



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

**Report: High Level
Roundtable for
Vice Chancellors &
Senior Officials of
Institutions**

Commonwealth of
Learning (COL) and Asia
eUniversity (AeU)

July 29-30, 2022

Penang, Malaysia

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Executive Summary

The third edition of Commonwealth of Learning's (COL) Vice Chancellor's Roundtables was held from July 29–30, 2022 in Penang, Malaysia. It was co-organized by the Asia eUniversity (AeU), Malaysia.



With 'Quality Higher Education for Sustainable Development' being the overarching theme of the Roundtable, it focused on six sub-themes, namely:

- Innovations during COVID-19;
- The Role of Universities in Promoting SDG 4;
- Equity and Inclusion;
- Technology for Quality Education;
- Employability – Focusing on Reskilling;
- and Building Resilient Institutions.

The Roundtable meeting was attended by 33 participants from 17 countries with several of them from the host institution. The Caribbean was the only region which was not represented in the meeting. The participants included representatives from campus institutions, virtual universities, open schools, TVET institutions and qualifications authorities. It provided an opportunity to share and learn from peers around the identified sub-themes and develop collaborative action plans to materialize these.

The intense and participatory workshop consisted of 90-minute moderated plenary sessions on the six sub-themes. During these sessions, each panellist made a short presentation, that led to profound panel discussion around it with contributions from the floor as well. The final session was structured as group work where five questions were discussed, and recommendations were generated for further action.

Following are the key points/issues raised around the sub-themes by participants during the Roundtable meeting:

Innovations during COVID-19

- Open and Distance Learning (ODL) requires revision in policy to promote flexible education supported by sound pedagogy.
- National quality assurance bodies need to reconsider the calculation of Student Learning Time (SLT) in the context of ODL, and the adherence to Outcome Based Learning (OBE) should be accepted for assessment.
- Ensure equal access to technology, Internet and devices for all learners, and enhance their digital literacy so that they can make optimum use of technology.
- Universities should review their existing models to adapt to the online mode and adopt a learner-centric approach with a focus on blended technologies/various permutations.
- Open Educational Resources (OER) are indispensable for online educators.
- More open education initiatives are required to facilitate inclusion (short and stackable courses must be investigated as another pathway to education).
- Maintain a standard/common framework for quality assurance.
- Use of future technologies, such as Virtual Reality, and Metaverse for skilling is expensive, and requires funding.
- Encourage employers to accept and recognize Micro Credentials (MCs), quality assurance agencies can develop policies to support MCs. These can be mainstreamed into the national qualification frameworks.

Role of Universities in Promoting SDG 4

- Upscale open, online and distance education to increase access to quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, as per SDG4.
- National quality assurance and accreditation agencies are vital for OFDL educational providers to sustain their delivery, and for newcomers to be able to adopt more flexible learning modes.
- National and international collaboration.
- Universities to advocate for inclusive and progressive policies at institutional, national and international levels.
- Integrate a green learning agenda for sustainable education that safeguards the interests of future generations.

- Higher Education Institutions should have a roadmap on SDGs, and on transforming education by optimizing the use of facilities and resources.

Technology for Quality Education

- Technology is the only way to ensure that education is accessible to all. It should be utilized to assist learners' learning.
- Focus on providing short courses online to enhance skills, leading to increased importance of Micro Credentials (MCs).
- The Virtual University of Pakistan (VUP) has a system to monitor students' activities, the time spent on videos and modules, and installing pre and post assessment. It employs chatbots, moderated discussion boards, and ticketing systems to streamline administrative matters, and has created several question banks categorized by Bloom's taxonomy.
- To address learners' needs, VUP delivers content asynchronously using AI, Big Data, Deep Learning, Blockchain, animation and graphics, and analytics to inform learners about their strengths and weaknesses.
- To address low interaction between facilitators and learners, Prof. Olufemi Peters suggested the adoption of flipped classroom models, and meetings students once a week during the semester.
- Universities should invest in state-of-the-art studios, equipment, and new cloud resources to serve a large number of students and build capacity for in-house maintenance of IT infrastructure.
- The Zambia Quality Assurance Framework (ZAQA) focuses on the outcomes instead of the process. QA must be enhanced around the new technology to maintain transparency and trust.
- Capacity building of instructors is important, and it also requires a quality standard to evaluate the online mode, which is different from conventional evaluation.

Graduate Employability – Focusing on Reskilling

- Universities should drive skill development by developing skill-oriented curriculum aligned with the requirements of the global market to address the challenges of graduate employability and prepare them for the global market.
- The graduates taught via virtual platforms during COVID-19 lack practical skills as well as other qualities such as leadership, problem-solving, analytical thinking and communication.
- Universities should revise their curriculum to embed soft skills and people skills while teaching subject-specific skills. They should partner with public and private sector institutions for workplace learning and internship/apprenticeship opportunities.
- They should create learner support units and industry liaison centres and organize career guidance seminars to encourage a start-up culture in the university system.

- Acquisition of a single skill or a set of knowledge does not guarantee employability. It is a multi-layered concept influenced by a variety of factors, such as education policy, curriculum design and implementation.
- Universities can play a special role in the identification of competencies and qualifications relevant to the job market by actively participating in and analysing the labour market data.
- Universities should strive to embed and integrate new competencies and qualifications in curriculum, training regulations and qualifications frameworks, especially by noting the need for basic, foundational, transversal and cross-cutting skills.

Equity and Inclusion

- There is a need for developing country-specific strategies during emergencies, such as the provision of laptops/desktops to academics apart from training to cope with emergencies, verification of students' access to right tools and devices, and extension of governmental assistance.
- The Virtual University of Pakistan (VUP) leverages graphic designers, and Extended Reality (XR) technologies and tools to create content in sign language for differently abled people.
- Their attempts towards offering free education to transgender persons and scholarships to girls have been successful inclusion initiatives.
- In the case of Seychelles, inclusion and equity have been achieved through the continuous training of teachers, enhancement of technology access and infrastructure, financial support, timely and relevant communication to target groups, and partnership and collaboration with stakeholders at local, regional, and global levels.
- Two models that helped in leaving no one behind during the Covid-19 pandemic in the Philippines were:
 - the RAPID model, which helped to rapidly analyse the instructional design with the aim of reviewing the learning objectives and the relative assessment techniques for any change that can be brought about in the instructional design. The process also takes into consideration the availability of tools and platforms for introducing blended methods of teaching.
 - the BOLD model, which helped in emergency teaching design.
- The use of Open Educational Resources (OER) and other digital tools were instrumental in reducing the cost, improving the quality and rolling out a quick contingency plan during the COVID-19 times.
- In Namibia, with a special focus on persons with disability, the following steps were taken to ensure that no one, even with disability, would be left out of the education process:
 - A. provision for disclosure of diverse and special education needs;
 - B. appointment of student counsellors for extending assistance;
 - C. development of a database of persons and their needs; and

- D. knowledge sharing among the examining bodies to prepare special examinations.
- To include the excluded, especially persons with disabilities, it is important to ensure their access to the curriculum, creation of braille centres for the visually impaired, provision of psychological support, financial support and scholarships and enhanced use of assistive technologies.

Building Resilient Institutions

- The panel agreed to build resilience to the threats, be it a financial crisis, disease outbreaks or the effects of climate change and terrorism. Universities must turn the challenges into opportunities by being flexible and making necessary adjustments to ensure the accrual of long-term benefits. This can be done by developing intellectual capabilities, raising resources and using feedback to build resilience.
- As universities and higher and vocational educational institutions are the prime implementers of job-ready curriculum and prepare the workforce for the future, they should have the necessary ICT infrastructure to deliver courses in blended modes, using the latest techniques in curriculum delivery. Teachers should have the right competences and be a part of regular and continuous professional development programs in training methodologies and in the use of technologies for teaching and learning purposes.
- The quality assurance systems developed in Sierra Leone with support from COL led to designing a system for credit transfers and vertical and horizontal mobility of students between and across vocational and academic fields of studies.
- To prepare graduates for the future, emphasis should be placed on the development of a robust Quality Assurance Policy for face-to-face and Online and Distance Learning provisions.
- Another method of building resilience is through the establishment of multi-stakeholder systems that are engaged in scaling up skilling provisions, and for facilitating research and development.

The panel discussions around the sub-themes were followed by group discussions on five key questions:

What leadership role can institutions play moving forward as hybrid learning is here to stay?

Higher Education Institutions should enhance technological capacity and train teachers in the use of hybrid learning approaches. A concerted attempt should be undertaken to be innovative in delivering hybrid learning. In addition, there is also the need to change the public perception of hybrid learning and ODL.

What strategies are required for reaching the unreached?

Public-private partnerships and the deployment of targeted delivery methods will bring education closer to people, including Indigenous groups and persons with disability. The use of Open Educational Resources (OER) can help to cut costs in the development of courseware and to reach the unreached.

Are universities providing leadership in modifying sustainable behaviour of people and the planet?

Higher Education Institutions should not only be aware of all SDGs, but actively engage with the community to understand the current behaviour. They should demonstrate their leadership position in developing green curricula to promote sustainable behaviour and address problems faced by the community.

What are the lessons learned during COVID-19 times that would make universities conduct their businesses differently?

The COVID-19 pandemic taught universities the need for developing curriculum, assessments and learning approaches differently from the traditional ones. There is a need for quality assurance, although QA cannot help in sustaining ODL institutions alone. It is also important to develop marketing methods to ensure its uptake. The pandemic also helped Higher Education Institutions to realise the positive effects of work from home and learn anywhere anytime.

What innovations are required to build resilience?

Most importantly, Higher Education Institutions should focus on funding and student enrolment. They should be able to generate resources independent of government sources. This is possible when they have a strategy to introduce multi-modal pathways, delivery systems and exit and entry options.

List of Abbreviations

- Artificial Intelligence – AI
- Asia eUniversity – AeU
- Commonwealth of Learning – COL
- Open and Distance Learning – ODL
- Open Educational Resources – OER
- Higher Education – HE
- International Council of Distance Education – ICDE
- Micro Credentials – MC
- Quality Assurance – QA
- Sustainable development goals – SDGs
- Technical Vocational Education and Training – TVET
- Virtual University Pakistan – VUP

Introduction

Higher Education institutions are going through unprecedented times. The Covid-19 pandemic forced universities to adopt emergency remote teaching to help continue teaching and learning during the lockdowns. While the use of technology helped draw attention to the benefits of distance learning, it further exacerbated several underlying issues related to equity and inclusion. For example, access to technology was not equitable, even in the best institutions around the world, and those with limited bandwidth and poor study locations faced challenges in accessing their studies. The quality of even the most highly rated institutions was called into question due to the unplanned and *ad hoc* adoption of online learning, where neither the teachers nor the administration was prepared. Many universities are now facing the challenge of student recruitment and financial sustainability as students are also migrating to online delivery.

In addition to the current challenges, it is also important to note the role of the universities in national development and strengthening economies. The focus of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) is to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’ by 2030. One of the targets of SDG4 is to “ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.” In addition, universities also play a critical role in research and development to achieve other SDGs.

In the past, open universities constantly aspired to achieve ‘parity of esteem’ with campus institutions. Today campus universities have much to learn from the experience and expertise of open universities. Are the distinctions between distance and in person approaches still relevant? Or is higher education moving in a direction where competencies acquired will matter more than modes of delivery?

About the Roundtable

Recognising the role of universities, in the post-Covid environment, the fourth edition of the Vice-Chancellor’s Roundtable focused on “Quality Higher Education for Sustainable Development.” The event was jointly organised by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada and Asia eUniversity (AeU), Malaysia. The two-day workshop provided an opportunity to share and learn from peers and develop collaborative action plans. During the event, the following areas were discussed and facilitated by experts: Role of universities in promoting SDGs; Education technology for quality education; Graduate employability; Equity and inclusion in higher education; Innovations during Covid-19; Future proofing universities.

Objectives

- Discuss key developments and innovations adopted by tertiary institutions during Covid-19;
- Critically examine the models of technology adoption to improve the quality of teaching and learning;
- Share the best practice in providing inclusive access to ensure that no one is left behind;
- Examine the requirements of graduate employability and skills development; and
- Develop recommendations for the ODL institutions to contribute to sustainable development.

Format

It was an intensive and interactive 2-day face-to-face workshop, and the format was 90-minute moderated plenary sessions on the six sub-themes. Each panellist was assigned a role to make a short presentation after which an interactive panel discussion followed, also inviting contributions from the floor. The final session was structured around group work where five questions were discussed, and recommendations made for further action.

Participants

The two-day meeting was attended by 33 participants from 17 countries, with several participants from the host institution. The Caribbean was the only region not represented.

Roundtables had been attended by campus institutions, virtual universities, open schools, TVET institutions and qualifications authorities.

DAY 1:

Welcoming Remarks

Professor Dato' Dr Ansary welcomed all delegates. He expressed gratitude to COL delegates for attending this 3rd Roundtable meeting for sharing experiences with ODL institutions particularly after COVID-19. There is so much that we can learn with each other for future enrichment, creativity and leveraging new tools in ODL. Hence, now is a good time to gather for exchanging ideas, expertise, and experiences apart from the usual networking. Prof Dato' Dr Ansary also thanked all involved including the secretariat from COL, AeU and Penang.

Setting The Context

Professor Asha Kanwar welcomed all COL delegates and thanked AeU for hosting and the hospitality given in organizing the 3rd COL Roundtable Meeting. She began the presentation by highlighting the themes and recommendations of the 2016 and 2018 VC roundtables. In 2016 the themes included leadership, quality, ICTs and best practices and in 2018 it included Leading with Power and Influence, Challenges & Trends in University Management and Best Practices in ODL.

Professor Kanwar highlighted the six themes for the 3rd Roundtable namely: Innovations during COVID-19; The Role of Universities in promoting SDG 4; Equity and Inclusion; Technology for quality education; and Employability - focusing on Reskilling and Building resilient institutions.

Professor Kanwar elaborated on the impacts of COVID-19, which included: the transition to emergency remote teaching; the drop in international students; lack of technology infrastructure; the adverse impact on research - practical and collaborative and the drop in revenues from fees/budget cuts.

Professor Kanwar further explained the impact of COVID-19 in terms of the teacher and student perspective, while highlighting the benefits of ODL.

Before concluding her presentation, she briefly reflected on a case study, "ODL for Poverty Alleviation", that targeted 50,000 rural villagers, and was conducted by the Open University in China. The study has shown evidence of increase in income, enterprise profit and employment opportunities.

Professor Kanwar also highlighted the COL-Coursera Workforce Recovery Programme which focusses on supporting people in ODL for skilling and reskilling by learning to learn online, providing just-in-time training for livelihoods and learner support essential.

Professor Kanwar concluded her presentation by expressing her hopes that all delegates may share experiences and innovations that need to be invested to build resilient systems as well as the lessons learned and what can we do differently.

SESSION 1: Innovations During Covid-19

Covid-19 highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of Higher Education institutions and challenged institutions to think creatively and develop approaches that worked for the students while maintaining the integrity of the system. Traditional assessment and evaluation methods were no longer viable during lockdowns and closures. During this session, moderated by Prof. Dato' Asma Ismail, panellists discussed innovative ways adopted by Higher Education institutions to deliver teaching and learning during Covid-19.



Prof. Dato' Asma Ismail highlighted how the education landscape is a condition of predictable unpredictability and further stressed on the need to build a resilient ecosystem, as more unknown challenges are expected to be faced in the future. Prof. Pal Ahluwalia provided an overview of the solutions developed by the University of the South Pacific (USP), Fiji; Prof. Dr

Ahmad Izanee stated some forms of support provided by the government during the pandemic. Prof. Melinda Bandalaria introduced the Philippines Open University (POU) and provided inputs on how POU dealt with the challenges during the pandemic.

The following points emerged from the discussion:

- Open education providers need a lot of support, including a revision in policy to promote flexible education supported by sound pedagogy. National Education Frameworks need to include policies that will position ODL in the frontier.
- Quality Assurance bodies need to look at how Student Learning Time (SLT) should be calculated for ODL. This is because the existing policy is outdated and does not fit ODL.
- Flexibility in assessment is needed, and as long as the assessment adheres to the Outcome Based Learning (OBE), the assessment should be accepted.
- Infrastructure needs to be considered to ensure equal access to the internet and the devices needed for learning, as online learning requires dependable tools for learning. Furthermore, financial assistance is required for learners in low-income households.
- There is also the need to increase digital literacy to the public.
- Education institutions need systematic policy and procedure to structure their efforts to be resilient.
- Education providers also need to include the human connection in this time of digital dependency in their plan to be resilient.
- Universities were advised to look at their existing models and examine where they could adapt to the online mode and conventional universities must be encouraged to embrace, acknowledge, and focus on the benefits of ODL.
- It was suggested that institutions should look at blended technologies/various permutations by focusing on the learner as the driver of their learning (Learner-Centred).
- In the Philippines, a new model called BOLD (Blended Online Learning) emerged, which is the use of different tools and platforms to complete learning activities.
- Using OER remains a good strategy as there is a rich pool of resources for online educators.
- Models for inclusive training/capability building for teachers and school personnel was encouraged
- More open education initiatives are required to facilitate inclusion, and short and stackable courses must be investigated as another pathway to education.
- By maintaining a standard/common framework, the quality will not be diminished. Furthermore, students should be the focus and top priority of any education institution.
- Creating authentic skill-based learners, is a challenge. What is needed are discussions on Methods, Virtual Reality, and Metaverse to address this, but as it is costly, funding should be made available.
- ODL providers need to expand their sustainability and life-long learning efforts beyond the main daily operation and contribute to society and community at large as well.

- To ensure that employers accept and recognize micro credentials, employers have looked at the increase in skills as a result of micro credentials and started to believe in their efficacy. Another way is to take the short courses from accredited programs, giving them more weight. Micro credentials or MC are common in the United Kingdom, and this is because of collaboration by various agencies and parties. Quality assurance agencies can develop policies to support MC.
- On the difference between graduates who studied on campus and off campus it was said that, they are of the same standard because ODL universities are also monitored and vetted by the same quality assurance body in any country and that there are many quality frameworks available to measure the success for ODL learners. A survey on employers on their perception of ODL graduates working in their respective companies showed that the employers were favourable to ODL graduates.
- Prof. Dato' Dr. Asma Ismail concluded the session indicating that panellists were very agile in addressing the many issues or problems during the pandemic. She also remarked that new business models are needed to survive, and that flexible education is part and parcel for some countries, and it is important as it is the way forward post-Covid, to fit in a resilient ecosystem. Values are needed in ODL to future-proof all education institution providers, and quality and collaboration are also areas of importance. She concluded that mental health was not addressed and needs to be integrated in the design of future models of education.

Session 1 Presentations: [Session 1](#)

SESSION 2: Role of Universities in Promoting SDGs

Education is an essential instrument and catalyst for social transformation. At the same time, the global education system itself needs radical transformation to upgrade capacity, quality, reach, and relevance. Higher Education for Sustainable Development (HESD) is a new social phenomenon, which has grown out of global efforts to implement the SDGs and is the result of a continuous evolution of the basic concept 'Education for Sustainable Development' (ESD). In view of the above this session's discussion focussed on the necessary changes in university education and the development of mechanisms to support national development.

Professor Kanwar, who moderated the session, introduced the session theme by reflecting on the roles of universities in promoting SDG4 highlighting UNESCO's higher education global data report. According to this report there are five dimensions which are essential for realizing target 4.3, namely: participation in higher education, equity and inclusion, quality of higher education, financing of higher education and impacts of COVID-19 by strengthening online and distance learning. Professor Kanwar also highlighted three key approaches to environmental conservation, namely: greening the curriculum through environmental literacy and aligning it with the SDGs; greening the campus and site operations; and using distance and online learning.

Ms. Torunn Gjelsvik introduced the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) and its perspective to link open, flexible and distance learning (OFDL). Professor Dr Lily Chan shared Wawasan Open University's (WOU) perspective on SDGs. She said that WOU is focusing on the need to increase STEM education especially for working adults to support Malaysian development. Dr Daniel Tau in his presentation said that the role of universities in the promotion of SDGs should be viewed within the context of education for sustainable development, where education for sustainable development should allow people to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values required to sustain their current needs and at the same time contribute to shaping a sustainable future.



The following points emerged from the discussion:

- Upscaling of open, online and distance education is a prerequisite in building flexible learning pathways into and within higher education, and by that increase access to quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, as per SDG4.
- Equitable access to education for all is dependent on many critical factors such as internet connectivity and affordable bandwidth, open admission policies from universities, modularization of programmes and courses allowing for flexible pace and

progression, and the need for quality assurance (QA) and accreditation systems to integrate and adopt open, online and distance education.

- National quality assurance and accreditation agencies are important for OFDL educational providers to sustain their delivery, and for newcomers to be able to shift their provisions to more flexible learning modes.
- Universities should focus on lifelong learning as a tool to empower the entire population in securing relevant skills to support the achievements of the SDGs and to ensure that students are equipped to positively impact the world after graduation.
- Universities must ensure that their curriculums are culturally sensitive, and not perpetuating stereotypes, racism, etc. through their educational provision.
- De-colonization and co-construction of knowledge were two key issues raised during the recent UNESCO World Higher Education Conference in Barcelona.
- Collaboration nationally and internationally is key to success, which is why active involvement in global associations, such as COL and ICDE is important.
- Universities should use their voice to advocate for inclusive and progressive policies, on institutional, national and international level.
- They must build and nurture a culture of sharing by promoting openness, sharing of experiences and practices and be open to collaborate with others.
- Adopting OFDL to further access to education for previously excluded populations and generate a momentum for improvement and expansion of universities' educational provisions.
- Education systems that anchor their socio-economic development must be responsive to the needs of humanity as they exist now and be sufficiently agile to assist in the formulation of effective strategies for proactive countering of key issues such as environmental degradation, poverty, inequality, unemployment, etc.
- To achieve the long-term goals towards achieving SDGs, universities must ensure learning opportunities are available to all people, and to achieve short term goals, institutions can offer flexible programs.

How can we integrate a green learning agenda for sustainable education that safeguards the interests of future generations?

- Understanding the importance of the SDGs and incorporating them into the core curriculum will contribute to a green learning agenda for sustainable education that safeguards the interests of future generations.
- To enhance collaboration amongst open universities or with key stakeholders, policies should allow students to take courses offered by the collaborating institutions.
- One good example of a university taking action to strengthen the achievement of the SDGs is the International Spanish University which is 100% online (this is a private university). They have introduced an institutional policy for producing Open Educational Resources (OER).
- Best practices can be learned from all ODL institutions particularly from all COL delegates attending the roundtable meeting.

- The key action taken by the Botswana Open University (BOU) to support the achievement of the SDGs is by giving equitable access to all members of the society.

Overall, all panellists agreed that it is important to have roadmaps on SDGs and to transform education by optimizing the use of facilities and resources. ODL provides the opportunity to make changes in education to reach the unreachable. In addition, ODL institutions may incorporate SDG curriculum in Early Childhood Education programmes.

Session 2 Presentations: [Session 2](#)

SESSION 3: Education Technology for Quality Education

Prof. Dato Ansary introduced the session by reflecting on education technology as an essential element to consider, with a focus on pedagogy and not just technology, to be ready for the changes to come in future. Technology should be a centrepiece in achieving the SDG 4 goals. In essence, the right utilization of technology in education is important and educators are encouraged to keep in mind the characteristics of future students. Professor Dato Ansary furthermore shared the following points for consideration: technology must add value; technology should assist in pedagogy and learning should be pedagogy-focused; technology should promote sustainability; technology should be scalable; technology must promote sharing; technology should promote choice and technology must allow customization.



The following points emerged from the discussion:

- To produce highly skilled graduates, institutions must focus on the changing needs for education and one way of addressing this is by providing short courses online to increase skills, leading to the increased importance of Micro-Credentials (MC).
- In Pakistan, the importance of ODL is reflected by the increase in the number of enrolments at the Virtual University of Pakistan (VUP). The VUP focuses on inclusivity, diversity, quality assurance and online assessment. VUP's philosophy is to create learners, not just graduates and therefore its policy is to focus on learners' needs and characteristics to frame instructional design and the digital technologies framework for any curriculum. In other words, instructors should focus on a combination of the right instructional design and leveraging digital technologies when designing a program.
- Prof. Dr. Arshad Saleem shared the content development process at VUP, where it involves several steps.
- VUP leverages on graphic designers, extended reality (XR) technologies and tools to create content in sign language for differently abled people. In terms of assessment, VUP has a system to monitor students' activities, this includes tracking the time students spend on videos and modules and installing pre and post assessment.
- VUP employs chatbots, moderated discussion boards, and ticketing systems to streamline administrative matters and many question banks categorized by Bloom's taxonomy.
- To address learners' needs, VUP delivers content asynchronously, uses AI, Big Data, Deep Learning, Blockchain, animation and graphics, and uses analytics to inform learners about their strengths and weaknesses in learning.
- Prof. Olufemi Peters shared to address the low interaction between facilitators and learners the adoption of flipped classroom models, and meetings students once and week during the semester is an option.
- To address the internet bandwidth - stipends and allowances are provided to staff for internet service to support course delivery and interactions with students.
- To address the shortage of laptops among staff, NOUN commenced a device acquisition program for staff.
- Limited interactive learning resources - supplementary materials, invest in state-of-the-art studios and equipment and in new cloud resources to service a high number of students.
- To address the over dependence on external IT solution providers, NOUN develops and maintains most of its IT deployments and solutions and invested in IT capacity building.
- To address the low digital literacy skill among academic staff, NOUN introduces a sustained capacity building programs in collaboration with National Universities Commission.
- No matter the mode of delivery, quality assurance (QA) is very important.
- The Zambia Quality Assurance Framework (ZAQA) focuses on the outcomes instead of the process. QA must be enhanced to maintain transparency and trust and it must be enhanced around the new technology. QA also needs to change in the way that it does the evaluation.

- NOUN developed an On-Demand examination and proctoring that allows students to take examinations anytime they are ready. NOUN utilized many types of assessments and reported that misconduct cases were higher than compared to sit-in examinations prior to the pandemic. Measures have been taken to curb this.
- How can quality teaching and learning be achieved through purposeful utilization of new technologies, such as AR/VR, Artificial intelligence? Technology is the only way to make sure education can be accessible by all and should be utilized to assist learners' learning.
- Pedagogy is different for ODL compared to the conventional learning mode. Capacity building is important, especially for the instructors and a quality standard to evaluate the online mode is needed, as there is a difference from conventional evaluation.
- Micro Credentials (MC) focus on personalized learning to produce well-rounded and future-ready learners. The existing methods and types of assessments also need to be revamped. While MC are still new it can be mainstreamed into the national qualification frameworks.

Session 3 Presentations: [Session 3](#)

DAY 2:

SESSION 4: Graduate Employability

The session was aimed at discussing if and how prospects of being employed was tied to technical skills despite the economic downturn experienced in many geographies. With businesses going digital, adopting IR 4.0 technologies, the panel explored the link between graduate attributes and employment as well as entrepreneurship. In this, the panel also discussed how distance and online learning opportunities serve to skill, reskill, and upskill people who could be prepared as well as made relevant in the changing job market. The session, moderated by Professor Lily Chan offered a bird's eye view on the changing employment landscape with specific interventions undertaken in Sri Lanka and Kenya, explained by Professor Tilakaratne and Dr Tarno, respectively. Dr Shadrach highlighted the critical role higher and vocational educational systems could play in shaping up of the job market and the economy at large.



The session produced the following key pointers:

- With a view to preparing graduates for the future jobs, it becomes imperative for universities to drive skill development by developing skill-oriented curriculum in order to address the change and challenges in graduate employability.
- Educational institutions are required to have partnerships with the global marketplace, mainly to develop and deliver courses that are aligned to the skill needs, not only within their nation, but also supply graduates to the global field.
- There is also the problem of graduates finding suitable jobs after graduation, mainly due to lack of job creation in certain economies as well as skills mismatch between the demand and supply.
- COVID-19 pushed graduating students with lack of practical skills as well as other qualities such as leadership, problem-solving, analytical thinking and communication for they were mainly taught via virtual platforms. Skills sought by employers included the above.
- Universities are therefore required to revise their curriculum to embed soft skills as well as people skills while teaching subject-specific skills and to have stronger partnership with public and private sector institutions for workplace learning and internship/apprenticeship opportunities.

- It becomes important for universities to create learner support units, career guidance seminars and industry liaison centres to give a new dimension to student innovations and for creating a start-up culture in the university system.
- With the understanding that employability does not occur on the acquisition of a single skill or a set of knowledge, rather a multi-layered concept influenced by a variety of factors such as educational policy, curriculum design and implementation, there is a greater role for employers and the industries in graduate employability.
- Universities should strive to identify key issues and challenges that influence graduate employability; identify gaps between supply and demand; build staff capabilities in curriculum development and students' acquisition of job-oriented skills; build closer relationships with the industry; and participate actively in discourse around curriculum development; and, adopt multimodal training approaches keeping in mind the requirements of the job market, including the SMEs.
- Universities have a special role in the identification of competencies and qualifications relevant to the job market by actively participating in gathering and analysing labour market data, identifying skills gaps and skills mismatches and in the identification of obsolete skills.
- Universities should strive embed and integrate new competencies and qualifications in curriculum, training regulations and qualifications frameworks, especially by noting the need for basic, foundational, transversal and cross-cutting skills. They should have the competences to embed the above in sector-specific and occupation-specific skills and to determine the right strategies to develop effective curriculum that could help graduates become job-ready.
- Universities and higher and vocational educational institutions being the prime implementers of job-ready curriculum and in the preparation of workforce for the future, should have the necessary infrastructure, especially ICT infrastructure to deliver courses in blended modes, using the latest techniques in curriculum delivery. Teachers should have the right competences and be a part of regular and continuous professional development programs in training methodologies and in the use of technologies for teaching/learning purposes.
- Universities and higher and vocational education institutions should also embrace multimodal, technology-enabled learning practices and to ensure that new demands for micro-credentials, industry-specific certifications and provide for various entry and exit options.
- Universities also have the responsibilities to inculcate lifelong learning and learning to learn skills through their course programs.

The session ended with a note that the universities should consider the challenges posed through a variety of changes witnessed in the education and skilling landscape, and the participants agreed to consider exploring short-term skilling as a segway to graduate employability and for preparing the future workforce.

Session 4 Presentations: [Session 4](#)

SESSION 5: Leaving No One Behind

The session was aimed at gaining an understanding on the provision of higher education at the wake of COVID-19 Pandemic and the way digital technologies are used to overcome the challenges. With half of world's population having no access to the internet, the session focused on the way universities and higher educational institutions use distance and online learning approaches to increase access to quality education and training. The session was aimed at also exploring the concepts of open access, open science, open learning, and the use of open educational resources in higher education practice.

Ms Gjelsvik of ICDE provided an overarching statement on the importance of addressing the challenges with including the marginalised people in ODL programs. Ms Perreau and Dr Bandalaria provided insights on how in the Seychelles and in the Philippines certain strategies employed worked well to address the challenge of including the excluded. Dr Murangi spoke to the strategies that worked well in Namibia in including with persons with disabilities.



The following points emerged in the panel discussion:

- Considering the geographical conditions, there is a need for developing country-specific strategies during emergencies such as the provision of laptops/desktops to academics apart from training to cope with emergencies; verification of students for their access to right tools and devices; allocation of allowances for mobile data packs; and extension of governmental assistance.
- It is also important for higher education institutions to have robust technological backings for providing education on blended mode, and the staff training to manage technologies and for their capabilities to create a higher number of online courses.
- In the case of Seychelles, it was noted that the following factors were found to be important in the event of ensuring that no one was left behind: continuous training of teachers; enhancement of technology access and infrastructure; financial support; timely and relevant communication to target groups; and partnership and collaboration with stakeholders at local, regional, and global levels.
- Two models that helped in leaving no one behind during the pandemic in the Philippines were presented: the RAPID model which helped to rapidly analyse the instructional design with a view to reviewing the learning objectives and the relative assessment techniques for any changes that can be brought about in the instructional design. The process also takes into consideration the availability of tools and platforms for introducing blended methods of teaching. The second model called; BOLD helped in emergency teaching design.
- It was reported that the use of Open Educational Resources and other digital tools were instrumental in reducing the cost, improving the quality and for rolling out a quick contingency plan during the COVID-19 times.
- In Namibia, with a special focus on persons with disability, the following steps were taken to ensure that no one, even with disability, would be left out of the education process:
 - a) provision for disclosure of diverse and special education needs;
 - b) appointment of student counsellors for extending assistance;
 - c) development of a database of persons and their needs; and
 - d) knowledge sharing among the examining bodies to prepare special examinations.
- Further, in order to include the excluded, especially the persons with disability, it is important to ensure their access to the curriculum, creation of braille centres for the visually impaired, provision of psychological support, financial support and scholarships and enhanced use of assistive technologies.
- Finally, it was also agreed that many flexible methods should be considered, especially based on the context and the situation, for effective delivery of course content online and through other means.

SESSION 6: Building Resilience

The session was meant to discuss the challenges facing higher education institutions in the form of rising costs of university education, lack of budgetary commitments by governments, financial burden on students and the systemic transformation required as a result of the changing world of work. Climate change and digitalisation have impacted all sectors and the education sector is no exception. The session considered a rethink on how universities that are at the crossroads should transform into new entities that optimise their existing operations, increase their capabilities and focus on research and development alongside increasing access to quality education for improving lives and livelihoods.

The session, moderated by Professor Datuk Dr Mohammad Shatar Sabran of the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA), Malaysia, had practical examples and solutions from Pakistan, presented by Professor Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum (ZU) Vice-Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) and from Sierra Leone by Professor Aliyageen Alghali (AA) of the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). There were examples from Lesotho, presented by Professor Olusola Fajana.



The following points emerged from the deliberations:

- While there is unpredictability in the future of education, and with both public and private universities facing some challenging times, the panel agreed to build resilience to the threats, be it financial crisis or disease outbreaks or the effects of climate change and terrorism. Universities must turn the challenges into opportunities by being flexible and by making necessary adjustments to ensure long-term benefits are accrued. This

can be done by developing intellectual capabilities, raising resources and using feedback to build resilience.

- One of the best strategies to overcome the above challenges is that of using blended learning and to demonstrate the role of universities in reaching the unreached.
- There is a need for a paradigm shift towards distance learning and online provision of education and to investigate the shortfalls in the effective delivery. Higher education institutions lack the requisite facilities, infrastructure and skilled staff for effective material development for teaching and learning.
- The example of quality assurance systems developed in Sierra Leone with support from COL is in the right direction of preparing future ready graduates, which is one of the strategies to build resilience in the education system, especially when universities are having to compete with international players in the market. This effort also led to designing a system for credit transfers and vertical and horizontal mobility of students between and across vocational and academic fields of studies.
- A needs assessment study conducted in Sierra Leone which included a scan of open and distance learning and online provision of education helped to identify gaps that limited institutional abilities to deliver courses and ensure appropriate learning outcomes were achieved, including that of graduates' employability. The study took into consideration key indicators namely, good governance, financial sustainability, staff adequacy, quality of programmes, adequacy of infrastructure and facilities, relevance of academic programmes, staff and students' welfare, community services and the effectiveness and efficiency of the modes of service delivery.
- In addressing the needs to prepare graduates for the future, emphasis should be placed on the development of a robust quality assurance policy for face-to-face and online and distance learning provisions
- Equal emphasis must be placed in setting up of quality assurance units in higher education institutions that will embark on undertaking perception surveys which are required to provide views of stakeholders such as employers and policy makers about the relevance and needs of the programmes being offered as well as that of undertaking graduate tracer studies to provide a reference for institutions and employers in gauging the relevance of the curricula on offer by the institutions for their suitability to the workplace. It is also important to undertake self-assessments and reviews for internal quality assurance in line with local and international external quality assurance agencies and their accreditation processes. And in participating in curricula developments and periodic reviews. There needs to be a robust monitoring compliance to QA Policies and processes.
- Another method of building resilience is through the establishment of multistakeholder systems that are engaged in scaling up of skilling provisions and for facilitating research and development. A model based on significant NQF and Outcome Based Education (OBE) that align all learning programmes within the multiple stakeholder framework, thereby ensuring that the needs of all stakeholders are firmly embedded in the curricula development.

- In the case of Pakistan, attempts towards offering free education to transgender persons and scholarships to girls have proven successful towards including the marginalised.

Session 6 Presentations: [Session 6](#)

FINAL SESSION:



The final session witnessed the participants discussing the following questions in an in-depth manner in four groups. A good number of recommendations were made to the questions posed to the experts.

What leadership role can institutions play moving forward as hybrid learning is here to stay?

Higher Education Institutions have the responsibility to increase credibility of ODL and to convince the learning population of the veracity and the quality of education delivered through ODL. This can be achieved through a consortia approach as well as in collaboration with traditional universities which are also expecting to deliver online education to their students. In order to assume the leadership role, Higher Education Institutions should enhance their technological capacity and train teachers in the use of hybrid learning approaches. A concerted attempt should be undertaken to be innovative in delivering hybrid learning. As much the

quality, infrastructure and teachers' capacity are enhanced, there is also the need to change the public perception of hybrid learning and ODL. This can be done solely by ensuring high quality in all programs. Quality can be garnered through accreditation from professional bodies.

What strategies are required for reaching the unreached?

Concerted efforts towards identifying the geographies, barriers, and challenges that exist among the marginalised communities and their inability to access ODL programs. This will enable Higher Education Institutions to develop strategies specific to the different target groups and geographies to reaching the unreached. Public-private partnerships and the deployment of targeted delivery methods will bring education closer to people, including Indigenous groups and persons with disability. Sometimes, if it involves reaching physical materials, it should be considered. The use of Open Educational Resources (OER) can help to cut costs in the development of courseware and to reach the unreached. Higher Education Institutions should influence government policies to enhance universal coverage of telecommunication services through Universal Access Funds, established for the purpose of reaching the unreached. The use of community centres is one powerful strategy, the HEIs could try.

Are universities providing leadership in modifying sustainable behaviour of people and the planet?

In order to assume a leadership role in people's behavioural change, Higher Education Institutions should not only be aware of all SDGs but actively engage with the community to understand the current behaviour. They should demonstrate their leadership position in developing green curricula that address specific ways to promote sustainable behaviour and that address problems faced by the community. This can be carried out by being involving students who can be the partners and ambassadors in promoting sustainable patterns and in the protection of environmental values.

What are the lessons learned during COVID-19 times that would make universities carry out their businesses differently?

In addition to being agile and flexible, and the willingness to move online, universities should embrace partnerships with the private sector and industry. The COVID-19 pandemic taught universities the need for developing curriculum, assessments and learning approaches differently from the traditional ones. There is a need for quality assurance, although QA cannot help in sustaining ODL institutions alone. It is also important to develop marketing methods to ensure its uptake. The pandemic helped Higher Education Institutions realise the positive effects of work from home and learn anywhere anytime. Therefore, there is a need for new business and operational models and changes in delivery styles and modes. The pandemic taught the need for looking at the human side such as the mental health and wellbeing of employees, especially the teaching community.

What innovations are required to build resilience?

To build resilience, not only is there a need for revisiting the vision and mission statements of Higher Education Institutions, but there is also a need to ensure their operational strategies are aligned to the revised mission and vision statements. While working with the policy and the key decision-takers on one hand, the Higher Education Institutions should focus on funding and student enrolment. They should be able to generate resources independent of government sources. This is possible when there is strategy to introduce multi-modal pathways, delivery systems and exit and entry options. Micro-credentials and short-term courses will attract the new generation of learners and the institutions, realising this, should develop various learning pathways specific to individual learners.

Recommendations:

- Institutions should focus on sustainable development.
- The fundamentals that are needed for agility and building resilience include the 3Ps - Philosophy, Processes and People.
- Innovation must be made in all aspects including business models, operations as well as in learning and teaching.
- There should be more sharing and learning from other institutions.
- Institutions should develop new workforce skills to future-proof graduates.

In his closing, Professor Ansary expressed his gratitude and looked forward to the networking and collaboration with all COL members. He also emphasized the importance of multi-mode deliveries. He stressed that analogue is also a technology that has a role to play. He indicated that whether the private or public institutions, the present business model shall also be changed or modified accordingly with the Senior Management and have more deliberations. Professor Ansary also thanked the Secretariat, Professor Asha Kanwar and all the team members involved.

Professor Kanwar, in her closing, expressed her gratitude and appreciation to all Secretariat and COL delegates for their presence and support during this 3rd Roundtable meeting. This time around, Professor Kanwar mentioned the diversity and new perspectives gained from all different institutions including TVETS, Open School, Open Universities, Virtual Universities and others. Furthermore, she highlighted that innovation must be scalable. And for us, innovations must be not only in the operations side but also for students and skills that can be learned. Finally, she talked about building resilience, the fundamentals that are needed include the 3Ps - Philosophy, Processes and People. She also reminded all delegates to further discuss several topics at the next meeting which include Cybersecurity and how to reach the unreached.



List of Participants:

No	Name	Organisation
Invitation by COL		
1	Ms Frances Ferreira	Commonwealth of Learning (COL)
2	Professor Asha Kanwar	Commonwealth of Learning (COL)
3	Dr Basheerhamad Shadrach	CEMCA
4	Professor Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum	Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU)
5	Dr. Daniel R.Tau	Botswana Open University
8	Ms. Torunn Gjelsvik	International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE)
9	Dr. Edwin Tarno	Kenya Technical Trainers College (KTTC)
10	Mr. Thian Yee Wei	UniKL
11	Dr. H.V. Murangi	Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL)
12	Professor Olufemi Peters	National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)
13	Professor Olusola Isaac Fajana	National University of Lesotho
14	Assoc . Prof. Dr. Ahmad Izanee Awang	Open University Malaysia
15	Professor P.M.C. Thilakarathne	Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL)
16	Professor Aliyageen Mohamed Alghali	Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) Sierra Leone
17	Ms. Joëlle Perreau	University of Seychelles (UNISEY)
18	Dr. Melinda Bandalaria	University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU)
19	Professor Pal Ahluwalia	University of the South Pacific
21	Professor Dr. Arshad Saleem Bhatti	Virtual University of Pakistan
22	Professor Dr.Lily Chan	Wawasan Open University Penang (WOU)
23	Professor Aiono Alec Ekeroma	National University of Samoa
24	Mrs. Mirriam M. A Chiyaba	Zambia Qualification Authority (ZAQA)
Invitation by AeU		
1	Prof. Dr. Nik Maheran Nik Muhammad	University Malaysia Kelantan (UMK)

2	Assoc. Prof Zulhafiz bin Tajudin	University Kuala Lumpur (UniKL)
3	Professor Dato Dr. Mohammad Shatar Bin Sabran	Malaysian Qualifications Agency
4	Professor Datuk Dr Asma Binti Ismail	Individual
5	Professor Dato Dr. Ansary Bin Ahmed	Asia e University
6	Professor Juhary Bin Ali	Asia e University
7	Professor John Arul Phillip	Asia e University
8	Professor Titik Khawa Abdul Rahman	Asia e University
9	Professor Noor Raihan Ab Hamid	Asia e University
10	En Yusoff Bin Musa	Asia e University
11	Dr. Norlina Binti Kamudin	Asia e University
Committee Members		
1	Mohamed Suffian Bin Mohd Rasheed Khan	Event Coordinator
2	Mohd Redza Yusman bin Yunus	IT
3	Siti Aminah Bt Khalib	Administration & accomodation, F&B
4	Noor Juita Bt Sulaiman	Accomodation & F&B
5	Mohd Shahril Bin Jaapar	Logistics Coordinator / Marketing booth
6	Muhammad Afendi Bin Suaidi	Logistics / Marketing booth
7	Rosnah Amal Binti Wan Abd Razak	Rapporteur Coordinator / Marketing booth
8	Nur Fadhilah Bt Aziz	Rapporteur / Emcee / Marketing booth
9	Aisyah Melinda Rosius	Rapporteur / Marketing booth
10	Rosliza Binti Osman	Rapporteur / Emcee
11	Wan Nor Andree Bin Wan Mokhtar	Videographer
12	Mohd Fadzil Bin Khairuddin	Photographer / Corporate gift
13	Radzuan Bin Md Dalip	Driver
14	Justin Chong	Content Writer

Programme:

High Level Roundtable for Vice Chancellors & Heads of ODL Institutions Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and Asia eUniversity (AeU)

July 29–30, 2022

Penang, Malaysia

Opening Session

Friday 29th July 2022

Time: 09:00 – 10:00 hrs (Total duration: 60 minutes)

Rapporteurs Ms Frances Ferreira Director: Skills, COL, Canada Rosnah Amal Wan Abd Razak AeU, Malaysia Rosliza Osman AeU, Malaysia	09:00 – 09:30 hrs	Welcome Professor Dato' Dr Ansary Ahmed Founder President, Asia e University (AeU), Malaysia Setting the Context Professor Asha Kanwar President & CEO, Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada
All	09:30 – 09:45 hrs	Group photo

Session 1: Innovations during Covid-19

Friday 29th July 2022

Time: 10:00 – 11:30 hrs (Total duration: 90 minutes)

Moderator/Chair	Professor Dato' Asma Ismail Ibn Sina Professorial Chair in Medicine, International Islamic University Malaysia
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Panellists	<p>Professor Pal Ahluwalia (PA) Vice-Chancellor and President, University of the South Pacific (USP), Fiji</p> <p>Professor Dr Ahmad Izanee Awang (AA) Vice Chancellor, Open University Malaysia (OUM), Malaysia</p> <p>Professor Ami Upadhyay (AU) Vice-Chancellor, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University (BAOU), India</p>
Rapporteurs	<p>Dr Basheerhamad Shadrach Director, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), India</p> <p>Nur Fadhillah Binti Aziz Asia eUniversity (AeU), Malaysia</p>

Sislady Melinda Rosius
Asia eUniversity (AeU), Malaysia

Background

Higher education institutions adopted several innovative ways to deliver teaching and learning during Covid-19. Traditional assessment and evaluation methods were no longer viable during lockdowns and closures. Institutions had to think creatively and develop approaches that worked for the students and maintained the integrity of the system. Participating institutional heads will share their institutional innovative responses to help build resilient system of education. The lessons learnt and the future changes and innovations required will help develop a roadmap for resilience.

Structure and Flow

The **Moderator** will present the theme of the session, introduce the speakers and facilitate the session.

The **Panelists** will be invited to speak for 7-10 minutes in the order indicated above. The focus will be on sharing insights relevant to the topic of the session. Speakers may use presentations, if required. All presentations may be sent to mohamed.suffian@aeu.edu.my by Wednesday 27th July, 2022.

The Moderator will provide a summary at the end of the session.

The Rapporteurs will record the main highlights of the discussion to prepare the report.

Possible questions:

- 1) What were the most pressing issues the Universities had to tackle during the Covid pandemic and to what extent were they prepared to tackle these issues? (PA)
- 2) Was there national support made available in dealing with challenges presented by Covid-19? If none, what kind of support would be needed and how do you prepare to be resilient (AA)
- 3) What were the innovative solution(s) introduced to overcome some challenges during the pandemic? (AU)
- 4) Did enhanced access during Covid-19, diminish inequality? (PA)
- 5) What kind of enabling policies will be required in a post covid world to promote blended and online learning? (AA)
- 6) Building on the momentum of self-directed learning witnessed during the pandemic, how can universities take onboard a lifelong learning agenda? (AU)

Session 2: Role of Universities in Promoting SDGs

Friday 29th July 2022

Time: 11:30 – 13:00 hrs (Total duration: 90 minutes)

Moderator/Chair	Professor Asha Kanwar President & CEO, Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada
Panellists	Ms Torunn Gjelsvik (TG) Secretary General, International Council for Open and Distance Education - ICDE, Norway Professor Dr Lily Chan (LC) Vice-Chancellor, Wawasan Open University (WOU), Malaysia Dr Daniel Tau (DT) Vice-Chancellor, Botswana Open University, Botswana
Rapporteurs	Ms Frances Ferreira Director: Skills, Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada Rosnah Amal Wan Abd Razak Asia eUniversity (AeU), Malaysia Rosliza Osman Asia eUniversity (AeU), Malaysia

Background

Education is an essential instrument and catalyst for social transformation. At the same time, the global education system itself is in need of radical transformation to upgrade capacity, quality, reach, and relevance. The current model of education was designed at a time when knowledge was scarce, sources of knowledge were limited, classrooms were essential for knowledge dissemination, and higher education was limited to a privileged few. Higher Education for Sustainable Development (HESD) is a new social phenomenon, which has grown out of global efforts to implement the SDGs and is the result of a continuous evolution of the basic concept 'Education for Sustainable Development' (ESD). In view of this, it is important to discuss necessary changes in university education and develop mechanisms to support national development.

Structure and Flow

The **Moderator** will present the theme of the session, introduce the speakers and facilitate the session.

The **Panelists** will be invited to speak for 7-10 minutes in the order indicated above. The focus will be on sharing insights relevant to the topic of the session. Speakers may use presentations, if required. All presentations may be sent to mohamed.suffian@aeu.edu.my, by Wednesday 27th July, 2022.

The Moderator will provide a summary at the end of the session.

The Rapporteurs will record the main highlights of the discussion to prepare the report.

Possible questions:

1. What according to you are the short-, medium- and long-term goals towards achieving SDGs? (TG)
2. How can we integrate a green learning agenda for sustainable education that safeguards the interests of future generations? (LC)
3. How can open universities better collaborate (e.g., amongst open Universities or with key stakeholders and actors such as Government, society, traditional universities etc) to lead the transformation of higher education? (DT)
4. What are some good examples of universities taking action to strengthen achievement of SDGs? especially SDG 4. (TG)
5. From where we can learn best practices? (LC)
6. What are the key actions that Botswana Open university is taking to support SDGs? (DT)

Session 3: Education Technology for Quality Education

Friday 29th July 2022

Time: 14:30 – 16:00 hrs (Total duration: 90 minutes)

Moderator/Chair	Professor Dato' Dr Ansary Ahmed Founder President, Asia e University (AeU), Malaysia
Panellists	Professor Dr Arshad Saleem Bhatti (AB) Rector, Virtual University of Pakistan (VUP), Pakistan Professor Dr Lily Chan (LC) Vice-Chancellor, Wawasan Open University (WOU), Malaysia Professor Olufemi Peters (OP) Vice-Chancellor, National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), Nigeria Ms Miriam Chiyaba (MC) Chief Executive Officer, Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA), Zambia
Rapporteurs	Dr Basheerhamad Shadrach Director, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), India Nur Fadhillah Binti Aziz Asia eUniversity (AeU), Malaysia Sislady Melinda Rosius Asia eUniversity (AeU), Malaysia

Background

Technology not only equips students with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, but also opens up access to quality education, free from the constraints of location and time. Edtech tools such as AI, Blockchain, AR/VR etc. bring the promise of important benefits for education, such as learning that is personalized to the preferences of each student and deeper learning that is more immersive and interactive. Do these tools help to improve quality, equity and inclusion? What of the carbon footprint? Critical reflection on the impact of technology applications in teaching and learning in the context of distance and online learning is necessary to provide quality education.

Structure and Flow

The **Moderator** will present the theme of the session, introduce the speakers and facilitate the session.

The **Panelists** will be invited to speak for 7-10 minutes in the order indicated above. The focus will be on sharing insights relevant to the topic of the session. Speakers may use presentations, if required. All presentations may be sent to mohamed.suffian@aeu.edu.my by Wednesday 27th July, 2022.

The Moderator will provide a summary at the end of the session.

The Rapporteurs will record the main highlights of the discussion to prepare the report.

Possible questions:

- 1) How has Virtual University of Pakistan been adopting innovations in educational technologies to improve teaching and learning? (AB)
- 2) The metaverse is in thing today. How can quality teaching and learning be achieved through purposeful utilization of new technologies, such as AR/VR, Artificial intelligence? (LC)
- 3) What specific technology concerns did you encounter and how were you able to overcome them? (OP)
- 4) Does the quality assurance need to change and adopt to new education technologies? (MC)
- 5) How can resources be reallocated to deliver quality teaching and learning at scale? (AB)
- 6) How do you see the role of blockchain, OER and authentic assessments impacting teaching and learning moving forward? (LC)
- 7) What are the experiences of using proctoring tools at NOUN during Covid-19? (OP)
- 8) How do you see micro-credentials be mainstreamed into the National qualification frameworks (MC)

AeU	16:30 – 17:00 hrs	ICDE Global Advocacy Campaign Launch
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Session 4: Graduate Employability

Saturday 30th July 2022

Time: 09:00 – 10:30 hrs (Total duration: 90 minutes)

Moderator/Chair	Professor Dr Lily Chan Vice-Chancellor, Wawasan Open University (WOU), Malaysia
Panellists	Professor P M C Thilakarathne (PT) Vice-Chancellor, Open University Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka Dr Edwin Tarno (ET) Chief Principal, Kenya Technical Trainers College (KTTC), Kenya Dr Basheerhamad Shadrach (BS) Director, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), India
Rapporteurs	Ms Frances Ferreira Director: Skills, Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada Rosnah Amal Wan Abd Razak Asia eUniversity (AeU), Malaysia Rosliza Osman Asia eUniversity (AeU), Malaysia
<u>Background</u> Despite the economic downturn, research shows that now, more than ever, job-relevancy is tied to technical skills. Students with technical skills have opportunities to develop more promising job prospects. According to the World Economic Forum, 92 percent of businesses are accelerating the digitization of their work processes, and more than 90 percent are adopting technologies such as AI, big data analysis, and cloud computing. Students graduating with technical skills will have access to a variety of job opportunities in rapidly growing industries like IT, cloud services, and healthcare. What are the graduate attributes for employment and entrepreneurship? How can distance and online learning provide lifelong learning opportunities to skill and re-skill the workforce and prepare them for work that does not yet exist.	
<u>Structure and Flow</u> The Moderator will present the theme of the session, introduce the speakers and facilitate the session. The Panelists will be invited to speak for 7-10 minutes in the order indicated above. The focus will be on sharing insights relevant to the topic of the session. Speakers may use presentations, if required. All presentations may be sent to mohamed.suffian@aeu.edu.my by Wednesday 27 th July, 2022.	

The Moderator will provide a summary at the end of the session.

The Rapporteurs will record the main highlights of the discussion to prepare the report.

Possible questions:

- 1) How Open University of Sri Lanka has been responding to the graduate employability requirements? (PT)
- 2) How can we promote industry-academic relationship in course development and delivery to ensure graduate employability? (ET)
- 3) How can distance and online learning provide lifelong learning opportunities to skill, upskill and re-skill the workforce and prepare them for the relevant work? (BS)
- 4) What are the key graduate attributes in the context of the uncertain job market? (PT)
- 5) What measures have your institutions taken so far towards improve graduate employability? (ET)
- 6) What are the key trends in the job market? How can universities adapt to the emerging needs? (BS)

Session 5: Leaving No One behind

Saturday 30th July 2022

Time: 11:00 – 12:30 hrs (Total duration: 90 minutes)

Moderator/Chair	Ms Torunn Gjelsvik Secretary General, International Council for Open and Distance Education - ICDE, Norway
Panellists	Ms Joelle Perreau (JP) Vice-Chancellor, University of Seychelles (UNISEY), Seychelles Professor Melinda Bandalaria (MB) Chancellor, University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU), The Philippines Dr Heroldt Murangi (HM) Chief Executive Officer, Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), Namibia
Rapporteurs	Dr Basheerhamad Shadrach Director, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), India Nur Fadhillah Binti Aziz Asia eUniversity (AeU), Malaysia Sislady Melinda Rosius Asia eUniversity (AeU), Malaysia
<u>Background</u> As the world grapples with the Covid-19 pandemic, it is witnessing first-hand how digital technologies help to confront the threat and keep people connected. At the same time, some communities are facing tremendous technological challenges, with almost half of the world's population having no access to the Internet. Focusing on inclusive, resilient, and sustainable recovery from the pandemic and a closer look at the emerging issue of social policy in the context of university education is paramount for sustainable development. Issues of equity and inclusion are key to progress, and quality of higher education is dependent on providing equitable access to educational opportunities. What are the lessons from the Covid-19 that can help universities to embrace distance and online learning to increase access to quality education and training by leveraging, open access, open educational resources and open science? <u>Structure and Flow</u> The Moderator will present the theme of the session, introduce the speakers and facilitate the session.	

The **Panelists** will be invited to speak for 7-10 minutes in the order indicated above. The focus will be on sharing insights relevant to the topic of the session. Speakers may use presentations, if required. All presentations may be sent to mohamed.suffian@aeu.edu.my by Wednesday 27th July, 2022.

The Moderator will provide a summary at the end of the session.

The Rapporteurs will record the main highlights of the discussion to prepare the report.

Possible questions:

- 1) How do we ensure that no one is left behind? (JP)
- 2) How do we move forward as HE providers to ensure improved access and equity, forestalling future disruptions? (MB)
- 3) What strategies do we have for including persons with disabilities? (HM)
- 4) How is ODL being deployed in different technology- poor contexts?
- 5) Quality of higher education is dependent on providing equitable access. What were the key constraints your university have and how did you overcome them? (JP)
- 6) How national policies are influencing access to higher education? (MB)
- 7) How NAMCOL has been addressing the issue of equity while increasing access? (HM)
- 8) What role civil society can play in supporting universities to increase equitable access for all?
- 9) Propose one idea on how collaboration rather than competition between universities may be nurtured in order to ensure that no-one is left behind, and how civil society can contribute to this (JP, MB, HM)

Session 6 Building Resilience

Saturday 30th July 2022

Time: 14:30 – 16:00 hrs (Total duration: 90 minutes)

Moderator/Chair	Professor Datuk Dr Mohammad Shatar Sabran Chief Executive Officer, Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA), Malaysia
Panellists	Professor Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum (ZU) Vice-Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University(AIOU), Pakistan Professor Aliyageen Alghali (AA) Chairman, Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), Sierra Leone Professor Olusola Fajana (OF) Vice-Chancellor, National University of Lesotho (NUL), Lesotho
Rapporteurs	Ms Frances Ferreira Director: Skills, Commonwealth of Learning, Canada Rosnah Amal Wan Abd Razak Asia eUniversity (AeU), Malaysia Rosliza Osman Asia eUniversity (AeU), Malaysia

Background

Rising costs of university education is a key concern even in the most developed nations. The operations are no longer matched by a willingness of governments and students to pay for them. Technological change and a new world of work are generating calls for university education to change. Demographic change will likely mean smaller domestic cohorts of students in most liberal democracies. Climate change is leading to expectations that public bodies will be carbon neutral in their operations. Competition from non-traditional entrants investing in large scale digital delivery threatens a portion of their markets. Traditional universities are approaching a crossroads. They must rethink how to transform themselves into new kinds of entities, optimize their existing operations, increase capability and focus on research and development alongside increasing access to quality education for improving lives and livelihoods.

Structure and Flow

The **Moderator** will present the theme of the session, introduce the speakers and facilitate the session.

The **Panelists** will be invited to speak for 7-10 minutes in the order indicated above. The focus will be on sharing insights relevant to the topic of the session. Speakers may use presentations, if required. All presentations may be sent to mohamed.suffian@aeu.edu.my by Wednesday 27th July, 2022.

The Moderator will provide a summary at the end of the session.

The Rapporteurs will record the main highlights of the discussion to prepare the report.

Possible questions:

- 1) How has your university responded to assure quality as an ODL provider? (ZU)
- 2) How is your National Quality Assurance System addressing this need to prepare future ready graduates? (AA)
- 3) In which ways do current systems of education need to change? Immediately and in the long term? (OF)
- 4) As University leaders, how do you see the impact of blockchain and web 3.0 technologies in providing quality education? (ZU)
- 5) What are the foundations of building resilience? (AA)
- 6) How do we prepare faculty to respond to the needs of the future?

Business Session and Valedictory

Saturday 30th July 2022

Time: 16:00 – 18:30 hrs (Total duration: 150 minutes)

Facilitators and All	16:00 – 17:30 hrs	Group work and recommendations Rapporteurs Dr Basheerhamad Shadrach Director, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), India Nur Fadhillah Binti Aziz AeU, Malaysia Sislady Melinda Rosius AeU, Malaysia
Rapporteurs Ms Frances Ferreira Director: Skills, COL, Canada Rosnah Amal Wan Abd Razak AeU, Malaysia Rosliza Osman AeU, Malaysia	17:30 – 18:30 hrs	Valedictory Professor Dato' Dr Ansary Ahmed Founder President, Asia e University (AeU), Malaysia Professor Asha Kanwar President & CEO, Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada