

## Education 2030 Framework for Action

Inaugural Address by Dr. B. Shadrach, Director, CEMCA, at a Webinar organised by CEMCA and DELNET on 'Leveraging OERs to Enhance Higher Learning' in New Delhi, India, on 30 September 2022.

Thank you Dr Sangeeta Kaul! Collaborating with DELNET is like home-coming for me! I have collaborated with them many a times in the past, but since my return to India from Commonwealth of Learning, Canada, this has been a great opportunity. Thank you so much Dr Manas Ranjan Panigrahi for forging this relationship. I'm extremely pleased that, today, CEMCA and DELNET are commencing a new journey, and I hope that this will go a long way. Thank you again Dr Sangeeta Kaul for inviting me to join this effort and offer a few words as introductory remarks.

We'll hear a lot from my colleague, Dr Manas Ranjan Panigrahi, who is an expert in Open Educational Resources (OER) not only in India, but globally, and he has many publications to his credit. It's a privilege to provide some opening remarks before Dr. Panigrahi would take you through the OER journey, and how it would benefit each one of us. I'm happy to address this introductory message to all librarians, educationalists and others involved in enabling a large number of people to pursue education.

The OER movement has been a long drawn movement, and I would quickly summarise its history. But before that, I want to remind us that the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which was actually adopted by 184 nations on 4 November 2015 in Paris, France, is a kind of Benchmark. It's a collective effort of 184 nations around the world led by UNESCO and many partners, such as the Commonwealth of Learning and others to ensure that education is provided to all. The Framework had a very good foundation in the form of what we call the Incheon Declaration for Education 2030, Republic of Korea, in May 2015, when 160 countries came together, including 120 Ministers of Education and heads and members of delegations from various governments including bilateral organisations, Civil Society Organisations, teachers, youth, private sector, to adopt it. It sets out a new vision for education for the next fifteen years. It served as the background for the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 is on education, which is rooted in the Incheon Declaration. There are three major pillars that hold the Education 2030 Framework for Action. The first pillar is educational infrastructure, which includes accessible resources, facilities, and brick and mortar and online educational institutions. The second pillar is teachers and educators because without them, we cannot have quality learners. Today, we require quality, learner-centred, and collaborative pedagogical approaches based education. So, teachers and educators form the second pillar, and their ability to turn around the table to ensure that education is learner-centred is important.

The third pillar, which is the topic of the day, is OER and technology. So, you can see that if we were to achieve SDG 4, OER are extremely important. These resources are not discriminatory; these are learner conducive, learner-friendly, context-specific, cost effective and available to all learners. This is where we see OER and technology enabled learning rooted. I want to remind the participants today that if SDG 4 were to be achieved, you need to ensure that these three pillars are strengthened: the education infrastructure which requires a lot of investment; teachers and educators, who need a lot of capacity building, and they need to be in adequate numbers in every country. But, the third pillar

which is actually in our hands – librarians, educators and others – who can strengthen this pillar of OER and technology enabled learning.

Why is OER important? Why is OER one of the three pillars? There are two major reasons – there could be thousands of reasons, but I want to outline the two major reasons – the first is that OER enables quality education that is equitable, inclusive, open and participatory. All these terms are very important. OER enables equitable education, inclusive education, open education and participatory education, and when it comes to the definition of OER, which Dr Panigrahi would elaborate upon later, you would understand why OER alone can make things equitable, inclusive, open, and participatory.

The second major reason why OER is important and why it is one of the three pillars of SDG 4 is because it provides professional autonomy and academic freedom that the teachers and educators need. Now, they can become producers of curriculum and learning materials. It gives them the freedom and professional autonomy and we can discuss in a while as to how librarians can help in ensuring this professional autonomy, academic freedom, quality education, equitable education, inclusive education, open education, and participatory education.

Here, very quickly, I want to run through the history to show where we are in terms of OER and locate the Commonwealth of Learning and its role in this arena. The Commonwealth of Learning started this journey around 2002, but, historically, globally, we see the 2007 Cape Town Declaration on OER as a historic event followed by the Dakar Declaration in 2009; Paris Declaration in 2012 and Ljubljana OER Action Plan in 2017. The 2017 Plan actually mainstreamed education. In fact, it mainstreamed OER in not only SDG 4, which is Education, it also mainstreamed it in SDG 5 for Gender; SDG 9 for Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; SDG 10 for reducing inequalities within and across countries; SDG 16, which stands for peace, justice and strong institutions; and SDG 17 for Partnerships.

So colleagues, through supporting OER, we are actually contributing to several SDGs directly and indirectly. On the basis of all these historic developments supported by the Commonwealth of Learning, UNESCO came up with the OER recommendations on 25 November 2019, which was endorsed by all member states of UNESCO. The 2019 UNESCO Recommendations are the latest, which provide a clear roadmap for OER development. It defines OER as – any teaching, learning and research material in any format or in any medium that resides in public domain. But the condition is that they are released free under open license for access, reuse, repurposing, adaptation and redistribution. With regard to open license, it's important for us to recognize that the open licensing machine allows the intellectual property rights to be held by the owner or creator, but, at the same time, it gives the permission to access, reuse, repurpose, redistribute and adapt the resources in public domain.

That's the specialty of the whole concept of OER. Once we do this, we are able to allow anyone, anytime, anywhere to access this material and adapt. There is huge resource saving in this; there is huge cost saving, because we are sharing each other's material. So, if we were to create a university curriculum, it is possible for us to do so in three days' time by using the existing OER, and come up with a curriculum and launch our courses and have our teachers teach from anywhere because technology allows it to happen. In the near future, virtual universities would come up where smart entrepreneurs would put together OER based curriculum, courses and content, which could become the future of education.

Now I want to mention a few words about the Commonwealth of Learning, and my organisation, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA). We are the regional centre of Commonwealth of Learning, which is based in Vancouver, Canada. The regional centre is based in Delhi, India. We are privileged to be hosted by the Government of India as an intergovernmental

organisation, something similar to the UN entities in India. The Commonwealth of Learning has been involved in the OER movement from day one. It has been supporting various governments to come up with OER national level policies because policies are extremely important as steers and drivers for creating an OER movement. We have been working with 33 open universities around the world and enabling them to create institutional OER policies and OER based programmes, short courses, MOOCs, employment oriented courses and so on. We have also supported them in establishing OER repositories.

But, today, here in DELNET, we are going beyond the 33 open universities because in India OER and blended learning methods are recognised in the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020). OER are not just for open universities and open educational institutions, OER are for all institutions. NEP 2020 allows 40 per cent of the courses to be developed using OER material in any institution. This is where you can play an extremely important role in enabling the Faculty members of your institutions to use OER so that they can save time, cost, and effort and create courses that are employable – short courses, micro credential courses. They can provide many other innovative ways of spreading education and skills among the learning societies and constituencies. Today, everyone is a lifelong learner and we can see that the opportunity spreads itself far and wide.

As I mentioned, we are commencing a new journey! But we would like to make this first awareness creation webinar on OER a regular affair. We want this to be continued for any number of times. We are available to do this, and we want to take this to the next level where out of thousands and thousands of DELNET members, if any institution or any librarian is interested in taking further training in OER and become a champion within his/her institution, an OER Ambassador, we are willing to provide you training. We can use DELNET facilities and collaborate with DELNET to provide face-to-face training to those who are interested in deepening their knowledge and understanding, and becoming an OER practitioner.

We can also support member institutions in creating their own institutional OER policies. We can assist you on this and, I think, DELNET is best placed to do this. CEMCA would be highly interested in supporting it to create an open repository and OER movement so that we can have collaborative tools, collaborative content and we can share these. Those institutions that do not have the technological manpower or infrastructure, can use DELNET portal. I'm making an appeal to Dr Sangeeta Kaul today to allocate a portion of the resources to create OER repositories for various institutions present today. Friends and colleagues, there is a huge OER gap in India because, very recently, the National Repository of OER has been merged into PM Diksha portal. We see that a large number of Institutions now need a repository, a portal where they can share their resources and create a new movement. DELNET, and CEMCA and Commonwealth of Learning can help fill the void. Thank you so much!