

COL-CEMCA UPDATES

October 2024



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING
Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia

EDUCATION

COL-CEMCA and BAOU Facilitate a Roundtable Meeting on ODL Regulations 2020

COL-CEMCA and Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University (BAOU) hosted a roundtable meeting of Open University (OU) Vice Chancellors in Ahmedabad, India, on 7 October 2024, to review the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Online Programmes Regulation, 2020. It was attended by VCs from 12 state OUs to propose recommendations to the University Grants Commission (UGC) to enhance the ODL systems in India.

Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, commenced the meeting by reaffirming COL-CEMCA's commitment to developing employment-focused courses to improve graduate employability. He introduced a two-year initiative aimed at aligning university programmes with labour market demands and cited successful international models, like the University of the Philippines Open University and Athabasca University, as examples of



integrating skilling and flexible learning strategies.

During the meeting, key discussions centred on the role of OUs in providing accessible, quality education to underserved populations and the need for innovative, employment-oriented curricula to address youth unemployment in India. Led by Dr Nirmaljeet Singh Kalsi, Retd. IAS and former, Chairperson, National Council for Vocational Education and Training, and Professor Ami Upadhyay, VC, BAOU, participants explored the challenges OUs face in maintaining educational quality while competing with traditional institutions.



Dr. B. Shadrach, Dr. Nirmaljeet Singh Kalsi IAS (retd), Professor Ami Upadhyay and VCs of Open Universities at the Roundtable.

Quality assurance, financial sustainability, and technology integration emerged as major issues during the deliberations. The attendees expressed disappointment over slow implementation of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and called for greater collaboration among institutions to meet national needs. The meeting concluded with a commitment to adapt ODL programmes to address regulatory challenges and industry demands.

Breaking Barriers: Webinar Advocates Inclusivity in Higher Education for Persons with SLD

A crucial webinar was held on 14 October 2024, to mark Global Dyslexia Awareness Month, and sensitise Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on dyslexia and specific learning disabilities (SLD). The event, organised by COL-CEMCA in collaboration with the ChangeInkk Foundation, New Delhi, India, brought together stakeholders from HEIs to challenge misconceptions and celebrate the abilities of individuals with dyslexia and SLD.

A key theme of the webinar was the use of the colour red to symbolise courage and determination, aiming to counteract its negative educational connotations. The discussions emphasised the need for inclusivity within Indian HEIs, which serve over 40 million students.

Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, stressed the importance of changing perceptions of dyslexia, eliminating stigma, and promoting accessible education, as mandated by the Indian Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016. He called for enhanced awareness on learning disabilities and urged institutions to adopt inclusive practices.

The panellists, including Dr A. Chidambaram from Pondicherry University, Puducherry, and

Dr Sampurna Guha from Amity University, NOIDA, Uttar Pradesh, discussed the role of technology in supporting students with SLD and the importance of faculty training in inclusive teaching methods. Ms Suhana Bhutani, a medical student with SLD, shared the challenges encountered in her journey to higher education. The session, facilitated by Ms Aparajita Singh from ChangeInkk Foundation, highlighted the gap in identifying learning disabilities in India, with less than 10 million individuals recognised. The participants were encouraged to adopt inclusive educational practices to support students with learning disabilities.



Dr. B. Shadrach addressing the participants at the webinar.

Webinar on Institutional Blended Learning Policy to Strengthen Higher Education in Pakistan

COL-CEMCA partnered with Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) of Pakistan to host a pre-conference webinar titled Empowering Higher Education Institutions through Blended Learning: A Deep Dive into the Institutional Blended Learning Policy (IBLP) on 14 October 2024. This event, a precursor to the 37th Association of Asian Open Universities Conference, focused on the IBLP template and its role in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which promotes inclusive and equitable education. Participants from various Commonwealth nations discussed strategies for

effective implementation of blended learning in HEIs.

Professor Dr Nasir Mahmood, Vice-Chancellor of AIOU, commenced the webinar by highlighting the growing challenges in online education and the relevance of blended learning. The keynote speaker, Professor Sarah Prestridge from Griffith University, critiqued traditional views of blended learning, advocating for more flexible, asynchronous designs that enhance online collaboration and active learning.

Following this, Dr Shadrach gave a presentation on the history and current relevance of blended learning, tracing its roots in open and distance learning, and the opportunities and challenges posed by technology. He clarified misconceptions about blended learning and stressed the need for supportive policies in Pakistan's educational framework. He also underscored the importance of the IBLP template for HEIs, setting the context for the IBLP template introduced by Ms. Sheriya Sareen, a PhD scholar from IIT Jammu.

Ms Sareen highlighted the adaptability of the IBLP template across various educational contexts, encouraging feedback for improving the template. The webinar also featured a panel discussion on institutional readiness and governance, led by experts from Pakistan's Virtual University and Higher Education Commission. The event concluded with discussions on the role of technology, AI, and ICT in promoting accessible, affordable, and equitable education, emphasising the need to maintain quality and ethical standards in education.



Proceedings at the pre-conference webinar, AIOU Pakistan

COL-CEMCA and Changelnkk Foundation Launch SLD Capacity Building Programme for Inclusive Education in India

The Ministry of Education (MOE), Government of India, in collaboration with the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi, organised a virtual sensitisation session on Inclusive Education for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on 15 October 2024, which also marked the launch of an innovative tutorial series, "Capacity Building Programme on Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs)." These tutorials are developed by COL-CEMCA in partnership with Changelnkk Foundation. Dr Rina Sonawal Kouli, Joint Secretary (Higher Education), inaugurated the series, joined by representatives from NIEPA, MOE, and Changelnkk Foundation.

Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, emphasised the global need to build capacity on SLDs among Higher Education Institution (HEI)

staff, reinforcing COL's commitment to inclusive and equitable education across the Commonwealth. He highlighted COL-CEMCA's initiatives on SLD awareness in Asia, particularly in Sri Lanka and Maldives, and invited feedback for ongoing improvements to the resources.

The tutorials, available on the Malviya Mission Teacher Training Programme (MMTTP) platform (<https://mmc.ugc.ac.in/LearningDisabilities/CapacityBuilding>), align with India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. They aim to support HEI staff in addressing challenges related to Dyslexia and other SLDs. By fostering educators' professional development, the tutorials are expected to drive effective strategies for inclusivity, benefiting both staff and students. This initiative represents a meaningful step toward implementing resilient policies and supporting learning outcomes for individuals with SLDs in India.

Webinar on Strengthening Capacities of Policymakers and Teachers for Inclusive Education in Sri Lanka

COL-CEMCA, in collaboration with Sri Lanka's Ministry of Education (MOE) and India's Changelnkk Foundation, held a webinar on strengthening the capacities of policymakers and teachers to support students with learning disabilities, particularly dyslexia, in Sri Lankan schools on 16 October 2024. The event aimed to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and improve support for children with specific learning disabilities (SLDs), fostering a more inclusive education system.

Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, highlighted Sri Lanka's inclusive education plan (2019-2030), which emphasises accessible curricula and teacher training. He stressed the need for technological tools and enhanced teacher preparedness to address gaps in infrastructure and support for SLD students. Dr R.M.J.C. Kumara, Director, MOE, Sri Lanka, discussed the country's strategies, including increasing the mandatory education age and appointing inclusive education coordinators. He also mentioned plans to finalise guidelines for dyslexic students and expand teacher training.

Presentations by Ms. Noopur Jhunjunwala, Trustee Changelnkk Foundation, and Dr Geet Oberoi, Resource Person, focused on the importance of early identification and support for SLD students. They stressed the potential for individuals with SLDs to excel in various fields and emphasised the need for tailored teaching approaches and assistive technologies. The webinar, moderated by Ms Nabeela Ata, attracted approximately 250 participants, with policymakers showing interest in adapting Indian tools for SLD assessment and teacher training for Sri Lanka. The event concluded with a vote of thanks from Mr N.D. Wathukarawatta, Director of Foreign Services, MOE, Sri Lanka.



Screengrab from the meeting marking the launch of new tutorials on MMTTP Platform



Screenshot from the webinar featuring dignitaries and experts discussing SLDs

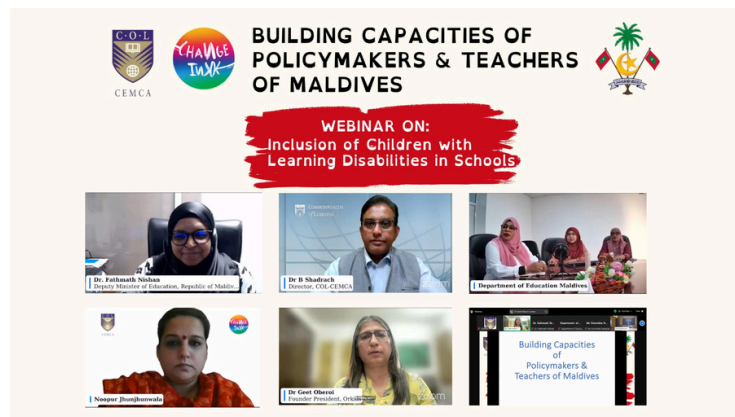
Addressing Learning Disabilities in the Maldives through Capacity Building for Inclusive Education

COL-CEMCA, in partnership with the Maldives' Ministry of Education and ChangeInkk Foundation, India, hosted a webinar titled "Building Capacities of Policymakers and Teachers on Inclusion of Children with Learning Disabilities in Schools in the Maldives" on 23 October 2024. The event aimed to enhance awareness, reduce stigma, and promote support for students with dyslexia and specific learning disabilities (SLDs) within an inclusive educational framework.

Dr B. Shadrach, Director of COL-CEMCA, commended the Maldives government for its establishment of the Department of Inclusive Education, emphasising the need for comprehensive systems to support SLD integration at various levels. Dr Fathmath Nishan, Deputy Minister of Education, shared her experiences as a trainer and highlighted the government's significant investments in teacher training to better identify and support students with learning disabilities.

Ms Adhila Rushdhee, Senior Inclusive Education Analyst, detailed strategies initiated since 2019 to expand educational access and equity,

including training special educators and mainstream teachers in Maldives. The webinar featured insightful presentations from Ms Noopur Jhunjunwala and Dr Geet Oberoi, who stressed the importance of early identification and intervention for SLDs. Ms Jhunjunwala advocated for incorporating assistive technology, while Dr Oberoi emphasised the neurological nature of SLDs and the critical role teachers may play in their identification. The event concluded with Deputy Minister Aminath Nazima expressing gratitude for the collective commitment to supporting children with learning disabilities. The webinar was ably moderated by Ms. Poornitha Nambiar from ChangeInkk Foundation.



Dignitaries share insights at the webinar on SLDs

COL-CEMCA Acquaints BMU Faculty Members with Technology-enabled Learning

The "Technology Enabled Learning" session aligned closely with NEP 2020 organised by COL-CEMCA in partnership with the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Development at BML Munjal University on 23 October 2024 provided educators with practical AI-driven tools and insights to transform their current teaching practices. Demonstrations on using platforms like edpuzzle and embedding Swayam Prabha videos empowered them to create engaging, student-centred, asynchronous learning environments.

SKILLS

COL-CEMCA and INRIA Set to Launch AI Literacy Pilot to Empower Farmers in India

COL-CEMCA has partnered with INRIA to promote AI literacy for informal sector workers, aligning with the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence's (GPAI) Future of Work objectives. This initiative was conceptualised at the 2023 GPAI Innovation Workshop, which highlighted AI literacy for all as a key priority. The project involves developing an AI curriculum tailored for the SME sector, especially informal workers, using case studies and examples from GPAI projects and living labs. It includes a blended learning format suitable for farm workers, with assessment and feedback mechanisms, and aims to reach 10,000 farmers in Maharashtra via Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU) and its Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Nashik. In this regard, COL-CEMCA signed an MOU with Maharashtra Knowledge Corporation Limited (MKCL) and YCMOU on 23 October 2024.

Starting on 1 November 2024, the AI curriculum will be accessible through a dedicated Learning Management System (LMS), with COL-CEMCA managing learner recruitment and monitoring progress. To support learners, the system will track engagement, offer technical assistance, and provide certification upon successful completion. Feedback and data collected will inform future improvements, with an impact assessment planned to analyse outcomes and gather insights. This pilot, which extends

through partners like the Indian Society of Agri Professionals (ISAP) and the Foundation of MSME Clusters (FMC), aims to equip farmers with AI skills, enhancing productivity and empowering marginalised communities. Following pilot results, the project is set for replication and scaling across GPAI member states by 2025.



Dr. B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, Mr Amit Ranade, MKCL and Prof. Sanjeev Sonawane, VC, YCMOU showcasing the signed MoU.

COL-CEMCA Participation in Regional Events

Digital Social Justice, IFLA Information Futures Summit 2024, Brisbane, Australia, 1 October 2024

Dr B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, moderated a Session on Digital Social Justice at the IFLA Information Futures Summit held at Brisbane in Australia on 1 October 2024. The session essentially explored how to ensure equitable access to digital technology and internet for everyone regardless of their race, gender, age, abilities, or socio-economic status.

Sensitisation Session on Inclusive Education for HEIs and Launch of BUILD Tutorials, 15 October 2024, Virtual

As an esteemed speaker on this occasion, Dr, B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, shared a global perspective on the critical need for building HEI staff and educators' capacity on SLDs. He highlighted COL's commitment to inclusivity and equitable education, and emphasised the importance of resilient policies and institutional support for enhancing learning outcomes of students with SLD.

Interaction with the Staff of YCMOU, Nashik, Maharashtra, 23 October 2024

Dr B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, interacted with the staff of Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU) on 23 October 2024 to explore how COL-CEMCA can align with and support their institution in achieving their strategic goals.

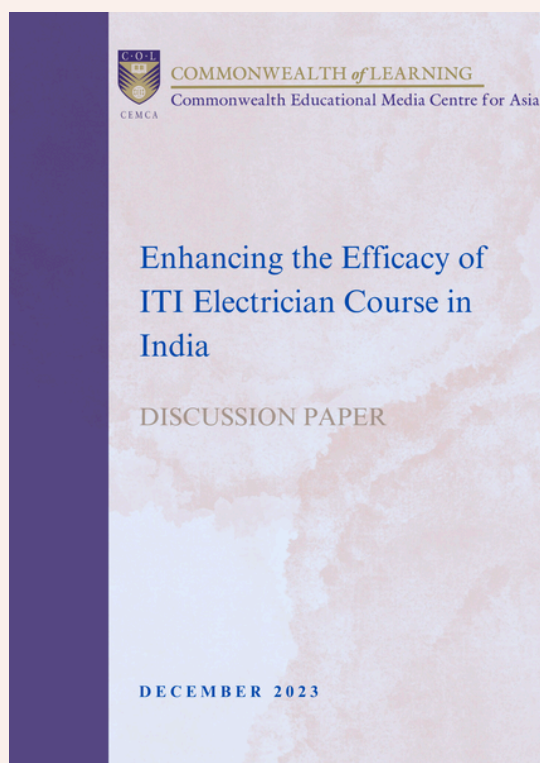
Resources

Discussion Papers

Enhancing the Efficacy of ITI Electrician Course in India by George C Varughese

This study maps the Electrician trade curriculum offered by Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in India to evaluate how innovative blended learning practices could improve the quality of training and enhance the learning experience, particularly for students aiming to become entrepreneurs. It can be accessed at:

<https://www.cemca.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Enhancing-the-Efficacy-of-ITI-Electrician-Course-in-India.pdf>



Enhancing the Efficacy of ITI Electrician Course in India

Tutorials

Tutorials for Inclusion of Students with Specific Learning Disabilities in Higher Education Institutes under Malviya Mission Teacher Training Programme (MMTTP)

These tutorials are developed by COL-CEMCA in partnership with ChangeInkk Foundation. Available on the Malviya Mission Teacher Training Programme (MMTTP) platform, the tutorials align with India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. They aim to support HEI staff in addressing challenges related to Dyslexia and other SLDs. By fostering educators' professional development, the tutorials are expected to drive effective strategies for inclusivity, benefiting both staff and students. Follow the link to access the tutorials:

<https://mmc.ugc.ac.in/LearningDisabilities/Tutorials>



BUILD Tutorials on MMTTP Platform.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Name: Roundtable on AI Interaction within the Labour Market

Date: 14 November 2024

Venue: Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, New Delhi, India

Name: AI in Education for School Teachers - English

Date: 18 to 22 November 2024

Venue: CIET-NCERT, Online

Name: AI in Education for School Teachers - Hindi

Date: 25 to 29 November 2024

Venue: CIET-NCERT, Online

Name: National Consultative Meeting on Teacher in the Loop AI Project

Date: 25 November 2024

Venue: Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, New Delhi, India

COL-CEMCA, a Regional Office of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) Vancouver, Canada, is an international agency.

COL-CEMCA's mission is to promote meaningful, relevant and appropriate use of ICTs to serve the educational and training needs of Commonwealth Member States of Asia.

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