



Mid- Term Review Report

OER Policy and Implementation Of Blended Approach through eLearning at Bangladesh Open University

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1 Project Background

OER Policy and Implementation of Blended Approach through eLearning at Bangladesh Open University is a small-scale project to pilot OER activities and capacity enhancement programmes (CEP). The project emphasizes on Capacity Enhancement taking BOU as a whole so that academic, non-academic and support manpower get orientation to implement OER policy at their individual levels. The overall objective of the project is to review the existing OER policy of Bangladesh Open University, to develop manpower through CEP and to enforce the OER policy for implementing a blended OER-enabled Higher Education (HE) programme, Master of Business Studies (MBS) at Bangladesh Open University (BOU) and include practical recommendations from implementation experience for other BOU programmes. Further, one of the specific objectives of the project is to prepare, develop, adopt and launch MBS Programme during this project period.

Open School has been offering Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS) since 2006, but these BBS students didn't have opportunity to join Master Programme after BBS completion. Through implementing OER, BOU is starting to offer MBS programme, which is a sustainable and visible output of the project. Along with that, another sustainable activity of the project is that through creating a repository in the university, there will be a regional language- Bengali language based OER basin in South Asia.

The main outputs of the project are:

- OER Action Plan prepared and approved by all relevant BOU authorities;
- Strengthening Capacity of Key BOU stakeholders (policy-makers, academics and officials);
- Networking and information exchange established within BOU schools and various departments;
- One OER-enabled Programme implemented at BOU.

The project is executed by the Open School and Training & Research Unit of Bangladesh Open University. Due to the nature of the project, the implementation of project activities is done by the Project Implementation Team. Overall management of the project is responsibility of Project Team consisting of 4 members:

- Professor Sufia Begum, Dean, School of Education - Member
- Ms. Sabina Yeamin, Dean and Associate Professor, Open School – Member
- Mr. Md. Mizanoor Rahman, Assistant Professor, Open School-Team Leader
- Mr. A K M Iftekhar Khalid, Deputy Director (Training), Training & Research Unit -Member Secretary.

Professor Dr. M A Mannan, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Bangladesh Open University always suggested and assisted towards managing the project activities and always keeps an open door towards the project team for getting advice towards implementing the project. From CEMCA, Delhi, Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi, Program Officer (Education) provided also prompt supports to BOU Team for the successful management and implementation of the project activities on right time.

2 Purpose of the evaluation

The Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) is intended to provide a complete overall assessment of the last six months period of the project. The MTE provides an opportunity to critically assess administrative and technical strategies, issues and constraints associated with CEMCA initiative. The evaluation gives recommendations for improving the potential of the project to achieve expected outcomes and meet objectives within the project calendar.

3 Key issues addressed

- To review the overall performance against the Project objectives as set out in Project profile;
- To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Project;
- To critically analyze the implementation of the Project;
- To assess Project outcomes to date and review planned strategies and plans for achieving the objectives of the Project within the stipulated time;
- To assess Project relevance to BOU priorities;
- To provide guidance for the future Project activities;

4 Methodology of the Evaluation

The activities are specific and on request from the CEMCA, this document has been prepared by the following personnel who are already in the project management. The Team comprises of:

- Md. Mizanoor Rahman – Team Leader
- AKM Iftekhar Khalid – Member

The MTE has been undertaken through a combination of processes including a desk study, document analysis and interviews CEP participants.

The methodology for the evaluation covered the following areas:

- Desk study review of all relevant Project documents;
- Consultations with selected Deans/Directors,
- Interviews with stakeholders
- Officials of the BOU e-Learning Center
- Programmers of the BOU Computer Department

5 Findings and Conclusions

The report covers three main areas:

- Project Delivery
- Project Implementation
- Project Finances

5.1 Key Observations from CEP participants/project team

- Most of the CEP participants are hopeful and supportive to implement the OER in Bangladesh Open University as well as in Bangladesh;
- Access to Web for all students is a concern ;
- Concern over the implementation of all programmes through OER;
- Project has had significant impact with BOU academic/officials by providing support for workshops and training programmes;
- There is less communication between project team and CEP participants;

- Important that the OER policy developed is incorporated into operational plans by the computer department;
- Project team are very positive in assisting the press;
- Project promotes international co-operation;
- The project is viewed as having an impact at national, regional and international levels;
- There is a need to extend the duration of the project, if the legal procedure takes time;

6 Project Delivery

The project has five stated objectives (presented above). An estimate of completion of each of these objectives was given by the Project profile. These estimates were considered by the Evaluation Team to be consistent with the other reports submitted to CEMCA/BOU.

6.1 Objective 1 – Policy issues

This was considered to be 100% complete. It clearly identified why the OER is not yet implemented although the policy was in place in 2014. Policy-makers were not conversant with the OER issues before launching this project. Now OER and OER policy at BOU is well known to many policy makers, academic and officials of the University.

6.2 Objective 2 – Review of policy

The project had been gone through a critical review of the existing OER policy. The review of the OER policy promoted towards the implementation of OER for the academic materials of the University.

6.3 Objective 3 – Policy-makers informed

28 Policy level people were trained on OER issues. This objective is 100% achieved.

6.4 Objective 4 – CEP for academic and officials

30 academics were trained;
37 officials were trained;
This objective is 100% achieved;

6.5 Objective 4 – One OER repository for a Programme delivery

Some aspects of this component are complete and operational (e.g. web) although in need of continual maintenance. Dissemination of project information is on-going to general public, press and other stakeholders e.g. education ministry, primary education, other relevant ministries.

On the basis of the quarterly reports, discussion with project staff and with stakeholders, the project is proceeding close to the original plan.

One pilot project was brought forward to enable the outputs of these to be assessed whilst the CEMCA/BOU project was still operational. The start of development of the MBS Programme was delayed to the second to enable more information to be available from the OER project. However, the following things for MBS programme have been completed:

- MBS regulation is drafted;
- MBS curriculum is drafted;
- To be placed in the next available Academic council;

50% of this objective is achieved and by the end of June 2017, it is expected to reach towards a tangible output, launching the MBS programme.

6.6 Project Implementation

- **Project Execution** – the project appears to be well planned and executed as the project activities had been completed on expected time-frames. Where changes to the programmes have been requested, the revised timescales have been adhered to.
- **Professionalism of the project staff** –It shall be noted that despite comprehensively small staff, they are also experts in their own fields. All interviewed stakeholders have also been agreed that the project management performance is excellent.
- **Project Administration** – Financial management of this project is controlled from the University Offices. All legal procedures for financial management appear to be in place as Accounts and Finance Division verifies each component of the expenditure of the project and forward for necessary approval to the University Authority. The BOU Authority is allocating necessary infrastructures for implementing the project objectives. Technical administration of the components is undertaken by the expert responsible in collaboration with the Project Committee.
- **Project Planning** – Planning for OER policy implementation and Capacity Development is reviewed on a regular basis by Project Committee in collaboration with CEMCA personnel specially Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi. Thus, the project planning appears to be satisfactory.

7 Project Finance

7.1 Financial Planning

- The project is financed by CEMCA, Delhi. But there was a bridge finance applied when the money was in transit. BOU project committee members had to finance the CEP events. This created a temporary problem for the project personnel because they were using their own money for completing the project activities at a right time.

7.2 Disbursements

There were significant cash disbursements from the project other than reimbursement of travel/accommodation for participants at Capacity Development workshops / seminars.

7.3 Effectiveness of funding mechanisms

A number of issues regarding the operation of the CEMCA/BOU processes were highlighted. These have been brought to the attention of CEMCA/BOU by the project team before, however the key concerns raised during the discussions included:

- Considerable time is required to get budget approval;
- Significant problems have arisen from the introduction by CEMCA/BOU of new project management / financial management. The new system does not provide sufficient detail to manage the project. These problems have been acknowledged by CEMCA/BOU but there is no solution as yet.
- Payments from CEMCA/BOU are made to the project in USD but payments to sub-contractors have to be made in local currency - Taka. Exchange rate risk was acute. VAT regulation sometime found very crucial.

8 Sustainability and cross-cutting issues

Sustainability of project organization, which is executing the project, is important aspect from the project financial point of view. BOU is a digital University which uses technology e.g. proadcast technology and open accessed materials have been operational before the CEMCA/BOU project though the materials were not under Creative Common License. Therefore, acceptance of OER for the University is not the option only; it has been the important part of its technology use. For sustainability, BOU shall provide its manpower and infrastructures for conducting the OER activities in Bangladesh and in addition, CEMCA shall draw its attention to support of the component. In this way, it gives the indication of mainstreaming which, in turn, says the sustainability of the project.

About 40% female participated in the CEP for Academics (Master Trainer) and 5/4 academics have been identified as Master Trainers for the forthcoming CEP for BOU teachers.

The project supports the digital-Bangladesh promise VISION 2021 as well as the achieving the sustainable goals for ensuring quality for high education. From the interviews with the BOU staff, it is understood that OER has been an inevitable part of BOU activities.