



NRNA Open University Initiative Task Force Terms of Reference (ToR)

Introduction

Adopted by NRNA in 2009 and declared “NRNA Flagship Project” by NRNA Houston Conference 2010, the Open University Initiative is a long held NRNA initiative developed by NRNA community. A White Paper on the Open University Initiative has documented the history of this initiative up until it was officially adopted by the Government of Nepal in 2014. Carried forward by various committees since 2009, Open University Task Force (OUTF) is the instrument of the NRNA first established during 2013-15 period to give a special thrust to the initiative. This Terms of Reference presented carries over the same vision, mission and objectives from its past. That this initiative is a major NRNA initiative on skill, knowledge and innovation this TF works closely with NRN SKI committee.

Thus far much time and intellectual energy has been expended on this initiative but due to vary difficult ground realities of Nepal only five achievements can be counted as substantial by the future, and history will credit NRNA for this work. They are:

- (1) bringing of Open University into prominence into higher education reform agenda of Nepal,
- (2) adoption of The White Paper on Open University of Nepal developed as a culmination of years of diaspora efforts,
- (3) tabling of the Higher Education Bill 2067 (which failed due to dissolution of first Constituent Assembly),
- (4) subsequent tabling of Open University Bill – 2072 and its bringing to motion in Legislature Parliament of Nepal,
- (5) adoption of the Bill in principle by the legislature and its subsequent transfer into parliamentary committee for final refinement of the bill,
- (6) untiring efforts to gain institutional autonomy for the Open University in most difficult of circumstances.

At present Open University Bill is already in the parliamentary committee and is scheduled to be deliberated immediately after the finalization of the Education Bill, which is under deliberation.

Readers of this ToR may note that we had set very ambitious objectives for our 2013-15 term, including full establishment of university, broadband communication

infrastructure in 12 districts, functioning collaboration on best practices and best technological solutions with credible institutions. However, we faced significant resistance from government institutions in Nepal that hindered the accomplishment of our tasks. Nevertheless, our efforts have not gone in vein.

Attempting to implement our ambitious plan was in itself highly educational and subsequently we intimately recognized the value of institutional autonomy through direct experience. That forced to conduct substantial research in this matter. Today, what changes we are pushing in the Bill at the parliamentary committee are the by-product of this experience. If we succeed to advance our propositions, this will set a historic president for Nepal and we believe that a new wave of institutional reform will begin.

We believe that our time and our mental and physical efforts expended on the mission since 2008 and prior are quite substantial by now. It may frustrate many friends and may have given a sense that it is difficult to do anything good to Nepal and in Nepal. However, this mission was not about establishing one more university in Nepal but was about shifting a paradigm of a society on how it advances higher learning and it, therefore, amounts to an unknown for which people are always fearful and that makes this task a difficult one. But we have never given up in worst of circumstances and things look only better from here on (and we still will not give up even if we were to fail one more time). We have not let our relationships with other collaborating universities collapse in circumstances where what we were set to do collaboratively are stalled for painstakingly long years. Therefore, we are poised and prepared to rise and do so with better rigor. Having said that, the diaspora engagement in OU mission ought to be made logical through the Bill and then through the rules and regulations that would be made thereafter, for which the White Paper would also be a major direction setting document.

Many colleagues and well wishers of Open University might have been frustrated with prolonged lack of good news. In this regard, some wise person had said: "Work hard in silence and let your success make the noise". It sounds as if he was speaking to us. Our mission continues with significant rigor and we are nearing the threshold of establishment of Open University. It is time that we now bond together and band together with ever greater intensity.

Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives:

Vision

"Igniting the spirit of learning and harnessing the excellence in every human being for building an intellectual, prosperous, sustainable, and always-learning society"

Mission

Establishing a comprehensive research university of open learning in Nepal with extensive involvement of Nepalese diaspora community

Goals

1. to take university to people's homes and communities over a robust technological foundation,
2. to remove all barriers to learning opportunities including those of income, circumstances, geography, and readiness by mode of open learning,
3. to meet informational, educational, technical and vocational needs of people by connecting learners with sources of knowledge and skills that may be found anywhere inside or outside the country,
4. to convert the raw knowledge and skills found in the nature, society and culture into formal knowledge by means of distributed knowledge production, co-development and collaboration,
5. to continue educating and training youth that take foreign employment by facilitating lifelong education and learning,
6. to convert brain drain into brain gain by mobilizing diaspora people in education, research and transfer of knowledge and skills,
7. to offer a learning system that scales to rising enrolments and efficiently adapts to population movement,
8. to bring people residing outside big cities into the mainstream of knowledge economy through education, transfer of skills, and entrepreneurial knowledge,
9. to become the model open university of the 21st century.
10. to democratize education and massify learning by making it possible to educate all people.

Objectives

1. Establish Nepal Open University: a public open university by 2016,
2. Mobilize in-country and diaspora contributors for educational content development and delivery and in teaching and learning,
3. Secure technical collaboration and assistance from the best distance learning institutions to establish best practices and best technological solutions,
4. Provide technological foundation, content foundation for mass access to education
5. Develop bridging programs to school systems for improving primary and secondary education,
6. Become the university with the largest range of program offerings in Nepal

Our only focus now is the Bill and the establishment of Open University of Nepal. We will develop our plans based on how things unfold. At present “lobbying” has turned out to be our primary occupation. Therefore, for this time, we await for Open University to be officially release its operational plan before we set our deadlines on our objectives.

Task-Force Team

Currently the team is composed based on interests registered at NRNA Secretariat or based on recommendations made to the TF Chair. At this moment we are focusing on how the bill is going to be finally worded, how the governing team is formed, and

the type of engagement that arrangement seeks. Therefore, we are limiting the team to present state. As and when the university shall demand deeper diaspora engagement, we will mobilize all the NCCs and seek one coordinator per country and the country coordinators of the region will then select among themselves the regional coordinators to represent the ICC Task-Force to honour the kind of system NRNA has established for its everyday functioning.

The first country coordinator will take a lead to form NRNA country chapters named OUNI Country Chapter. Subsequently, the member of the Country Chapter will select/elect their own Country Chapter Coordinator. The NRNA ICC Member, NRNA country chapter President, and Regional Coordinator and Deputy Regional Coordinator applicable to that chapter will be advisors to each chapter. From each region two people will be selected to represent the region to the main task force. Once the team is formed in that manner, the Task Force will be reformed at that moment.