

**REPORT ON COL'S NATIONAL
CONSULTATION MEET ON ITS
THREE-YEAR PLAN FOR 2006-
2009, HELD ON 29-30 NOVEMBER
2004 at NEW DELHI**

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The purpose of the national consultation meet (NCM) was to obtain information, views, experiences and strategies and such other inputs from a wide-range of stakeholders and feed the same into COL's three-year plan, for addressing the educational and training needs of various sectors of development in India.

Abstract: The report is organised in two parts, which focus on two dimensions of the NCM, namely, COL-CEMCA duo's inputs and the inputs of the stakeholder-participants.

- COL-CEMCA duo's inputs made explicit in relation to their future plans the paradigm shift in the vision and therefore the functioning of the two institutions. These inputs informed and channelled the spontaneous and informal dialogue between the duo and the invited participants, who represented a cross-section of existing and potential partners of COL and CEMCA.

- The inputs from the stakeholder-participants (see the enclosed list of participants), during the first in the series of meets that COL has planned to hold for the purpose, provided the range of interests, views and strategies of various key-players in the field of education and development. The expectation is that the inputs would eventually feed into the future plans of COL.

**PART ONE OF THE REPORT:
INPUTS OF COL AND CEMCA**

1.0 The Setting

Mohan Menon, Education Specialist, Teacher Training, COL, mentioned in his introductory remarks that COL has always held consultations with its partners but this event has marked a more systematic and planned form of consultation with key players in all kinds of sectors, such as agriculture, education, health, and governance for COL's planning for 2006-2009. Discussing the process of planning at COL, Menon located the national consultation meet at the third stage of planning process, after the initial two stages of 'Identifying the goals to be achieved' and 'Regional Environmental scan and projection'. After the consultations at various levels, COL would formulate the draft plan and seek approval by member countries for formulating initiatives and activities. This and a crisp account of COL's mission, functions and other facts brought out in bold the challenge before the commonwealth countries to not only make the resources available but also better application of those resources to provide better opportunities for education and training.

1.1 Open and Distance Learning for Development

Menon said that while rising to the challenge, the task before COL and its partners is to formulate COL plan for 2006-2009 in the light of

- What are the education and training needs of various sectors of development in India, which could be addressed by COL?
- What are five priority needs for which Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Technology-Mediated Learning (TML) can make a difference?
- What are the areas wherein Indian expertise could contribute to COL in facilitating the use of ODL and TML?

1.2 COL in India

Adding to Mohan Menon' inputs, Usha Reddi, Director, CEMCA, provided a bird' eye view of the wide-ranging activities of Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and Commonwealth Education Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), COL's regional agency, located in India. Reddi observed:

As per its vision, COL encourages the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies and thus helps developing nations to improve access to quality education and training.

1.2.1 CEMCA, the regional agency of COL

After giving snippets of open and distance education in South Asia in general and India in particular, Reddi introduced CEMCA, the regional agency of COL, located in India. Its functions include

- conducting training workshops on diverse themes in ODL and media use
- publishing a quarterly newsletter and other knowledge resources on various applications of ICTS in education
- partnering with several regional agencies and implementing projects in media applications for development for different donor agencies.

1.2.2 Activities of COL in India

Reddi provided the following details of the various activities of COL in India.

- Working jointly with State Open Universities and other organizations in building ODL capacity, staff training, collaboration and quality assurance systems (examples of some of the partners are BRAOU, YCMOU, NCERT, NCTE, UGC, NAAC, CEE, TNAU MSSRF, SRCs, Delhi University)
- Working with NCERT to host annual workshop for Directors and CEOs of teacher training 'Institutes' in Sub-Saharan Africa
- COL led consortium of South Asian Universities in four South Asian countries to launch CEMBA/CEMPA programme
- Support for Teacher Education in the form of

- Facilitating the development of PG diploma in Guidance and Counselling by NCERT
 - Technical support to University of Delhi in developing an online forum for teachers of Delhi schools
 - Working with UGC to enhance teacher skills through development of e-content and learning object repositories
 - Working with Open university of Sri Lanka to develop a Master of Arts in Teacher Education (MATE) to be offered internationally
 - Working with South Asian Institutions to develop a South Asian Consortium for Teacher Education (SACTED)
- Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme, located at IGNOU to provide a Commonwealth wide Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education
 - In gender issues, COL has partnered with IGNOU and other regional institutions in developing Commonwealth wide resources on issues impinging on Gender and ICTs and CEMCA is partnering with FAO to produce a multimedia training package on Gender and Rural Development
 - In agricultural extension COL has supported a number of Indian Council of Agricultural research Institutions and universities in development of ODL materials and models for field agriculturists and veterinarians (some partners included YCMOU, C-DAC, MKCL, KAU, TNAU)
 - In poverty reduction, sustainable development
 - Training of NGO staff

1.2.3 Recent activities of COL in India

Reddi elaborated on the following recent activities of COL.

- India participated in the International Literacy and Livelihoods experts meeting in Vancouver
- Quality Assurance in Teacher Education Roundtable in Bangalore
- COL sponsored 35 delegates from India to the 3rd Pan Commonwealth Forum in Dunedin, New Zealand
- CEMCA sponsored 12 participants (10 from India) to the first International Conference on Digital Libraries in India
- India is one of the beneficiaries of the recently concluded COL Literacy Project. One of the outcomes from the project is the development of proposals for course development for adult educators in India

- India is one of the countries covered by the South Asia site of the Global Distance Education Network
- Under COL's Young Professionals Attachment Programme, India has been hosting interns for the last five years.
- COL is working with ICRISAT to support their establishment of a Virtual Academy for the Semi Arid Tropics (VASAT)
- NIOS hosted a two weeklong institute for 14 educators from Asia and the South Pacific on the establishment of open schools in their respective countries.
- COL worked with UGC, India on a policy dialogue on "Enhancing Higher Education through E Learning
- CEMCA conducted a workshop to train grass roots workers of the FRCH to develop content for community radio.
- A similar workshop is planned for grass root workers of Velugu Project in A.P.

1.2.4 Forthcoming activities of COL

Further, Reddi informed that the forthcoming activities of COL include

- Collaboration with ISRO in developing a proposal for international policy dialogue on various potential collaborations and applications of EUDSAT for use in Afro-Asian region
- COL is assisting NIOS to convene a meeting of state secretaries of education to examine the establishment of more state open schools in India
- Collaboration with Anna University on a five day training programme on the Management of Community Radio
- COL is also working toward establishing CEMCA as a liaison/networking centre of ODL expertise in South Asia

1.3 Activities in India in collaboration with IGNOU, NIOS and RGF

After Usha Reddi's informative inputs, Susan Phillips, a COL representative, added a short note on Col's activities in India in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), National Institute of Open Schools (NIOS) and Rajiv Gandhi Foundation RGF).

1.3.1 IGNOU

- Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme, offering IGNOU's PGDDE and AMDED programmes to students around commonwealth countries
- Instructional design/ materials preparation

1.3.2 National Institute of Open Schooling

- •Collaborate on institutes for officials/educators from other parts/countries of the C/W
- •Advocacy meetings to encourage establishment of new SOSs and to strengthen existing ones
- •Materials development for care-givers in Africa
- •Consultancy services – for Africa/Bangladesh
- •Work together to strengthen NIOS training wing – in materials development and student support
- •Training strategy for staff working in regional centres

1.3.3 Rajiv Gandhi Foundation

- Work collaboratively to develop courses on Business English, and Small Business Skills for staff working in NGOs – both to be offered by IGNOU
- Work with IGNOU and RGF on developing a post-graduate diploma on NGO management

Media Centre for Asia

1.4 Commonwealth Educational

On the second day of NCM, Usha Reddi presented an overview of background and activities of CEMCA, which is an initiative of COL. It was established in 1994 and initially located at Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi.

1.4.1 The need for CEMCA

- The need for pooling of resources, and in bringing together of the different national and international stakeholders in the region.
- A need to promote the international exchange of media products, knowledge and experiences,
- The need to provide the badly needed capacity building in the region to ensure quality assurance.
- Equally important was the need for capacity building, and the extensive experience and expertise of the region, which, if shared regionally could accelerate the process of development.

1.4.2 COL's initiative to create CEMCA

- COL created CEMCA as a project to develop and manage a database and foster media exchange among commonwealth Asian countries. CEMCA covers the commonwealth Asian region, comprising Bangladesh, Brunei, India, Malaysia, the Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka. It is recognised by the Government of India as an International Agency with independence and flexibility of action. It works with formal and non-formal institutions in education at all levels and in formal and non-formal sectors.
- As a COL centre, CEMCA serves as the regional office of the Commonwealth of Learning in Asia and functions from New Delhi with an internationally recruited staff.
- The instrumentalities by which CEMCA is currently operating include the legal status as an international organization under the United Nations Act 1947, a status accorded to it by the Government of India in February 2000.
- Changes in the global discourse on the impact of education on human development, and advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs), and the acceptance of the Millennium Development Goals with identified sectors and targets draw on a perspective where education today is seen as not merely the formal systems, but the non-formal, basic, continuing, technical and be vocational, and life long, linked to the livelihoods, empowerment, and the physical and mental well being of communities; and ICTs have become one important component of educational provision which must seen within the broader context of the global agenda of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.
- It is then imperative that the goals and functioning of CEMCA be re-visited in the new scenario to ensure that they continue to remain relevant and appropriate to regional needs.
- Recommendations of the evaluation of CEMCA (Koul report) can be summarized into six headings—general policy; training resource function; knowledge/information resource function; the collaboration building function; the capacity building function; and the catalyst function. Integrating these recommendations into the strategic vision, the basic aim of re-engineering CEMCA is to now make the agency

work within the broad areas of ODL and technology enhanced teaching and learning in all sectors of education endeavor.

- The value of regionalisation for COL is seen in terms of
 - Having one centre of expertise as opposed to several with dispersed competencies
 - Leveraging limited resources
 - Fostering collaboration and resource-sharing
 - Drawing from and promoting local talent
 - Making COL and its activities ‘visible’ in the field
 - Familiarity with local ethos, and working conditions enable a more effective response to regional needs.
 - Enabling COL to gain an in-depth grasp (at first hand) of regional needs, and of institutions at all levels that can serve both as resources for collaboration, partnerships, and potential clients and beneficiaries of COL services

1.4.3 The new CEMCA – mission and objectives

- In consonance with the mission of the Commonwealth of Learning, CEMCA promotes the meaningful, relevant and appropriate use of information and communication technologies to serve the educational and training needs of commonwealth member states of Asia.
- In its role *vis a vis* COL, CEMCA will function as a COL outpost in the Commonwealth countries of Asia. To some extent, it will have an advisory function in relation to COL and other agencies for them to take informed decisions regarding what country/institution, and specific groups of individuals therein, will benefit from what kind and level of training and how best it may be arranged.
- The overall **Objectives**
 - To provide advice, expertise and support in relation to the competencies and the corresponding know-how required for the effective use of open and distance education and technology mediated learning in order that the regional needs in ODL as well as technology enhanced ODL are met adequately and in a cost-effective and timely manner.
- Specific objectives of CEMCA are
 - To facilitate and/or provide training in a) the use and application of ODL methodologies in/to educational transactions at/in all the levels and forms of education and b) the use and application of ICT in/to ODL in the region.
 - To facilitate dependable, cost-efficient and quick exchange of information/knowledge pertaining to all the aspects of ODL as well as technology enhanced ODL among educational institutions, government bodies, NGOs, self-help groups, funding agencies, the private sector, experts and research scholars.

- To actively promote links among the organizations concerned to establish networks by working on collaborative projects in the domain of CEMCA's overall objectives.
- To promote and take on activities that build relevant capacities for the use of ODL and technology enhanced learning among individuals as well as institutions in the region.
- To proactively look for opportunities for COL's and/or CEMCA's informed and expert interventions in policy formulation, plan implementation, problem solving, etc. in the domain of ODL and technology enhanced teaching and learning.

1.4.4 Operational Modalities

- CEMCA's work and activities will fall within the ambit of COL Three Year Plans and will derive from COL programmes and sub-programmes. Based on its observable success in the past, CEMCA will focus its work at the operational level, (at present, badly needed in the region). CEMCA will focus on the member states of Commonwealth South Asia and will seek to engage with member states in the region, building upon their competencies to share regional experiences, and to synergize regional efforts to address regional issue with regional approaches and solutions.
- CEMCA will increasingly focus on both global and regional institutions (government, public sector, non government (NGO), and civil society based organizations (CBOs) working in the region with an educational mandate within the development sectors, i.e. agriculture, food security, rural development, and environment; primary and secondary education; and non formal and adult education institutions.
- CEMCA will remain a small and highly focused organization, working in partnership with organizations in the region.
- Keeping in mind the recommendations of the Koul Report, CEMCA's activities will be restructured into four major headings in a descending order of priority: **core activities; COL Related activities; Networking and Collaboration and Cost Recovery Initiatives.**
 - **Core activities will include the development of training and capacity building resources, through training workshops and/or knowledge resources**—which CEMCA will be able to provide through workshops engaging regional institutions as partners, and through attachments, networking and collaboration. The focus will be on TOT—Training of trainers and institutional capacity building.
 - **Supporting and promoting COL Initiatives and Interventions in the Region**

- **Networks and Collaborations**—CEMCA will foster and seek to build networks and collaborations with and between national and regional institutions in an effort to synthesize and synergize regional experience and expertise.
- **Cost Recovery Initiatives**—Without prejudice or detriment to its three earlier identified function areas, CEMCA will proactively seek to partner with global and regional institutions to utilize its own competencies and develop, implement and evaluate pilot projects and initiatives on a cost recovery basis. The purpose of such an activity is to engage in a continuous learning process for the organization as well as to promote the region's extensive experience and expertise. In this, CEMCA will seek to leverage its COL support to seek additional funding and will proceed with the premise that the economically and educationally stronger nations could be called upon to support economically and educationally weaker countries of the region

1.5 COL Future

Arun Nigvekar, Chairman, UGC, made a presentation on expanding of COL's mission. He elaborated his point of view in terms of knowledge currency unit and twenty-first century and discussed the following key aspects of challenges and issues before the commonwealth.

1.5.1 ODL: Four Roles

- Catalyst for collaboration
- Resources for training
- Capacity building
- Knowledge provider

1.5.2 The challenges

- Enhanced access and equity
- Access to relevant education
- Quality education independent of geography

1.5.3 The pentagon puzzle

- Access and equity
- Relevance
- Quality and excellence
- Governance
- Resources

1.5.4 What is expected versus facts

- Access: geographical advantage and access ratio; fact: non-uniform distribution and poor access ratio
- Equity: quality at par with best places and gender; fact: big question mark and miles to go

1.5.5 Relevance: Why relevance is important?

Education in general and higher education in particular is a personal, social and economic necessity.

1.5.6 Quality and excellence: Why?

A need because of GATS, liberalized scenario and changed job market

1.5.7 Advantage COL

- •Commonwealth-owned & centred international organization.

- •Committed to ODL.
- Developed unique knowledge, characteristics & work ethics for cost effective output.
- Innovative & Responsive to Technology change.
- Ability to use the talents & knowledge inside and beyond Commonwealth.

1.5.8 Need to further strengthen the advantages

- By Embracing Open Learning / Distance Education / Flexible Learning / Online Learning & e learning / Virtual Learning in a clever & need based way.
- By Networking internal strengths of the Commonwealth.
- By Enlisting more Financial & “in kind” support from Members.
- By Bridging with other International organizations & Nations.

1.5.9 Expanding COL’s mission

- Access to Education.
- Access to Relevant Education.
- Access to Quality Education Independent of Geography and
- Access to a Better Future.

The Nigvekar speech on COL’s future provided a source of inspiration to all the participants for extending their comments and observations, expressing their needs and ideas about fulfilling those needs. Hence to Part Two of the Report.

**PART TWO OF THE REPORT:
Questions/ Observations and
Summaries of Each Group's
Report**

2.0 Comments/ observations

Responding to the background set by Mohan Menon, Usha Reddi and Susan Phillips, on the first day of the meet, the chairperson, Ram Takwale, observed that the nation consultation meet was an important occasion for all to explore the utility of ODL for development. (In the forenoon session of the first day, before the speech of Arun Nigvekar in the afternoon), Takwale invited the participants to put forward their general and broad comments and suggestions before forming separate groups for intensive and more focussed discussions. The comments and observations by the participants included

- The need for carrying out, in relation to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a problem analysis in the context of what are the problems that ODL can address and help. (Giving the example of the goal of poverty reduction, JC Katyal mentioned that India has 250 million people living below the poverty line and as many as thirty-five per cent of such people live in rural areas. They have no jobs. They need to learn new skills to translate their knowledge of traditional skills into marketable jobs. Can ODL help in this matter? Further, Katyal gave another example of the issue of sustainable development and in this context the importance of five elements, namely, water, energy, HIV/AIDS, agriculture, and biodiversity. ODL can bring knowledge and skills relating to these areas.)
- (M Menon responded to this observation by pointing out that COL is already apprised of these issues as is clear by COL's International Literacy and Livelihood Experts Meeting in Vancouver. So far COL has been working with a broad and general understanding of these issues and it is only now that COL is trying to take cognisance of them in a focussed manner and COL's expectation is that this consultation exercise will help it to formulate its future plans in a more systematic manner.)
- The need of consultation process across Commonwealth countries: Most important among the issues is that of quality assurance of the instructional material. Besides high quality the content needs to be useful both for India other Commonwealth countries. (GD Sharma)
- The need for developing skill-oriented educational packages for creating more opportunities for livelihood and in this sense ODL needs to address the issues of skills and their functionality. (A Merchant)
- The need to consider future activities in terms of sectors, for example, agriculture that requires multi-lateral power-partnerships.
- Undoubtedly, ODL and TML can make a considerable difference in terms of productivity in agriculture sector. There is the need for development of content that is related to knowledge requirements of learners. Preparing the instructional material in ODL/ TML format is a challenging task, requiring support and

training from COL. It is a good idea to first develop generic content and later adjust it to local needs and applications. (S Dixit)

- Earlier there was only one element of ODL before us to focus on and we have two parameters of our discourse. One is ODL and the other one is development. The question is: How can ODL be used for development? In other words, how can the national consultation at different levels help the institutional capacity of COL to use ODL or development? We need to focus on such questions. (VS Prasad)
- Need on the part of stakeholders to understand how COL operates and vice versa COL needs to appreciate local needs for planning its future activities. (R Namagiri)
- It is better to first plan and identify the infrastructure needs for ODL/ TML format of instructional design. (JC Katyal)
- Instead of individual demands, it is necessary to focus on group needs and community demands to generate sharing and caring type of support. Examine what type of technology would one use on the basis of need-based analysis that has been carried out with a bottom-up approach. Find out in what way we can use ODL/ TML for development goals in the case of even those who cannot read and write. Our final goal is to achieve self-evolving and self-sustaining systems of education and training for development. (R Takwale)

The above discussion set the tone for more intensive and focussed discussion in four separate groups with experts in the following areas.

- Agriculture
- Higher Education
- Basic Education, literacy, adult education and teacher training
- Mixed group, comprising those working at the grassroots level with the people

Since each group had its own special points of focus to deliberate, each group came out with varied points of view and suggestions. This is why the report provides summaries of each group's discussions rather than highlight only the common elements in them.

2.1 Group 1: Agriculture (Chair: R Takwale and Discussant: S Dixit)

The group comprised R Takwale, JC Katyal, SL Mehta, MM Das, N Balakrishnan, Sreenath Dixit. The group pointed out the following initiatives of COL in the field of agriculture in India and then discussed the training needs of various sectors, priority needs for ODL/ TML.

2.1.1 COL's agri-initiatives in India

Virtual Academy for Semi-arid Tropics (VASAT) focus on drought
Virtual Univ. for trade in Agri-KAU
Post-qualification education TANVAS
Maharashtra Univ. of Vet and Fish Sciences
Consortium for L3 farmers
Dialogue with ICAR and GBPUA&T

2.1.2 Training needs of various sectors

Farmers: demand driven, skill building for on and off farm employment
Intermediaries/change agents for knowledge transfer in inventions /innovations and IT enabled advisories
Teachers'/Scientists' competence building
Skill literacy : GAP, weather trade and market, PHT, Hi-tech Agri and IT
Research manager education : IT, TML, ODL

2.1.3 Priority needs for ODL and TML

- COALS
- Productivity
- Profitability : Cost reduction, efficiency
- Quality
- Sustainability
- Strategy of diversification
- Strategy of value addition

2.1.4 Tools, techniques and technology

- Intermediaries : user friendly and interactive – PDA
- Existing tools : print, audio/video
- Existing systems : knowledge warehouse
- Group formation : community learning groups
- Technology : meta-database, reusable learning objects, virtual expertise, knowledge grid, network of institutes./ organisations/experts – network of networks

2.1.5 Areas of Indian expertise

- Agriculture
 - NARES – research institutes, line departments.
 - Site specific, subject specific expertise
 - Already existing linkages and networks
- ODL

- Existing enabling environment
- ICT
 - Good quality HR
 - Expanding connectivity – Govt/CSO supported
- Knowledge for action and development
- New paradigm for scaling-up, meeting diversified needs
- Demand driven socially responsible models

The group put forward the goal of evolving a self-evolving and self-propagating model.

2.2 Group 2: Higher Education (Chair and Reporter: Professor G D Sharma)

The group comprised GD Sharma, VS Prasad, A Merchant, E Balaguruswamy, P Ramaiah, K Murugan, M Kaushik, TV Ramachandran. It focussed on capacity building, research, policy advocacy, resource sharing and ODL/ TML for instruction design.

2.2.1 Capacity Building

- Institutional capacity building (CB) for ODL and TML with the focus on
 - Material development
 - Technology options
 - Quality maintenance of materials
 - System of evaluation
 - LMS
- Capacity building for teachers
 - Type 1: faculty development for good teaching and use of technology- ODL and face-to-face
 - Type 2: instructional design and e-content development
 - Type 3: leadership building – ODL and TML among the institutional heads

2.2.2 Research for system development

Technologies for ODL and TML, and their effectiveness of
Knowledge delivery
System of evaluation
Appropriate technologies

2.2.3 Policy advocacy

In the areas of transfer of credits, credit recognition among ODL and between ODL and conventional systems

2.2.4 Resource sharing

Among ODL/ TML and conventional systems in terms of content, programmes of studies and curriculum and system evaluation
Among ODL/ TML of commonwealth countries
Setting of consortia of sharing of knowledge resources within India and commonwealth countries

2.2.5 ODL/ TML for development

Development of content by ODL/ TM:L and conventional systems in the areas of skills development, entrepreneurship, good governance, gender and public health issues
Technology for language translation

<p>The group pointed out the contribution of India in terms of Technology development for content and distribution Creation of reusable learning objects and metatagging Infrastructure development and capacity building.</p>

2.3 Group 3: School Education, Basic Education and Literacy (Chair: Prof Shardindu, Discussant: Dr Sushmita Mitra)

The group comprised Shardindu, MC Pant, R Mathew, R Namagiri, SK Jha, SY Shah, S Mitra. It concentrated on education and training needs and highlighted priority areas.

2.3.1 Education and training needs

- Training of facilitators of continuing education centres
- Development of need-based vocational courses for out of school children and youth (street children/ disadvantaged)
- Training of teachers on environment education that has now become a compulsory subject by the Supreme Court mandate and UN Decade of sustainable development (2005-2014)
- Capacity building of functionaries in Basic education (elementary education)
- Training in the use of ICT in Teacher Education

2.3.2 Five priority areas

- Professional development of teacher educators
- Recurrent support to literacy and adult education functionaries
- Training packages for disadvantaged group
- Pedagogy for learning to live together
- Use of ICT in all ODL operations
- Professional development of teachers (secondary/ senior secondary)

The group highlighted the Indian expertise in the areas of Development of curriculum; Development of learning materials; Development and implementation of evaluation systems; Setting up of national institutions of importance, like teacher education; Project management and evaluation; IT in education; MIS and DSS; Data exploration and learning about learners; Technology based efficiencies in operation.

2.4 Group 4: NGO Group (Chair and Reporter: Niraj Seth)

The group comprised VV Raghavan, M Menon, S Phillips, H Jaitili, Sonia, Rukmani, N Seth.. It discussed the training needs of NGOs and their common concerns and areas of work.

2.4.1 The Focus, not only on NGOs but on different development sectors

- Governance
- Health
- Environment
- Education

2.4.2 Training needs to be identified through existing networks and large NGOs working in those sectors

2.4.3 Common concerns for NGOs/ development sector concern sharing of information

- Work within the existing government run training institutes, for example DIET, SCERT

2.4.4 Areas of work

- Use of existing tools like radio that can be expanded in its reach
- Prepare development-related common material in forms other than print
- Engage with SSA, for example, EDUSAT, capacity building of SMCs and VECs
- Assessment and joint development of learning objects

The group suggested that the expertise may be found in both the government as well as NGO sector, with professionals and grassroots level workers.

2.5 Discussion and suggestions by the participants

Ram Takwale, the chairperson of all the sessions of NCM, initiated the discussion by suggesting that not only a program is to get associated with CEMCA, but it needs also to get international recognition, which comes from building partnerships for resource sharing. This exercise is possible if we can forward our suggestions on how to strengthen CEMCA to enable it to help those in need in the region within its purview.

A Merchant suggested that we need to collaborate over efforts in the area of Panchayatiraj. For example, training workshops would be held in Ahmedabad on capacity building and use of ICTs. CEMCA may provide training in the use of TML.

VS Prasad made a case for supporting smaller organizations, which have already made big difference in the scenario of education and development. It is a good distinction to maintain that CEMCA's role is to complement and supplement COL's initiatives rather than duplicate COL's efforts. In this sense, CEMCA's role is that of an agency that looks after the regional needs in their social and cultural contexts. It is better to appreciate that culture of a region brings considerable difference in the nature of ODL content and how to use TML in a specific socio-cultural setting.

E Balagurusamy emphasized the need for documenting best practices in the area of education and development so that others can share the experience for learning the right way to proceed with their own initiatives.

S Dixit pointed out that for learning purposes documentation of what did not succeed is more helpful than the success stories. Learning about the reasons and nature of failures in certain cases, others may avoid those mistakes in their own cases. CEMCA may consider documenting even those cases where goals were not achieved and go into the reasons for failure.

U Reddi made explicit that CEMCA's main role is collaboration and it cannot take up such tasks as documenting failures of programmes. and projects. This is also not a politically correct step for an organization to follow. CEMCA is more interested in group-based action that targets community interests.

M Menon expressed agreement with CEMCA's position and elaborated that COL has now begun to extend its outreach beyond open universities, and open schools. His opinion is that with the shift toward expanding the scope of activities, there will be more strengthening of partnerships to ensure quality maintenance, for example partners like CEE may carry out the activities of documenting successful and not so successful projects and programmes. In the next five years, the partners would be carrying out capacity building activities and they should be encouraged to evolve further partnerships. Stronger partners may then perform functions of bringing out documentation that would provide experience sharing and learning from them.

R Takwale held that partnership over the matter of quality assurance in education and training has to perform two activities, namely, quality assessment in teacher training and internal quality assessment. He posed the question: Can one create interested groups to support internal quality assessment? Of course the assessment needs to be done on the basis of equality rather than empire building.

M Menon posed another question: Is it possible to facilitate the process of making available training in using technology through CEMCA, which may have direct access to resources stored with different consortia, promoted by CEMCA?

U Reddi pointed out that it may not be possible to deal with all aspects of every issue in this manner but certainly in appropriate contexts, it is possible to work in some specific sectors to work out feasibility of such a facilitative process.

A large number of participants expressed their concern over the scant use of multi-media resources by learners and therefore the situation of wastage of resources. They pointed out the need for working out ways and means to ensure better utilization of already available good quality resources.

In response several participants offered their suggestions, which have been summarized below.

- The use of multi-media-based resources needs to be made a compulsory part of evaluation methodology to ensure their use by learners (M Menon)

- Offering the programme in one mode only and expecting all learners to follow the technology based learning as a given fact (R Takwale)
- Encouraging learners to shed off the fear of new technology by making available opportunities of experiencing the new technology without attaching the same to the fear of failing the examination. This may be a slow process but its result may be long-term adoption of new technology by learners (S Jain)

2.6 The wrap-up

R Takwale encouraged the ideas of creating networks of networks to be crystallized in concrete terms. For example, S Dixit has already been carrying out demonstrations of the use of technology in training. The question is, Can one use technology in the context of one issue and then use it in other contexts too?

P Ramaih brought up the concern of database in regional languages. Without this resource it becomes quite difficult to operate in the regions where learners are not proficient in English.

M Kaushik made a case for studying learners' needs before embarking on preparing ODL/ TML content.

R Takwale made the final observations regarding the knowledge world being permeated with IT and emphasized the need for personalized technology, networking and the need for sorting out how we are going to function in terms education and training for development in ODL format. He asked if hotel service can be personalized with the help of technology why is it not possible to use technology for personalizing education too? CEMCA's objectives have now become more broad-based and we are witnessing a new culture of the use of technology in every aspect of modern living. In this scenario we need to make education more effective through the use of technology. Knowledge and technology both are important factors and we can access both if we share our resources. We need to look at resources in sharable form through creation of consortia. Such arrangements can practice cost sharing to bring down the cost by considerable percent. Take the example of Pune University, which has carried out personalized, online admissions and gave itself a handsome cut in cost. Technology gives access to larger numbers and that is why it is worth taking up the challenge of using technology for benefits to learners and thus ensuring development of larger number of beneficiaries. Takwale extended his best wishes to everyone in this venture of ODL/ TML for development.

U Reddi extended thanks to all.

2.8 Outcomes

Did the NCM address the questions (see 1.1) raised by M Menon? The report shows that the participants/ stakeholders came out clearly with

- The need to use ODL/ TML in development sectors of agriculture, higher education, basic and adult education, literacy and teacher training. The NGO sector voiced its need of the use of ODL/ TML in governance and networking.

- Five priority needs of
 - i) Problem-analysis in terms of MDGs in the context of COL's missions and functions

 - ii) skill-oriented learning packages

 - iii) use of ODL/ TML in training farmers and others engaged in agriculture

 - iv) infrastructure needs for utilizing ODL/ TML in instruction design

 - v) use of ODL/ TML for evolving self-sustaining systems of education and training for development.

- Lastly, each of the four groups identified the range and scope of Indian expertise that can contribute to COL in facilitating the use of ODL and TML.