

**COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA,
NEW DELHI**

**Minutes of the 21st Meeting of the CEMCA Advisory Council held via
Zoom December 09, 2021, at New Delhi, India. 1030-1200 hrs IST**

Attendees:

Commonwealth of Learning

Prof. Asha Kanwar (Chair)
President and CEO

Dr. Venkataraman Balaji (Vice Chair)
Vice President

Bangladesh

Prof. (Dr.) Syed Humayun Akhter (Member)
Vice Chancellor,
Bangladesh Open University, Bangladesh

Mr. Md. Masum Ahmed (Member)
Deputy Secretary, Secondary and Higher Education Division
Ministry of Education, Dhaka
Bangladesh

India

Mr. Partha Kansa Barik (Member)
(Representing Mr. Mrutyunjay Behera
Economic Advisor)
Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education,
Government of India, New Delhi

Prof. Nageshwar Rao (Member)
Vice Chancellor,
Indira Gandhi National Open University,
New Delhi

Prof. Ashok Ogra (Member)
Adviser,
APJ Group of Institutions,
New Delhi

Malaysia

Dr. Wan Zuhanis Binti Saad (Member)
Director of Academic Excellence Division
Department of Higher Education
Malaysia
(Representing YBhg. Datin Noorazah Binti Omar
Under Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Malaysia)

Maldives

Mr. Ahmed Mausoom (Member)
Education Officer
Ministry of Education
Male

Sri Lanka

Dr. Madura M Wehella, (Member)
Additional Secretary
Planning and Performance Review,
Ministry of Education
Colombo

CEMCA

Prof. Madhu Parhar (Member)
Director
New Delhi

Mr. Sushil Kumar Tanwar (Secretary)
Head, Administration & Finance
New Delhi

Call to Order

The Chairperson called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the 21st Meeting of the CEMCA Advisory Council.

1. Chair's Remarks

The chair wished that with changed conditions, the next meeting would hopefully be an in-person event. She shared COL's updates with the members and informed that the new six-year strategic plan entitled 'learning for sustainable development' had commenced from July 2021. Based on this, COL has developed an implementation plan with a detailed set of outputs and outcomes. CEMCA is an integral part of the plan and will contribute to achieving impact.

During the pandemic, several new things emerged with implications for transforming education in the future. There is an increased uptake of online and distance education courses compared to earlier times. It is noticed that many open universities have started taking the leadership role by offering MOOCs. The future of education is going to be blended learning. Campus universities would have to adopt the blended mode in delivering education. There is an opportunity for a leadership role for distance education institutions.

The other phenomena noticed across the Commonwealth was the increased use of videos which had lost prominence with the rise of social media and the internet, but since everyone doesn't have the same level of access to connectivity, the use of video has increased, especially in low-bandwidth contexts. There is another opportunity to make wider use of this medium.

There was heavy reliance on proctored examinations, tests and assessments and now there are new ways of testing, assignments and micro credentials. These can make education more flexible and should be taken up in the post-pandemic transformation.

COL has been promoting the use of open educational resources (OER) for a long time. Use of online courses has suddenly increased leading to an increased demand for quality content. People are looking for free and high-quality content and OER are being adopted in greater measure. The use of open educational resources should be promoted to make better quality education accessible at a lower cost.

During the pandemic people have also started giving more importance to the wellbeing of students and staff. Some institutions waived the fee and provided health facilities. There is an increased burden of the workload on students. Institutions are now taking better care of them, which is good for the future of education, and needs to be sustained even after pandemic.

Another important development is the COP26. Climate change and its consequences are a matter of great concern and education has a role in alleviating the impact. COL's study in Botswana showed that the carbon footprint of a distance learner is only a one third compared to that of a campus student because of reduction in transportation and travel etc. Thus, distance education apart from reducing costs also has the possibility of reducing the carbon footprint. COL's activities in this regard are well known. COL has setup a high-level panel on Climate Change and Education

which has five ministers on it which is chaired by an expert who was a member of the climate change panel that won a Nobel Prize. There will be a report which will be presented to Ministers of Education in Commonwealth countries by April 2022.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising from Last Meeting

The minutes and actions from the previous meeting were reviewed and the following was reported:

Action 1. CEMCA to work on development of a MOOC for parents to help them support students forced to stay at home because of Covid 19; supporting materials should also be developed as documents.

CEMCA has completed the work in this regard and a Handbook for Parents on Online Education is almost complete, the handbook would be released in the month of January 2022.

Action 2. CEMCA to develop training programmes for the faculty of OU's as well as conventional universities to help transition to teaching in the digital and online modes effectively.

Action completed. A total of eight programmes have been conducted, covering seven universities and a national project for MOOCs. Details are available in the Annual Report.

Action 3. CEMCA to increase its activities in all the member countries in the region.

Action completed. Activities now cover more Member Countries. Details are available in the Annual Report.

Action 4. CEMCA to make a more structured effort to increase the circulation of its online newsletter while targeting mainstream media as a special audience.

CEMCA online newsletter has been professionally prepared and published. As suggested, media houses and more faculties and administrators from Agricultural Universities, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and other Research Institutes, Indian Institute of Technology (IITs), Indian Institute of Management (IIMs) and other experts have been added in list of recipients.

The minutes from the previous meeting were unanimously approved.

3. CEMCA Annual Report of July 2020-June 2021

Prof. Parhar briefly apprised about CEMCA and its functions for the information of new members and informed that CEMCA collaborated various programmes reaching a large number of stakeholders from Bangladesh, Brunei India, Maldives, Malaysia, and Pakistan during the last seventeen months, thereafter, presented the CEMCA's Annual Report 2020-21, achievements in the current years and challenges. This presentation is available in an online folder at:

<https://www.cemca.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Annual-Report-2020-21.pdf>

https://www.cemca.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/CEMCA_Achievement_Report_13.12.2021_High-res.pdf

CEMCA was able to keep the momentum of its activities intact despite the prevalence of a pandemic wave in New Delhi region for two months. While achieving results the following challenges were noted:

- Slow pace of negotiation with Partners/Institutions and lack of timely responses
- Lack of due diligence in the identification of new Partners
- CEMCA's activities can be extended to School Education.
- Extended Lockdown in the year and potential for new situations that may require some form of lockdown.

4. Any Other Business (AOB): Trends and Priorities

The Chair sought members' priorities and views on the current developments in the region where CEMCA could support and add value.

Dr. Madura Wehella acknowledged CEMCA for its working with the several open universities/institutions in Sri Lanka. Several new initiatives CEMCA has introduced, and she requested some of these new initiatives like virtual labs should be collaborated with Sri Lanka. She informed that during pandemic they invested heavily on national broadcasting TV channels and have done around 8000 virtual lessons telecasted for the benefit of the kids from the primary section up to advanced level focused highly for those who had taken their public examination in 2020-2021. In universities, they have been delivering the virtual lessons but for schools' students and the rest of the university students like science faculty technology faculty having practical studies, the virtual lab concept can be introduced. CEMCA can help Sri Lanka in activities such as YOGA and other related courses. She explained about the educational reforms undertaken by the Sri Lankan especially for the science and technology, mathematics, business studies focusing of standard education covering the primary education also CEMCA 's success in working with Open Universities can be extended to other universities as well.

Action item 1: CEMCA to work with Sri Lankan Institutions on the development of virtual Lab concept for practical subjects and collaborate on development of a yoga programme as well.

Mr. Md. Masum Ahmed suggested that for every commonwealth country in Asia, an Orientation Programme for Parents for Government officials and other stakeholders on Online Education should be launched; people working in the policy framing level or implementing level and evaluation level particularly officials from the educational sector should be trained and sanitized as well. He offered to take up the issue related to the Disaster Management course with the relevant department in Bangladesh and requested CEMCA to maintain further contact in this regard. He

informed that Bangladesh is working on OER policy which was in the final stage. He emphasized the need for development of Sector skill-based courses such as Information Technology (IT), Artificial Intelligence (AI) and for Auto Mobile sector etc.

Action item 2: CEMCA to organise an Orientation Programme for Parents for government officials and other stakeholder in commonwealth Asian countries on Online Education. CEMCA to provide details to take up Disaster Management course issue with the relevant department in Bangladesh

Prof. Sayed Humayun Akhtar informed that mostly students from the open universities are employed individuals with time constraint; if text content may be converted into video, they could watch the content on their mobile phones. BOU model OER depository policy was already in place, and he wanted to implement the micro credentials MOOCs courses using model OER platform. He sought CEMCA's support on OER repository for development of MOOCs in Bangladesh Open University in coming years. CEMCA could facilitate BOU collaboration with other Open Universities in Commonwealth Asia.

Action item 3: CEMCA's to extend support for OER repository, and to provide advice on the development of MOOC in Bangladesh Open University. CEMCA to facilitate BOU collaboration with other Open Universities in Commonwealth Asia.

Mr. Ahmed Mausoom appreciated CEMCA ongoing activities, and he sought CEMCA's technical assistance for the Department of Education, the National Institute for Education, Quality assurance department and Planning department for Maldives

Prof. Ashok Ogra suggested CEMCA to focus on student assessment in blended learning which was critical to success. He also mentioned the need for a guideline which will assess the teacher performance online. He also suggested with the rise of e-commerce and online activities, there is a need for trained manpower in these areas, therefore CEMCA may consider developing some skill programmes for e-commerce and DTH technicians. He noticed different approaches and competency to deal with school counsellor and suggested CEMCA to bring out a publication which talks about the wellbeing which is of a great relevance as reference book for the school counsellor.

Action item 4: CEMCA help to develop some skill programmes for e-commerce and the DTH technicians. CEMCA to bring out a publication which talks about the wellbeing which is of a great relevance as reference book for the school counsellor.

Dr. Wan Zuhani Binti Saad (Malaysia) informed that CEMCA has been working with Malaysia in development of various programmes. Malaysia has been encouraging the universities to convert the conventional programme to ODL. The Malaysia Qualification Agency has published the guideline on good practices on Micro Credential and emphasis would be given on developing

micro credential courses. The other initiatives have also introduced in Digital learning by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), Malaysia.

She also shared with the members that Malaysia has launched its National Open Educational Resources policy which will help institutions to promote OER for visual impaired and with hearing impaired. She also suggested that alternative assessment should also be highlighted besides online examinations.

5. Wrap up

The Chair thanked the members for their participation, valuable inputs and rich contribution to the deliberations. She applauded CEMCA under the leadership of Prof. Madhu Parhar for extending its reach to almost all Commonwealth Asian Countries. The number of additional contributions had also increased and especially community radio has been used to reach the last mile. Projects in skills development have increased, which is really the need of the hour Innovations such as the virtual lab were an important development and there was scope for further inputs in these areas. The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair and the members.