institution should check out before going too far down the online education route.

In addition there is some evidence that students prefer a blended approach rather than pure e-learning. Miliszewska (2007) found that students preferred a blended model of teaching to an exclusively online approach. Similarly Shaker and Hu (2008) found that students offered f2f and online teaching, were more satisfied than students just offered online teaching. Distance institutions ignore their student preferences at their peril.



### 'Festina lente'

My old Bond minicar had some curious characteristics apart from its lack of speed. For instance it didn't have a reverse gear. So I'm not saying that distance institutions should reverse their moves into e-teaching. But I am suggesting that institutions should not be too seduced by technophilia (love of

technology) and educational fashion. They should not continue to rush into e-teaching without some very careful research. Moves into e-teaching should be carefully monitored and evaluated step by step for their effects on student retention and dropout. And in particular, institutions should maintain other forms of contact with their students whether by phone or f2f or other methods.

For my old Bond minicar had two other characteristics. One was a tendency to catch fire at unfortunate moments. The very last time that happened to me was next to a police box where it had to be finally abandoned.

The other characteristic arose from the fact that the engine was mounted entirely on the front wheel which gave the car the ability to turn through a 90° angle. Unfortunately, this sometimes

meant that the throttle cable got trapped, with the result that the car would start spinning faster and faster on the same spot. Now distance institutions aren't going to catch fire if they move into e-teaching. But the image of an institution spinning around uselessly on the same spot may not be too far-fetched to describe an institution which doesn't proceed very carefully in this new internet world.

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# Spotlight On...

## Maldives National University

By Mr. Ningreikhan Wungkhai and Ms. Rimi Chakravorty



The Maldives is an island nation in the Indian Ocean. The Maldives is widely known for its beautiful landscape, open beaches, blue lagoons and wide-ranging reefs and its capital, Malé, is a well-known tourist destination, famous for the 17th-century Hukuru Miskiy also known as Old Friday Mosque that is made of coral stone, along with exquisite restaurants, crowded fish market, and shops on Majeedhee Magu. Maldives National University (MNU) is the first university in this island nation. Established in the year 1998 as Maldives College of Higher Education (MCHE) and later opened as Maldives National University in 2011.

The emergence of Maldives National University as what we know today has come a long way from 1973 conjuring a change of names. Before the establishment of MCHE in 1998, the institute was known as Allied Health Services Training Centre since 1973. During the initial period of MCHE, the institute played a vital role in restructuring and rationalization of every post secondary education that is running

under the government of the Maldives. No doubt, MCHE is the lone public degree-granting institute of the nation since it offers various degrees and diplomas starting from engineering to management, education, health, science, tourism and more. The institution

supports both long-term studies as well as the short-term studies. MNU, in 1999 introduced a tertiary institute for open learning to encourage distance education and the Institute for Shari'ah and Law was established. The first University degree programme was introduced in 2000 that was Bachelor of Arts in Dhivehi Language.

The vision and mission of this university are to promote prolific education and become an outstanding academic institution and one that is most sought after in the country and the region. The deeper meaning of the university's mission lies somewhere in the confidence to create, to discover, to preserve and to

disseminate knowledge and skills, which are quintessential to develop the essence of culture and livelihood of the people. The university also symbolizes and envisages the enhancement of the social and economic structure of the modern society along with an ambition to keep the nation free and Islamic forever. The mission of the University is also enshrined in the University Act in Dhivehi.

The University is sagaciously administered under the watchful eye of the Council comprising of the Academic Senates having the Chancellor of the University, Dr. Mohamed Zahir Hussain as the Chairperson, while the position of the Executive Head is shouldered upon Dr. Hassan Hameed, Vice Chancellor of the University.

Since its inception, the University has been collaborating with many foreign universities and organisations for development of programmes. The Centre for Open Learning (COL) of the Maldives National University and UNICEF signed a memorandum of understanding endeavored to promote master programme of arts in social policy in 2012. The course was initially started in June 2013 in collaboration with COL, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka and Open University of Philippines with an objective to enhance the government and private sectors policy makers in solving the prevailing issues within the Maldivian communities.

The University signed another Memorandum of Understanding with the Yunnan Open University (YNOU) of







China in 2013 to established Chinese Language Learning Centre. Under this agreement, MNU will have access to the Yunnan Open University Chinese Language Teaching Platform and their online courses whereas Yunnan Open University will send Chinese Language Lecturers to teach in the face-to-face classes at the Faculty of Arts. The Vice President, Yunnan Open University, Mr. Li Congxi, and Vice Chancellor of The Maldives National University, Dr. Hassan Hameed signed the MOU in a ceremony at the University.

The University has recently formulated an institutional policy for open and distance learning through a two-day seminar on ODL held from August 18-19, 2014 at Maldives National University. The policy of ODL was for the first time formulated for the Maldives at the

presence of the Vice Chancellor at the closing ceremony of the seminar. Professor Uma Coomaraswamy, former Vice Chancellor of the Open University of Sri Lanka and Honorary Fellow of the

Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada formulated the institutional policy on ODL for the University. The objective of the Centre for Open Learning (COL) is to encourage the university to expand their provision of quality and accessible higher education across the country. Just before the two-day seminar, the Centre announced the establishment of outreach centers in R. Dhuvafaru and GN. Fuvahmulah under the University with an ambition to provide easy and less

expensive but equitable education through open and distance learning. In the recent past, the Centre announced undergraduate and post graduates degree programmes. It offers bachelor of education, bachelor of



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nursing and master of arts in social policy. Programmes concentrated only in the campus of MNU are now conducted at other atolls and islands under the provision of the Centre for expanding education in the country.

The Maldives National University's library for the first time organized an outreach programme in 2014 with an aim to develop social responsibilities within the university staff, to organize and transform the existing library for children of all age groups, and to promote readership incorporating with fun and activities. The programme was held at Vilimale' Kudakudhinge Hiya.

Recently, a research scholar of University of Southampton, Laurens Speelman presented at the University about his research findings on the migration processes in the Maldives. In his findings, he explored the behaviour of the migration in the Maldives during the late 1885 until 2006 based on the demographic and social economy of the island nation.

The Maldives National University offers a wide range of academic programmes under the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Engineering Technology, Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, MNU Business School, Faculty of Shari'ah and Law, Faculty of Science, Centre for Maritime Studies, Centre for Open Learning, and Foundation Studies.

The Maldives National University, hitherto, has been playing a vital role by imparting open resource learning, modern education in conjunction with technology and management in different atolls and islands of the Maldives. For further information, please follow the link <http://www.mnu.edu.mv>

## Orientation Workshop on Science for Women's Health and Nutrition



An orientation workshop on Science for Women's Health and Nutrition (SFWHN) was organized by the National Council of Science and Technology Communication

(NCSTC), Department of Science and Technology, Government of India in collaboration with Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), New Delhi on April 30 and May 01, 2015. CEMCA Director, Dr. Ramesh Sharma in his welcome address explained the activities of CEMCA. Dr. Ankuran Dutta, Programme Officer (CEMCA), highlighted the agenda of the programme and congratulated the NCSTC and community radio stakeholders on the completion of 10 years of the project. Dr. R. Shreedher, former Director, CEMCA delivered his remarks on the project and gave a road map on SFWHN. He reiterated the pivotal role rendered by community radios in empowering indigenous women folks at the grassroots level. Ms. Ujjawala Tircky, Scientist 'F' of NCSTC gave details of the project and enumerated the activities of the NCSTC

and DST with the community radio stations of India. She praised CEMCA for initiating such programme as it brings the two organisations under one pedestal working together for the development of community radio. As many as 13 community radio representatives across India were present at the orientation workshop having their action plan to implement the project.

The orientation laid greater focus on topics like, history and the present scenario of CR, baseline studies and content development, and capacity building. Ms. D. Rukmini Vemraju, Ms. Shirley Deepak, and Ms. Jayalakshmi Chittor made presentations on the baseline study and content development. In the workshop representatives from Community Radio Association and Media for Community Foundation discussed about the capacity building of the community radio stations for the SFWHN. Ms. Lalita and Ms. Shanta Koshti, representatives from two community radio stations, Hamara MSPICM, Solan and Rudi No Radio, Ahmedabad shared their experiences with community radio stations and how it does run smoothly.

## Workshop for Teacher Educators of Himachal Pradesh

A three day workshop was organized by CEMCA, New Delhi in collaboration with the Faculty of Education, Central University of Himachal Pradesh, Dharamshala where 27 teacher educators from District Institute of Education and Training (DIETs) in Himachal Pradesh were provided training on various web tools; free educational software and components of basic computer literacy.

This workshop is in furtherance of CEMCA's engagements in Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Madhya Pradesh towards building a strong Communities of Practice (CoP) for ICT integrated teacher education and intends to build and strengthen teacher educators' capacities to integrate ICTs into teacher-education, focus on their professional development; and leverage the CoP platform to create an environment of collaboration; and to assist teacher educators to develop and use digital libraries/OERs through critical perspectives on technology and its use in education.

The teacher educators were introduced to the CoP platform and its features including access to resources, mailing groups etc.,

and the participants were also exposed to the theoretical and the application part of the basics of the ICT along with orientation and provision of hands-on experience on curriculum planning, instructional design, content delivery, student assessment, trends in online education. They were also provided with knowledge of using social media platforms, along with preparing teaching content by using Audio/Podcasts/ Video/Vodcasts.

This workshop was facilitated by Dr. Pankaj Khare, IGNOU, New Delhi and Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi, Programme Officer, CEMCA. A session on KOER and CoP was conducted over video conferencing by Mr. Gurumurthy from IT for Change (ITfC), Bengaluru.





## Workshop on Educational Mobile App Development Toolkit

A workshop on 'Educational (Android) App Development Toolkit' was hosted by CEMCA, New Delhi on behalf of Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada in collaboration with Kulachi Hansraj Model School (KHMS), New Delhi, from 18-20 March, 2015; that was attended by 25 participants from 15 schools of Delhi/NCR.

Dr. Ishan Abeywardena, Director, International Academic Relations Division, Open University of Sri Lanka facilitated this three day workshop. "Educators all across the globe are collaboratively working for providing better education to the students who are the future of this global world," said Ms. Sneha Verma, Principal, KHMS in her address and welcomed the participants for attending the workshop.



While expressing gratitude to Ms. Verma for accepting the proposal for hosting the workshop, Dr. Ramesh Sharma, Director, CEMCA also encouraged the participants to learn new ICT applications and integrate them in their teaching. The participants created their App Inventor account and set up their Android devices for development and debugging. Teachers enjoyed using the basic components viz. Text to Speech App, Accelerometer App, Speech Recogniser App, Canvas App, Pet the Kitty, Dice Rolling, Swat Mosquito, Storyboard etc. Teachers also learnt about packaging, distributing and publishing an app on Google Play store.

## Workshops on Open Educational Resources for Development (ROER4D)



Two research workshops on 'Open Educational Resources for Development' were organized by CEMCA from March 2-5, 2015 and March 7-10, 2015 respectively at Machilipatnam (Andhra Pradesh) and Bhubaneswar (Odisha).

These workshops were organized in collaboration with Krishna University, Machilipatnam and Centurion University of Technology and Management, Bhubaneswar as part of CEMCA's research project "Teachers' Attitudes, Motivations and conceptions of Quality and Barriers to Open Educational Resources in India" supported by IDRC, Canada.

Urging the teachers to adopt OERs in their teaching learning, Prof. V. Venkaiah, Vice Chancellor, Krishna University presided the inaugural session, followed by the speech of Chief Guest Prof. V.S. Prasad former Director of NAAC, Bengaluru who

highlighted the opportunities and challenges of OERs. This workshop was attended by thirty faculty members of the University.

The workshop at Centurion University of Technology and Management, Bhubaneswar, Odisha also became a part of the global events since it was being conducted during the Open Education Week 2015. Prof. Chandrabhanu Pattanayak, Director, Institute of Knowledge Societies presided over the inaugural function after which Prof. Mukti Kanta Mishra, President, Centurion University of Technology and Management addressed the core issues regarding knowledge sharing, producing thought leaders and action leaders, and rendering service to the society which is quantifiable, sustainable and replicable. He further opined that the teachers should be more competent in order to make use of OER in their teaching-learning context. Thirty-three faculty members participated in this workshop.

Both the workshops saw Dr. Ramesh Sharma, Director, CEMCA, explaining the objectives of these research workshops; after which Dr. Sanjaya Mishra, Education Specialist (eLearning), Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada, provided an overview of the four days programme and the methodology adopted for the research workshop.



## Capacity Building Workshop on OER and launch of CEMCA's eLearning Programme

CEMCA in collaboration with OER Cell, School of Computer Science & IT, Uttarakhand Open University (UOU), Haldwani (Nainital) organized a Capacity Building 'hands-on training' workshop on OER from February 18-19, 2015 that was attended by 30 participants representing different schools of UOU.

For professional development of the higher education teachers in Uttarakhand, an OER-based eLearning programme developed by CEMCA was also formally launched at the inaugural session of the workshop by UOU. The main objectives of this workshop were the promotion of OER in designing new courses in the University along with provision of hands-on training to the UOU faculty members development of OER materials.

"We can make available the high quality OER based study material to the students at distant places befitting the different geographical situation of the state," said Prof. Subhash Dhuliya, Vice Chancellor of UOU. He further added, "We have already reached the unreached through EduSAT, Community Radio and online programmes, thus imparting education to the unreached where no other Institution has reached as yet."

With an intention to provide online quality study material to not only UOU students but other Hindi speaking universities as well, Prof. Dhuliya stated that most of UOU study materials are in Hindi. Appreciating Prof. Dhuliya's idea, Dr. R. C. Sharma, Director, CEMCA, stated



that in the present era the ODL through modern technologies is benefitting higher education sector and the UOU can serve the students of the region with greater impact with the use of ICT. Dr. Ramesh Sharma later took a session on the development and designing of instructional materials using Wiki and Creative Commons platform, followed by a brief by Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi, Programme Officer, CEMCA about the two day workshop highlighting the significance, objectives and explaining about the Creative Commons licenses.

## Community Radio Video Challenge 2015

The Community Radio Video Challenge (CRVC) 2015 was announced by CEMCA in association with UNESCO and Apeejay Institute of Mass communication, New Delhi for the students of Indian media schools with an objective to engage the Indian youth in Community Radio (CR).

This three minutes video challenge themed "Community Radio: Citizens' Voices, Empowering Societies,"

Empowering Societies" also aims at promoting a sense of understanding and importance of CR as an alternative media for community's self-expression, learning and development.

*Students' Participation Invited*  
**CEMCA-UNESCO**  
**COMMUNITY RADIO VIDEO CHALLENGE**  
 (Short Film on Community Radio)

**Theme of the Film: Community Radio: Citizens' Voices, Empowering Societies**

First prize (One): ₹ 30,000	Duration: Upto 3 minutes	Upload your film on <a href="http://crvc.cemca.org.in">http://crvc.cemca.org.in</a>
Second prize (Two): ₹ 20,000		
Third prize (Five): ₹ 10,000	Last Date of Submission: 30 April 2015	Students can submit film in any video formats
Certificate of Merit (Five): ₹ 5,000 each		

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Open to students in Indian education institutions, the CRVC will be judged by an eminent jury consisting of distinguished artists, media professionals, and CR practitioners who will also review the submissions and the best videos will be awarded by CEMCA and UNESCO in June 2015. For detail, visit <http://crvc.cemca.org.in>



## World Radio Day observed in New Delhi



The World Radio Day was observed by UNESCO, New Delhi and CEMCA at the UN Conference Hall, New Delhi on February 13, 2015 with launch of the *South Asia Network on Community Media*. Further, studies on *Innovation in the Community Radio*, a CEMCA initiative and *Internal Migration: A Manual for Community Radios*, a UNESCO initiative were also released.

The session opened with remarks by Mr. Shigeru Aoyagi, Director and UNESCO Representative to Bhutan, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka and Dr. Ramesh Sharma, Director, CEMCA, followed by a keynote address by Mr. Jawahar Sircar, Chief Executive Officer, Prasar Bharati, the Broadcasting Corporation of India.

The panel discussion on 'Community Radio and Social Inclusion' was opened by Mr. Pete Tridish, Community Radio Activist and Founder, Prometheus Radio Project, USA and was moderated by Prof. Vinod Pavarala, Chairholder, UNESCO Chair on Community Media at University of Hyderabad.

Mr. Indrajeet Grewal, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India; Ms Archana Kapoor, Secretary General, Community Radio Association; Mr N Ramakrishnan, Executive Director, Ideosync Media Combine; Ms Marina Faetanini, Programme Specialist (SHS), UNESCO New Delhi, and Prof. Biswajit Das, Founding Director, Centre for Culture, Media and Governance, Jamia Milia Islamia shared their views in the panel. Dr. Ankuran Dutta of CEMCA and Mr. Anirban Sarma from UNESCO coordinated this event.

## CEMCA organized National Workshop on Web Radio in Sri Lanka



CEMCA in collaboration with Sri Lanka Development Journalists' Forum (SDJF), Colombo and Post Graduate Institute of Agriculture (PGIA) at the University of Peradeniya, Kandy organized a national level workshop on Web Radio from February 9-11, 2015. Twenty participants attended the workshop representing different universities and community organisations.

Professor W. A. D. P. Wanigasundera explained the objectives and importance of such training for improving the ICT facilities in Sri Lanka. Dr. Ankuran Dutta in his welcoming address elucidated the community radio status in the south Asian region and initiatives took place in Sri Lanka in 1980's and how web radio can supplement the crisis of voice poverty. The workshop was inaugurated by the Director of PGIA Professor S. Samitha. Mr. Kapil Dadheech of Gram Vaani gave an overview on the workshop followed by vote of thanks from Mr. M. C. Rasmin, the Director of SDJF. In the workshop, Mr. Kapil Dadheech played the role of key resource person and Mr. Malinda Kumarasinha of Open University of Sri Lanka, Mr. Madhawa Perera of National Science Foundation, Colombo and Dr. Dutta as the resources persons. Mr. Rasmin thanked CEMCA, PGIA and all the participants for made the workshop a success.

## WOU launches its first Open Online Course

The Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on "OER in eLearning" and "Action Research" launch seminar was organised by the Wawasan Open University (WOU), Penang, Malaysia under

auspices of the WOU Seminar Forum to highlight its entirely online courses offered from February 2015 under its Centre for Professional Development & Continuing Education (PACE).

The launch seminar was held on January 29, 2015 at the main campus of WOU with 35 academic staff participants and with support from Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and its regional centre CEMCA.

Reflecting on the 50 years history of distance education, WOU Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan called for caution in the face of all the hype and suggested some pros and cons and a checklist of claims before deciding on MOOCs. "How difficult it has been to bring distance education from side stream to main stream. Yet MOOCs has become main stream overnight!" he further added.

While the pros were listed to be – free accessibility, courses presented by excellent experts, and reaching tens of thousands of students simultaneously; the cons included - uncertainties around quality of assessment and credentialing, requirement of highly developed ICT infrastructure, high costs by present providers for enrolment leading to certification, and proprietary platforms will add to cost. Indicating at WOU joining the MOOC bandwagon in 2014, Prof. Dato' Dr. Ho Sinn Chye, Vice-Chancellor, WOU in his presentation focused on the Open Educational Resources (OER).

Prof. Mohandas Menon, WOU Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic-OCL) and Acting Director of PACE, in his presentation 'WOU on the MOOC way?', said that WOU now has the capacity to offer short courses entirely online, but that it is up to the University whether it wants to still call its online courses MOOCs or not. He furthered that WOU's online courses meet certain

criteria of MOOCs like open content, free participation for guests, affordable, local cohorts, a learning community, and badges/credentials; while adding, "It is WOU's own version of MOOC." This version provides registration with a fee for assessment and certification, along with discussion forum, online tutorial support, and has no real-time interaction.

"The MOOC experience could be seen as the beginning of the online offer of WOU's ODL programmes," said Prof. Menon while sharing the fact that WOU is currently using Moodle 2.5 platform for its online courses. He also hopes to identify the most appropriate platform for large numbers along with instituting online self-registration, online fee payment, and training of more WOU staff in online tutoring/facilitation.

In this event, Associate Pof. Dr. Goh Lay Huah, 'School of Education, Language and Communications' (SELC), spoke about the research course offered by SELC to guide educators, teachers and teacher trainees on writing an action research proposal. 155 participants have registered until now mostly from teacher training colleges, she said. The four-module course is from February 9 to May 3, 2015. Prof Phalachandra Bhandigadi of SELC talked about the 'OER in e-Learning' course, which will enable participants to offer OER-based eLearning courses and programmes that run from February 9 to May 17, 2015.

## Workshops for Teacher Educators of Karnataka

Two workshops were organized by CEMCA, New Delhi in collaboration with IT for Change (ITfC), Bengaluru for the teacher educators from CTE (Colleges of Teacher Education) and District Institute of Education and Training (DIETs) in Karnataka, in furtherance of CEMCA's earlier engagements in Karnataka.

The first workshop was organised for teacher educators of Mathematics and Science subjects while the second workshop was organised for teacher educators of Social Science and Language subjects from January 20-24, 2015 and February 3-7, 2015 respectively at the Rural DIET, Bengaluru. IT for Change has been serving as an implementing partner for CEMCA to liaise with the Department of State Educational Research and Training (DSERT),

Karnataka and organise the training programmes.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Sri C.R. Rangadhamappa, Senior Assistant Director, DSERT (Department of State Education Research and Research) addressed the issue of revisions to the D.Ed curriculum and the syllabus and how the new curricula required ICT integration

into the teaching of core subjects. Over a period of five days, 22 DIET faculties were given training on various web tools, free educational software tools, components of basic computer literacy and were also introduced to the CoP platform for teacher educators and its features including access to resources, mailing groups etc.





## Consultation on Community Radio in Sri Lanka

A national level consultation on Community Radio in Sri Lanka was organized by Sri Lanka Development Journalists' Forum in collaboration with the Ministry of Mass Media and Information, Government of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) and Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), New Delhi on February 07, 2015 at the SLBC, Colombo. Mr. Karunaratne Paranavithana, the Secretary of the Ministry of Mass Media and Information formally inaugurated the consultation and shared his experiences of visiting community radio stations in western countries. Mr. Karunaratne Paranavithana, in his answer to Ms. Samanmalee queries agreed to take immediate steps to resolve prevailing frequency issues faced by Saru Community Radio.

Welcoming the consultation, Mr. M. C. Rasmin, Director/CEO, Sri Lanka Development Journalists' Forum enumerated the importance of community radio in a country like Sri Lanka; followed by Mr. Wijeyananda Jayaweera, former Director of Communication, UNESCO who briefed on the characteristics of community radio while explaining the existing situation in Sri



Lanka and other south Asian countries. He further enlightened on the idea of civil society activism to initiate an experimental community radio to prove the potential of the community radio with its allies, including the Government of Sri Lanka.

Dr. Ankuran Dutta of CEMCA delivered the keynote address in the inaugural session on "Community Radio across South Asia: Understanding its potential in addressing voice poverty."

## First National level Consultation on Community Media organised in Male

A National Consultation on Community Media was organized by CEMCA in collaboration with the Maldives Broadcasting Commission (MBC) on February 5, 2015 in Male', Maldives.

Inaugurating the session, Mr. Mohamed Aslam, Commissioner of the MBC mentioned about their vision to initiate community broadcasting in different atolls and islands in the Maldives; followed by speech by Dr. Ankuran Dutta, Programme Officer, CEMCA who appreciated the initiative of the commission on

community broadcasting in the country and enumerated the objectives and methodology of the consultation.

Ms. Noora Ali, Secretary General of MBC sketched on the broadcasting scenario in the Maldives at the consultation that was graced by Mr. Abdullah Saju, Vice President of MBC, as the Chief Guest. Ms. Aishath Shaaheen, Director, Planning and Projects of MBC gave an analysis on the research findings from the preliminary research and consultancy for community broadcasting conducted by Dr. Murray Green on behalf of the MBC in 2012-13, and later delivered the vote of thanks at the session. Dr. Ankuran Dutta took two interactive sessions on 'Why Community Media in Maldives' and 'Community Radio in South Asia- Status and Challenges', where the participants developed a set of recommendations in four groups and handed over to the commission.

These sessions were chaired by Mr. Mohamed Nasih, Director General, MBC and the participants were from different government and non-government organisations, such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Human Rights Commission, Communication Authority of Maldives, Transparency Maldives, Dhivehi Raajjeyge Adu, National Bureau of Classifications, United Nations Development Programme, Dhiraagu, Maldives Red Crescent, Island Broadcasting Company, MBC TVM, the Maldives National University, Medlanet Pvt Ltd, Hope for Women and Maldives Broadcasting Commission.



## Strategy Framework for eContent Development for Virtual Open Schooling (VOS) of NIOS

CEMCA organised a workshop on “Strategy framework for eContent Development for Virtual Open Schooling (VOS) of NIOS” on January 06-07, 2015 in National Institute of Open School (NIOS), Noida.

Dr. Sandhya Kumar, Deputy Director (Academic), NIOS in her welcoming address acknowledged the participants at the workshop and spoke on the need of VOS in the present scenario. The objective of the workshop and the readiness of the Virtual Open Schooling technology platform wherein Mr. S.K. Prasad, NIOS,



articulately explained two vocational courses Rural Technology and ICT Applications, which was launched. Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal, Director (Academic) welcomed the guests Dr. Ramesh Sharma, Director, CEMCA and Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi, Programme Officer, CEMCA and addressed the congregation. Dr. Agarwal, in his deliberation remarked that no other ODL institution in India has started online courses.

Dr. Sharma in his inaugural Address give

background information on the feasibility report on Virtual Open Schooling (VOS) project of NIOS and other virtual schools around the world. CEMCA Programme Officer, Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi spoke to the participants and laid more emphasis on the objective of the workshop while he elaborated the salient features of strategy framework for eContent for VOS. Participants developed a template during the group activity, which was used to prepare the subject wise strategy framed for eContent development.

## CEMCA finalizes the evaluation strategy for Community Radio Technology



CEMCA, New Delhi organised a workshop on “Evaluation Strategy for the Community Radio Technology” on January 12-13, 2015 in New Delhi. The basic objective was to develop a question bank of multiple choice questions which would be used to evaluate the progress / achievement of students

enrolled in Certificate in Community Radio Technology (CCRT) course and broadly to test the technical knowledge of the enthusiasts of community radio. Ten community radio and technology experts participated in the workshop. Through a consultation process, CEMCA finalized the evaluation strategy of community radio technology using IVR System and mobile app.

Mr. R. Thyagarajan, Head, Finance and Administration, introduced the new Director of CEMCA, Dr. Ramesh Ch. Sharma, at the beginning of the workshop. While inaugurating the workshop, Dr. Sharma expressed his views that this activity may be considered as a pioneering work in the evaluation process of skill based learning. Mr. Y. K. Sharma, Adviser, BECIL outlined the fact that how this activity can help to increase the knowledge of the CR technicians of India. Dr. Ankuran Dutta, Programme Officer, CEMCA delineated the importance of the workshop. Dr. A. D. Tewari of NCERT enumerated the techniques of developing objective type items. Mr. Aaditeswar Seth of Gram Vaani Community Media discussed on how IVR system can be used for the evaluation process. Among the participants, Mr. N. Ramakrishnan, Mr. Y. K. Sharma, Mr. Khuswinder Singh, Mr. Pankaj Giri, Mr. Hemant Babu, Mr. Vasuki Belavadi, Ms. D. Rukmini Vemraju offered their suggestions to develop mobile based evaluation for the CR technology. The participants developed about 200 questions on CR technology.



# Case Study

## Flicker of Farmer Digital Green

By Dr. Anamika Ray

### Introduction

It can be said that seeing is believing. Technology when combined with social organizations can effortlessly facilitate the diffusion of innovations. With the help of hi-tech boom in media, by the end of 2016, Digital Green aspires to reach one million farmers across eleven thousand villages in India and other parts of South Asia along with Sub Saharan Africa (Annual Report 2012).

Digital Green aims to empower as well as to improve the livelihoods of rural communities especially in farming sector by engaging target audiences in a process of knowledge exchange. Though the concept of participatory communication is not novel, participation in a digital platform like producing localized videos and disseminating them through human mediation can be considered a new paradigm for rural development. The videos are produced 'by the community.' The topics of these audiovisual resources are based on the various needs and interests 'of the community'. The videos are screened 'for the community'. Digital Green, a nonprofit international organization, has made this possible. This approach has been found to be ten times more cost effective, per rupee spent, than traditional agricultural extension services.

With the help of local public, private, civil society organizations and the engagement of local communities, Digital Green has produced over 4,000 videos in more than 28 languages, reached 4,000 villages and over 400,000 farmers. Emphasizing on the knowledge exchange of improved practices and technologies pertaining to agriculture, livelihoods, nutrition, and health, the organization has selected nine states (Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, and Madhya Pradesh) of India and parts of Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Afghanistan in association with 20 partners.

### The Background

India, like most developing countries, depends upon agriculture for their existence. Agricultural extension often represents a major part of government policies. But as technology has pervaded certain parts of society, the digital divide among farming communities has expanded. Considering this context in

2008, Digital Green was started to involve communities in development (especially on agriculture extension) by combining social organization and technology. The use of participatory video for information dissemination on various improved practices of livelihood and agriculture by Digital Green represents a unique strength, where the adoption of new process for increasing productivity has become very easy for the farmers.

### Reason Why DG

- Dearth of required knowledge on farming
- Asymmetric access to information in rural communities
- Continuous land degradation
- Increasing transition to high-value agricultural production
- Decreasing rate of public investments in agricultural development
- Trend toward liberalization of agricultural trade

Though India has the second largest number of extension workers, it cannot be ignored that due to a variety of factors, such as increasing debts, farmers are forced to sell their land in loss and some even take the extreme decision of suicide. In this context, Digital Green came into existence with the idea to support agricultural communities through proper training, problem solving consultancy, direction for suitable marketing and knowledge exchange.

Groups attending disseminations	Number of videos shown	Adoption rate	Average disseminations per day	Average attendance per dissemination	Villages with recent disseminations	
38143	1334	72.81 %	441.15	16.03	557	
Country	Viewers	Villages	Videos Produced	Disseminations	Viewer Adoptions	Practices
Ethiopia	26515	535	78	6507	30077	40
Ghana	561	8	2	25	370	1
India	415141	4686	518	154477	510690	148
Niger	0	0	2	0	0	0
Tanzania	94	2	8	10	0	0
Total	442311	5231	608	161019	541137	189

Source: [http://www.digitalgreen.org/analytics/overview\\_module](http://www.digitalgreen.org/analytics/overview_module)

## How Digital Green Works

The organization's approach involves three key elements: Initiation, Production, and Diffusion.

**Initiation:** This is basically the stage of background research and training. It includes mobilization, situation analysis, and capacity building. In this stage, the preliminary work is to select villages and understand the local context, identify resource persons from the community that can be engaged, and prepare a project plan. Video topics are decided through focus group discussions. Digital Green then provides training on video production, mediated video screening, and feedback and data management to the local community resource persons. They are taught how to handle video camera, write storyboards, edit videos, handle pico projectors, facilitation skills, and data capture and analysis protocols. As a part of data management, Digital Green introduces its management information system, called Connect Online Connect Offline (COCO), Analytics Dashboards, Videos Library, and Farmer book.

**Production:** This phase includes content production, storyboard writing, shooting, and editing. Based on expert opinion, local relevance, and community and

scientific appropriateness, the content is decided for the final production. The community members serve as the actors as they are keen to share their experiences and be seen as role models within their communities. The videos are not scripted, but rather, employ a simple storyboard format to ensure the completeness and clarity of the messages. The storyboard includes a story line for the video, visual panels, and key adoption points. After video production, the community filmmaking team uses simple video editing software, like Windows Movie Maker, to assemble the footage into a final video. Subject Matter Specialist (SMS) then approve it before distribution.

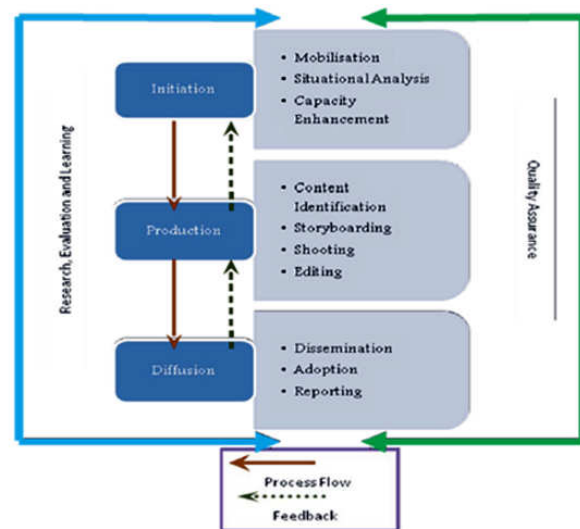
**Diffusion:** This stage includes activities including video dissemination, farmer adoption, and community usage data and feedback recording. Videos are distributed



to community groups, mostly women-led self-help groups, using a battery-operated pico projector. These screenings are facilitated by a member of the community who pauses and rewinds videos and engages community groups in an interactive discussion based on the presented content. There typically are 6-8 such groups in each village which each are comprised of 10-15 farmers that attend one video screening every fortnight. The videos that are screened are sequenced based on geographic and time sensitivities related to agricultural cycles. At each screening, mediators record farmer attendance, questions, and interests and afterwards which practices farmers actually applied on their own farms. This data is recorded in COCO. Digital Green also has quality assurance protocols for gauging mediator performance and cross-validating the adoptions that mediators report.



to community groups, mostly women-led self-help groups, using a battery-operated pico projector. These screenings are facilitated by a member of the community who pauses and rewinds videos and engages community groups in an interactive discussion based on the presented



Source: <http://www.digitalgreen.org>





- Ministry of Agriculture, Government of Ethiopia

## Conclusion

Digital Green is reshaping agricultural development by building a social network of community members learning and sharing locally relevant knowledge with one another through technology. Digital Green also has established relationships with other organizations, like IRRI and ICRISAT, to bring together research and extension partners on a common platform. Digital Green has extended its approach for agricultural extension to issues related to community mobilization, financial literacy, health, and nutrition. The organization received the Manthan Award in 2012 and Rs. 3 crores as Global Impact Award from Google in 2013. With 75 team members, Rikin Gandhi (CEO of DG) is the man of the noble success of the organization. This 33 years old Indian American boy is the anchor of Pan India Movement, which is called Digital Green. He was awarded IFA Norman Borlaug Award by the International Fertilizer Industry Association in 2012.

## Major Activities

- PATH
  - Program on Maternal and Newborn Health in Uttar Pradesh
  - Innovations in Nutrition Globally (Spring) Project in Odisha
  - Save the Children, and International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).
  - International Development
  - Enterprises (IDE) to Improve Livelihood Opportunities of Farmers by Promoting
  - Low-Cost Irrigation Technologies and Improved Agricultural Practices
  - Collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture, Oxfam America, and Sasakawa Africa Association
- To Strengthen the Government of Ethiopia's Extension System
  - The World Cocoa Foundation to Promote Practices Related to Cocoa Farming.

## Major Partners

- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- USAID
- DFID
- Google
- Deshpande Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India

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# Book Review

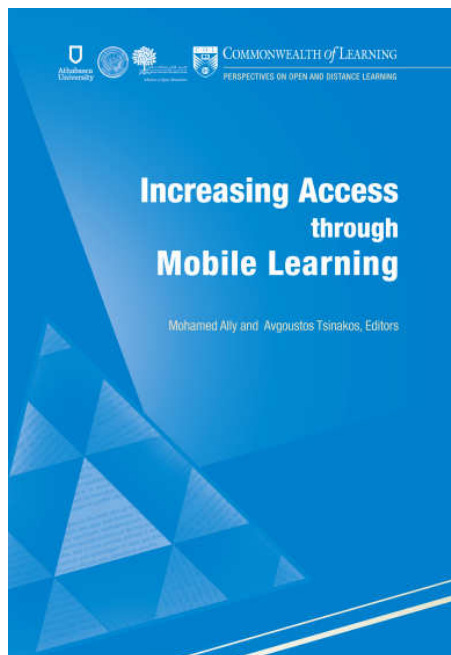
## Increasing Access through Mobile Learning

*Edited by – Mohamed Ally and Avgoustos Tsinakos; published by Commonwealth of Learning and Athabasca University, Vancouver, 2014, pp.xvi, 237, ISBN 978-1-894975-64-3.*

*By Dr S K Pulist*

The penetration of and access to smart phones and other hand-held mobile devices have made the educational institutions to take new strides in delivering their programmes innovatively diminishing the traditional boundaries. Use of these mobile technological devices in the teaching and learning processes has given birth to a new form of learning, i.e. mLearning. Though, it is still to be proved as to whether this relatively new form of learning - mLearning supports the geographic, economic, social and cultural conditions of developing countries more so the Indian context. However, supplementary and complimentary role of this form of learning in augmenting the learning effectiveness and access to higher education is well received in the developing countries.

The volume in hand, a collaborative initiative of Commonwealth of Learning and Athabasca University, unravels the treasure of this new form of learning for the rest of the world while doing justice to its title. Arranged in three broad parts, the book traverses through 16 different chapters focusing on core areas of mLearning thereby trying to give a concrete shape to its concept. While Part-I focuses on design, development, student support and other pedagogical aspects of mLearning keeping the interest of the learners at the core and revisiting the different phases of educational development with intervention of concurrent technological improvements, Part-II presents the implementation



scenario of mLearning - be it use of different formats and technological platforms; challenges being faced by the educational institutions in integration of these technologies to the pedagogical mainframe or use of OER and orchestration of existing material to suit the requirements in the new environment. Part-III takes the scope of Part-II further and suggests the strategies to overcome the constraints in use of mLearning in the current scenario. It tries to provide a glance of future prospects of use of this new form of learning. However, the successful implementation of mLearning is yet to be emphatically proved in the context of developing countries under different cross-cultural conditions. The book makes an attempt to peep through the major initiatives launched by different

governments for integration of usage of mobiles and other hand-held smart devices to the mainstream higher education.

On a positive note, the book visualizes the use of mLearning in progression towards fulfillment of universal goal of 'Education for All'. However, as is widely accepted, lot of research and development is required to be put in to optimally utilize the full potential of mLearning in education. At the same time, the respective governments especially in the developing countries need to take a liberal view on use of mLearning as a viable, cost effective and user-friendly phenomenon.

The book deals with different technological issues appropriately, though social, economic and geographical issues could have been given more space, more so the cross-cultural barriers and issues, since they play a major role in making a technology successful in regional context in the developing countries. However, on the whole the book attempts to provide answers to different expected queries from the novice in use of hand-held smart technological devices for educational pursuits broadly termed as 'mLearning' with up to date information. It is a good source of understanding the emergence, development and implementation of mLearning technologies in this information age feeding the knowledge society. The book would provide insight and prove to be a rich reference material not only for the mLearning practitioners, educationists, trainers and policy planners, but also the system administrators and technical support providers who wish to establish themselves in this comparatively new area of mobile learning.

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# Technology Tracking

## DIY Android Apps:

### Empowering Masses to Brew their Own Flavor of Mobile Applications

By Dr. Ishan Abeywardena

The Android operating system is currently dominating the smart phone and tablet market. The Free and Open Source (FOSS) frameworks and ease of use has made Android the most sought after OS for use by manufacturers. With thousands of apps available through the Google Play store, Android provides a feature rich experience to the user and has an app for just about anything imaginable.

The exponential growth of the smart phone and tablet markets over the past few years has caught the attention of many sectors including governments, industries and educators. As a result, Mobile Business, Mobile Learning and Mobile Government have become some of the fastest growing sectors taking information and services to a global market through mobile devices. This has given rise to a massive demand for various customized apps resulting in businesses and services investing heavily in custom mobile applications.

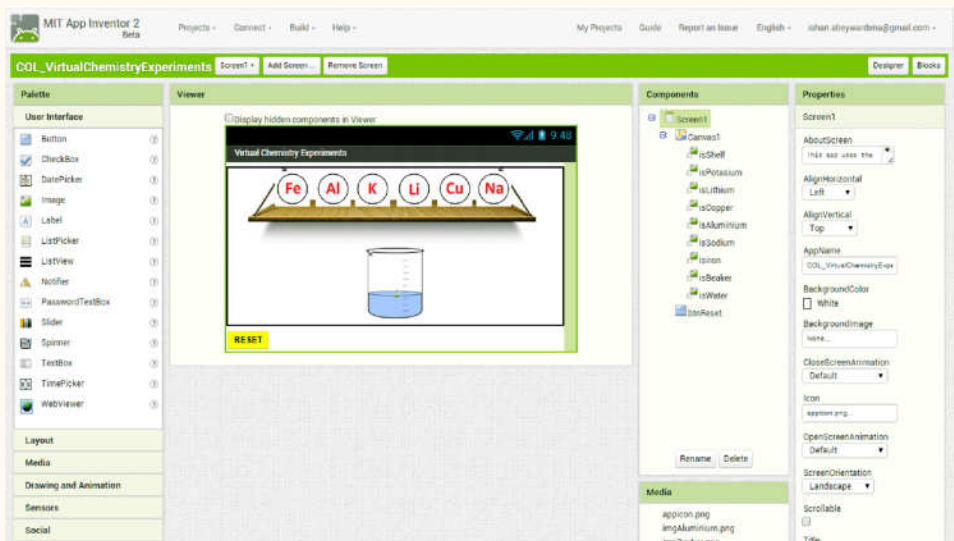
Another key factor contributing to the popularity of mobile applications is the rich interaction between the user and the software. Up until recently the concept of user interfaces (UI) was used to design the interface between the human user and the software application. However, the interaction with the UI was limited to visual and occasionally auditory. Devices such as a mouse, touchpad and a keyboard were used to interact with the UI. With the advent of the mobile device and touch screens, the focus has shifted from UI to UX which provides a richer

experience to the user. With UX design the user is able to touch the components displayed on screen, use gestures such as pinch, get feedback as auditory messages or vibrations, use speech to text to issue voice commands and use the inbuilt camera for visual inputs. This has revolutionized the way apps are built. Furthermore, UX can easily cater to impaired users making applications more accessible.

Traditionally, Android app development is a highly specialized field reserved only for software engineers and programmers. However, the massive demand for customized apps has led to the democratization of Android app development through the concept of 'Visual Programming'. Visual Programming is a concept which allows non-programmers to build powerful application using logical building blocks. It can best be

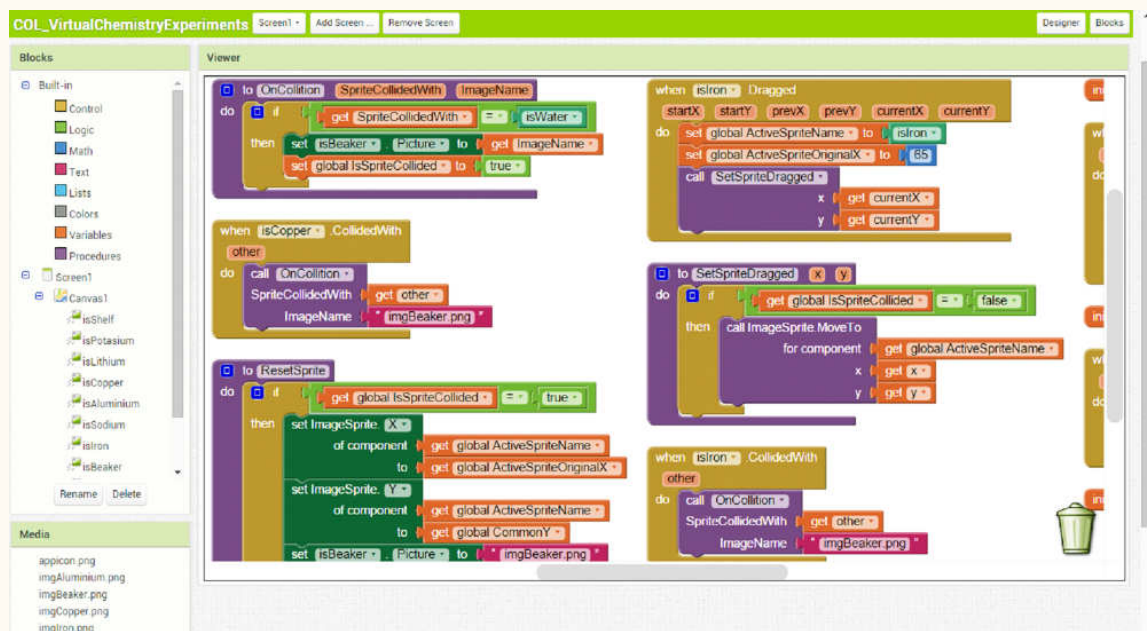
explained as constructing a jigsaw puzzle using fitting virtual puzzle pieces. Each of these puzzle pieces are blocks of code which form complete complex programmes when assembled logically.

One of the leading visual app development platforms, at present, is the App Inventor (AI2) platform developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), US. The first generation of MIT App Inventor had a local developer environment where users could download the programme onto their computers to develop applications offline. The second generation of App Inventor or AI2 does not have a downloadable developer environment. Harnessing the power of the cloud, AI2 provides a comprehensive web-based app development platform for customized Android app development. Anyone with a Gmail account can quickly setup an AI2 account at <http://ai2.appinventor.mit.edu/>. Among the benefits of the new web-based AI2 platform, users can develop apps any time, anywhere with various internet enabled devices. Devices such as tablets and phablets can easily be used to develop apps on the go. However, a larger screen is recommended for a richer development experience. The current AI2 version only supports Google Chrome and Mozilla Fire Fox browsers.



The Designer view of AI2

The AI2 platform revolves around two main concepts which are the *Designer* and *Blocks Editor*. The designer provides a work space resembling the screen of a mobile device for building the UX of the application. Developers can drag and drop components such as buttons, labels, text boxes, images, date-time pickers, and list pickers etc. to design the UX on screen. The following image shows the designer view of an AI2 project.



Blocks view of AI2

The *Viewer* area displays the screen visible to the end user on his/her mobile device. The *Palette* holds the various components which can be used in the design of the application. There are several drawers in the palette which are (i) User Interface – visual components to design the look and feel of the application; (ii) Layout – placeholders which allow the components to be aligned as required; (iii) Media – components for audio, video and multimedia; (iv) Drawing and Animation – components for designing interactivity and games; (v) Sensors – components to use various inbuilt sensors of the mobile device such as accelerometer and orientation sensor; (vi) Social – components to access and interact on social media; (vii) Storage – components for using the persistent storage in the device and external databases; and (viii) Connectivity – components to access Bluetooth and other applications installed on the device. The *Components* pane displays the components which have been used in the application; the *Media* pane shows the external resources such as images which have been uploaded; and the *Properties* pane provides access to editable properties for each component.

### The *Blocks* view is used to build the programme using visual building blocks.

The developer can drag and drop various individual blocks from the *Blocks* pane to build compound blocks which perform various tasks. For example the following compound block changes the text of Label1 to “Hello World!” when Button1 is clicked. The logic reads *when Button1 is clicked set the text of Label1 to Hello World!*. The blocks provide a very high level form of programming. As such, they somewhat follow the rules of English grammar in terms of building the logic i.e. if you can explain a particular activity in English, the blocks can be designed the same way.



Compound block

The *Built In* blocks provide a large collection of blocks such as control

structures, logic operators, math operators, text manipulation, list manipulation, custom colors, variables and procedures. Using the *Blocks* available for a particular component, coupled with the *Built In* blocks, complicated apps can be developed rapidly with minimum technical expertise.

Another cool feature of AI2 is the ability to debug your application live. There are three methods of live debugging which are (i) using an Android device and WiFi connection; (ii) using the emulator; and (iii) using an Android device with USB cable. Once live debugging is setup, the developer can see the application taking shape in real-time on the Android device or the emulator. This allows the application to be tweaked continuously until the expected effect is achieved.

More information on live debugging can be found at <http://appinventor.mit.edu/explore/ai2/setup.html>.



### Option One - RECOMMENDED

#### Build apps with an Android device and WiFi Connection (preferred): [Instructions](#)

If you have a computer, an Android device, and a WiFi connection, this is the easiest way to test your apps.



Build your project on your computer



Test it in real-time on your device

### Option Two

#### Don't have an Android device? Use the Emulator: [Instructions](#)

If you don't have an Android phone or tablet handy, you can still use App Inventor. Have a class of 30 students? Have them work primarily on emulators and share a few devices.



Build your project on your computer

Test it in real-time on your computer with the onscreen emulator

### Option Three

#### No WiFi? Build apps with an Android device and USB Cable: [Instructions](#)

Some firewalls within schools and organizations disallow the type of WiFi connection required. If WiFi doesn't work for you, try USB.



Build your project on your computer



Test it in real-time on your device

Live debugging adapted from <http://appinventor.mit.edu/explore/ai2/setup.html>

Finally, once you have developed the application to your satisfaction, AI2 provides you with the feature of downloading the .apk file to be shared with your potential users or to be uploaded onto Google Play. You can also download the project file as a .aia file to be distributed to colleagues or students so that they can build upon your work.

Overall the AI2 platform provides a comprehensive solution for developing and distributing Android mobile applications. One of the key benefits of this approach is that anyone can develop Android applications regardless of their technical/programming knowledge. Since the AI2 platform writes the necessary

code in the background based on the blocks you create, the applications developed are relatively error free when it comes to programming code. However, the developer has to build the logic of the application using the blocks correctly. AI2 has features which assist in building sound logic blocks.

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) through the Commonwealth Educational Media Center for Asia (CEMCA) organized a three day hands-on workshop

on Educational App (Android) Development Toolkit for Teachers and Learners at the Kulachi Hansaraj Model School (KHMS), Delhi, India from 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> March 2015. This workshop was the first Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop organized by COL and CEMCA on educational app development. Furthermore, COL is in the process of developing a toolkit which can be used to conduct these workshops by anyone anywhere.

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## Internship Available

CEMCA offers internship to graduate and post-graduate students to gain work experience in the area of CEMCA's field of competence and enhance their academic knowledge through practical work assignments. Internships are available for 2-6 months, and should be part of the learning and development plan of the candidate. For details visit Knowledge Management page at CEMCA Website.

## SkillsRec: A Novel Semantic Analysis Driven Learner Skills Mining and Filtering Approach for Personal Learning Environments based on Teacher Guidance

By Zaffar Ahmed Shaikh, Denis Gillet and Shakeel Khoja

SkillsRec (abbreviation of Recommendations based on user Skills) is a novel semantic analysis driven recommender model for Personal Learning Environments (PLEs) that develops user-user recommendations based on skill similarity. It uses LSA (Latent Semantic Analysis) to identify learner skills through semantically analyzing teacher competencies and learner interests. The model provides solution to how to overcome the massive, exponentially increasing, information-overload problem.

PLE is referred to as a collection of tools, brought together under the conceptual notion of openness, interoperability, and learner control. In the context of e-learning, PLE can be defined as “a technology-mediated and easily

customizable e-learning platform that incorporates personalization,

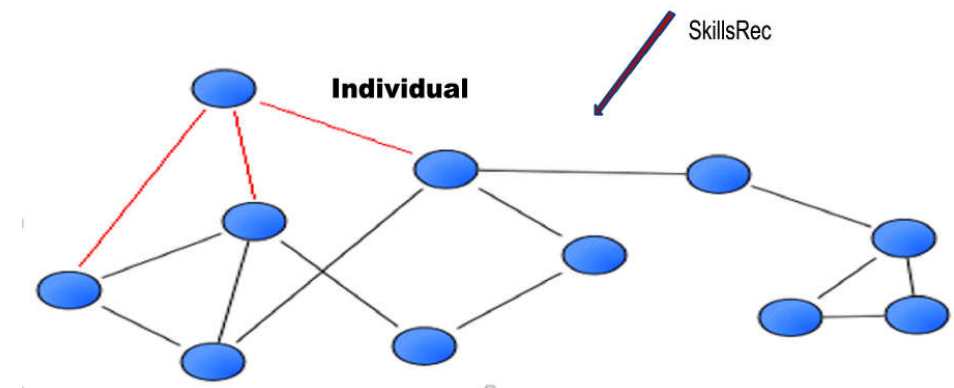


Fig. 2: SkillsRec implementation approach

collaboration, learner-based inquiry, and support constructs”. PLE has roots in early personalized learning concepts and

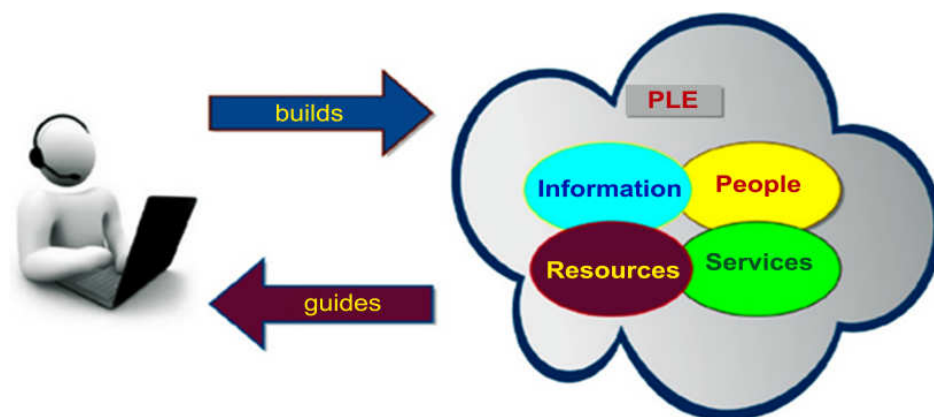


Fig. 1: The gPLEs Model

contemporary SW-based environments. Examples of PLEs include Facebook, LinkedIn, and other SW driven learning environments.

SkillsRec is based on PLE design and development principles of the guided PLEs (gPLEs) model. The gPLEs model envisions a PLE that guides a learner towards his/her learning pathway while he/she interacts with it (Fig. 1). The gPLEs model based PLE incorporates the four main constructs of the PLE idea through SkillsRec (Fig. 2).

SkillsRec applies LSA on teacher competencies and learner interests data to mine and filter learner skills (Fig. 3). Similarities returned by LSA are based on

contextual usage meaning of words occurring in two datasets. Later, on scale of 0.5 threshold, SkillsRec develops user-skill similarity cloud (Fig. 4) to generate user-user recommendations in ranked order (Fig. 5). This research compares learner-skill similarity scores generated through SkillsRec with those generated through conventional information retrieval (that uses Bag of Words model with Cosine Similarity technique) and Keyword Matching (KM) techniques (Fig. 6). We provide top N=8 user-user recommendations most likely to be similar for a given active user.

In existing literature, there is no evidence about finding learner skills through



analyzing learner interests against teacher competencies (user to user modelling). There is also a lack of information in literature about using learner interests-related data to develop similarity-based recommendations (finding solution to information-overload problem).

Thus, we developed SkillsRec. Results, as shown in Figure 6, depict that SkillsRec generated user-skill similarities outperform the conventional IR and KM technique results. Thus, it can be concluded that semantic analysis driven data mining and filtering approaches have implications for information-overload problem in particular and for modelling user with another user (learner and teacher) in general. Thus, it is recommended that such techniques need to be further explored and tested using different datasets and context to confirm validity of this novel approach.

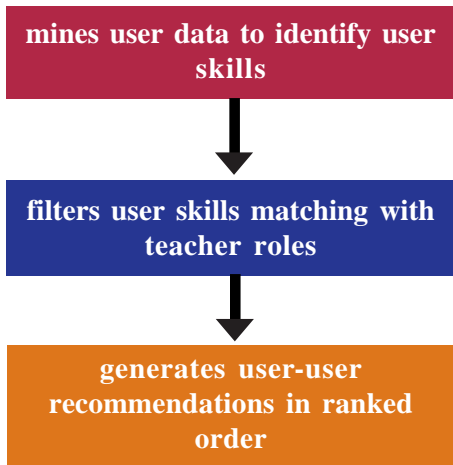


Fig. 3: How SkillsRec Works

The research was presented at the 29th International Conference on Advanced Information Networking and Applications Workshops (WAINA 2015) on January 20, 2015 by the authors. The first author, who is a research scholar at the Institute of Business Administration, Karachi has prepared the research findings for this section and he can be reached at zashaikh[at]iba[dot]edu[dot]pk

TABLE VII. USER-SKILL SIMILARITY CLOUD

Users/ Skills	U1	U2	U3	U4	U5	U6	U7	U8
S1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
S2	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
S3	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
S4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
S5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
S6	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
S7	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
S8	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
S9	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0
S10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Fig. 4: SkillsRec generated user-skill similarity cloud

TABLE VIII. USER-USER SIMILARITY CLOUD IN RANKED ORDER

Users / Users	U1	U2	U3	U4	U5	U6	U7	U8	
U1	Score	-	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.5
	Similar?	-	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
	Rank	-	5	5	5	3	5	4	5
U2	Score	0.5	-	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7
	Similar?	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Rank	5	-	4	4	4	4	4	3
U3	Score	0.4	0.6	-	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.7
	Similar?	0	1	-	1	0	0	1	1
	Rank	5	4	-	1	5	4	4	3
U4	Score	0.5	0.6	0.9	-	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.8
	Similar?	1	1	1	-	0	1	1	1
	Rank	5	4	1	-	5	5	4	2
U5	Score	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.4	-	0.9	0.3	0.3
	Similar?	1	1	0	0	-	1	0	0
	Rank	3	4	5	5	-	1	4	4
U6	Score	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.5	0.9	-	0.3	0.4
	Similar?	1	1	0	1	1	-	0	0
	Rank	5	4	4	5	1	-	4	5
U7	Score	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.3	0.3	-	0.9
	Similar?	1	1	1	1	0	0	-	1
	Rank	4	4	4	4	4	4	-	1

Fig. 5: SkillsRec generated user-user recommendations in ranked order

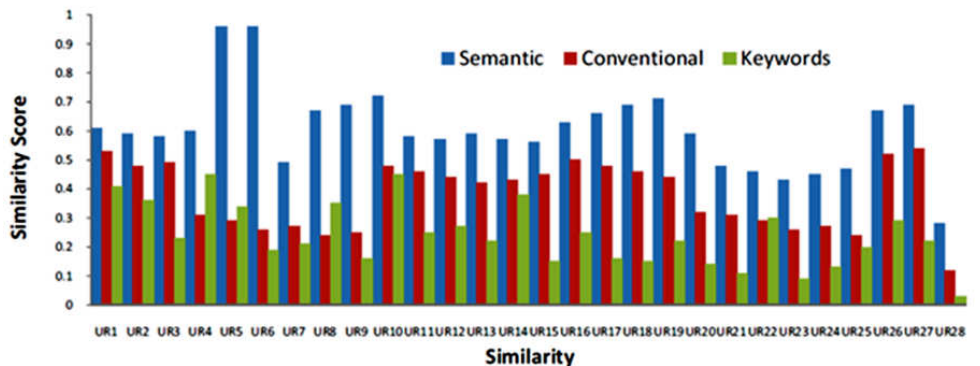


Fig. 6: SkillsRec (semantic) gains over conventional IR and KM techniques

## Finding Fluency in Academic and Report Writing

By Dr Mike Lambert



Fluency in writing is the ease with which words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs are progressively connected in a piece of writing. A text may have plenty of content, but if its style is disjointed, then its ideas become difficult for readers to follow. When it is fluently written, however, readers' appreciation is enhanced and new, clear understanding is securely gained.

Whether composing a course assignment, research report or degree dissertation, or indeed if you are advising others who are undertaking such tasks, finding this fluency is therefore an important task. Here are some ways in which this aspect of academic and report writing can be strengthened or achieved.

### 1. Establish the exact focus of your text

Make sure that you are clear about the purpose of the section of text you are writing. For instance, if you are reporting on data in a research report, decide if the text is about:

- presentation of data, with a focus on what data was collected, including specific examples
- analysis, interpretation or discussion of data which you previously presented, with references and reminders back to the earlier section
- a combination of the two, helping readers to be clear both about what the data says and about your subsequent analysis of it.

### 2. Be confident, but careful

Imagine that your readers are intelligent but non-expert, and are reading your text for the first time. Your writing should first identify, then build and develop particular arguments or ideas, so the understanding of such readers is increased.

They must never be confused or lost in this process. While they may feel they have questions and even doubts about what you write, they must

understand enough to give you the benefit of that doubt and be prepared to stay with you as your ideas grow in interest, depth and complexity. 'Be confident, but careful' sums up this approach.

### 3. Structure each paragraph

Structure every paragraph so that each one leads your readers a little further along your lines of argument. At the end of each paragraph, readers should be taken to a new position of awareness and comprehension from where they were at its beginning.

### 4. Connect sentences and paragraphs

Use words and phrases which link a sentence to the previous sentence, or a paragraph to the previous paragraph. In English these include: 'also', 'in addition' 'therefore', 'subsequently', 'on the other hand' - other languages have similar alternatives. By using such words you are metaphorically taking your readers by the hand and leading them on a journey through your arguments towards new understandings.

### 5. Remind the reader of what has been presented already

Refer back to earlier paragraphs ("as indicated earlier") or to specific earlier sections ("as outlined in Chapter 2"). This will help to bind together your text as a whole, creating a developing narrative, rather than a presentation of isolated ideas. It is also possible to refer to writing later on in your text, for example: "..., an issue to be discussed in detail in the next section".

### 6. Explain and give examples

Always define or explain important ideas and provide examples. Your



non-expert readers must always be clear about what you are describing and understand enough to move on with you.

## 7. Build on what you have told the reader already

Recognize too, in the words that you use, when readers have just had an explanation and therefore understand something new. For instance, if you have just explained a concept, continue by using the phrase 'this idea'. If you have highlighted opposing perspectives, continue using the phrase 'these differences in thinking' or 'contradictions such as these'.

## 8. Use short and long sentences

Use short sentences to make a succinct point. Use carefully punctuated longer sentences to explore or extend an idea.

## 9. Vary vocabulary

Avoid using the same term more than once in close proximity. Either choose a different word of similar meaning

(the thesaurus on a computer can be useful for this), or redesign the text so that repetition is not needed. Achieving this variability in vocabulary can quite dramatically improve the fluency of a text.

## 10. Find 'cadence'

In relation to spoken language, 'cadence' means variation in pitch. The notion can be applied to writing as well. If you read your text aloud, does its intonation help to express its meaning? If not, try changing word order or punctuation to improve it. Look for cadence in individual sentences (particularly long ones) and in paragraphs as a whole.

Finally, here is a wider suggestion related to the overall process of composition. Write early in your work (even if it is difficult), then write again, and again. Practice will make the process easier and you will find your texts gradually gaining fluency. Some writers like to leave a time gap between working on a draft, so that each time - like their readers - they can approach it with a fresh and open mind.

*Dr Mike Lambert, formerly principal lecturer at the University of Wolverhampton, England, is author of 'A Beginner's Guide to Doing Your Education Research Project', published by SAGE. He can be reached at [m.lambert@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:m.lambert@wlv.ac.uk).*



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# Forthcoming Events

## 2nd International Conference of the African Virtual University



**Date:** July 2 & 3, 2015

**Venue:** Crowne Plaza, Nairobi, Kenya

**Theme:** Linking Open Education & eLearning Research to Practice

*For more details, visit*

<http://www.avu.org/2nd-International-Conference-of-the-AVU/2015-2nd-international-conference-of-the-african-virtual-university.html>

## Emerging Technologies and Authentic Learning in Higher Vocational Education

Emerging Technologies and Authentic Learning  
in Higher Vocational Education

**Date:** August 31-September 2, 2015

**Venue:** Cape Town, South Africa

**Hosted by:** UCT ETILAB in Cape Town, South Africa

*For more details, visit*

<http://etinedconf2015.com/>

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Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, Breakwater Blvd, V & A Waterfront, Cape Town, 8002

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## X International Guide Conference



Optimizing Higher Education for the Professional Student:

A balance of flexibility, quality and cultural sensitivity

**Date:** September 16-18, 2015

**Venue:** Vienna, Austria,

For more details, visit

[http://www.guideassociation.org/10internationalconference\\_2015/index.php/en/the-conference/themes](http://www.guideassociation.org/10internationalconference_2015/index.php/en/the-conference/themes)

## 26<sup>th</sup> ICDE World Conference



Growing Capacities for Sustainable Distance e-learning Provision

**Date:** October 14-16, 2015

**Venue:** Suncity, South Africa

*For more details, visit*

<http://www.unisa.ac.za/ICDE2015/>

## ACE 2015: Seventh Asian Conference on Education



**Date:** October 21-25, 2015

**Venue:** The Art Centre of Kobe, Kobe, Japan

**Theme:** 'Education, Power and Empowerment: Transcending Boundaries'  
**Organiser:** IAFOR (International Academic Forum)

*For more details, visit*

<http://iafor.org/conferences/ace2015/>

Email: [ace@iafor.org](mailto:ace@iafor.org)

**Registration:** <http://iafor.org/ace2015-registration>

## The Online, Open and Flexible Higher Education Conference 2015



**Date:** October 29 - 30, 2015

**Venue:** The University of Hagen, Hagen, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany

*For more details, visit*

<http://conference.eadtu.eu/venue>

## MEDIASIA 2015: The Asian Conference on Media and Mass Communication

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ASIA'S THINK TANK

**Date:** November 12-15, 2015

**Venue:** The Art Centre of Kobe, Kobe, Japan

**Themes:** 'Power' and 'Human Rights, Justice, Media and Culture', explore these themes in an international, intercultural and interdisciplinary setting

**Organiser:** IAFOR (International Academic Forum)

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