



Skill Knowledge and Innovation (SKI) Committee 1st Teleconference Meeting Minutes, May 18th, 2014

Present

Navin Vaidya, Hem Raj Sharma, Saroj Ghimire, Rajesh Rana, Pramod Dhakal, Gokul Pokhrel, Drona Rasali, Shree Napit, Jagadish Timilsena, Raju Adhikari, Shesh Ghale

Apology

Betman Bhandari, Krishna Giri, Ambika Adhikari

Absent

Ishara Mahat, Sunita Chaudhary, Dharma Acharya, Tharka sen, Suraj Thapa, Ratan Jha, Jeetendra Bothara, S Binaya, D Basnet, BK Khanal, S Chettri

The meeting commenced with Raju Adhikari welcoming the members, thanking the past members, and initiating introduction among members of the committee. During the introduction the members of the team highlighted their major areas of interests, expertise, and general opinion on scientific initiatives that they consider to have significant opportunities.

NRN ICC president Shesh Ghale joined the meeting to put forward his message. He highlighted firm policy backing of ICC in academic, scientific and innovative pursuits and showed his keen interest to see credible results in NRNA initiatives like Open University, Nepal Science Foundation, and SKI inventory. He showed his eagerness to see some tangible outcomes in the coming six months and requested the committee members to bring forth project recommendations to the ICC. Those recommended projects will be tabled in forthcoming ICC strategic meeting. He preferred that these projects take shape within the next year or two, and regular progress gets disseminated through NRNA website.

SKI Chair Raju Adhikari provided summary of the last 6 years of SKI efforts and asked each project champion to share their project progress and action plans on ongoing NRNA projects that are interlinked with SKI.

Open University Initiative

Pramod Dhakal provided major highlights on the Open University Initiative from 2010 formation of the Steering Committee. He stated that the first major work in the initiative was tabling of a bill in early 2011. The dissolution of the parliament in May 2012 before passing the bill created significantly adverse condition for the mission. The Infrastructure Development Board developed as an alternative outlet turned out to be a poor performer and not conducive for the engagement of diasporas. However, much effort continued and mission has been saved from potential derailment. Special interests put forward by the current NRNA President and ICC has helped reassert the NRNA position in the project. Several meetings have been held with Ministry of Education in recent months and follow up is done intently. The new development has been that NRNA OUN Task Force has tabled a separate draft of Open University Bill to the ministry and the new draft has been accepted by concerned agencies of the ministry. In this new bill, we have strived to strengthen the roles of NRNA and Diaspora Nepalese. At present, NRNA Open University Task Force has been formed, its ToR with work plans has been prepared and already approved by the ICC, and its activities are being

carried out according to this document. Pramod Dhakal promised to circulate SKI ToR and the draft of the current bill with the minutes of this meeting. He also stated that OUNITF soon will have its own office and regular updates will be circulated to NRNs and SKI TF members.

Skill Inventory project

Drona Rasali provided the background details of NRNA Skill Inventory project with reference to NRN first data base that was created in 2009. The project faced some technical difficulties in achieving the intended success for the system then developed could not be user friendly and secure. Shree Napit described the technical causes of the past limitations especially that of the database being created in Excel sheet than using web-enabled database management system. The last SKI sub-task force designed a new system but it could not be implemented in NRNA website as we did not have right competency in web technologies in Kathmandu office. He said that he will prepare a project paper outlining the design, effort estimation, timeline and skill-set requirements. The new system will be HTML5 based and will be also be mobile device friendly. The exiting data of Skill is still intact and will be uploaded once the database software is upgraded. The project paper will be submitted to the team in the next 4 to 6 weeks for consideration.

Brain-Drain Seminar

Sraoj Ghimire from Netherlands provided the details of Brain-Drain seminar which commenced in 2012 as a joint project with NAST and SKI. Five seminars have been successfully organized since then for which the logistical help received from NAST was helpful. The seminar series is a success in sharing knowledge and developing network among researchers and scientists and has attracted diaspora and resident scientists alike. He said that the seminar series at the moment is biotechnology focused but it is going to diversify into other areas of science and technologies in the coming days. In October 2014, a workshop is planned to be organized in Barcelona where SKI will make a presentation for which a formal invitation to SKI may arrive from RC Europe Arjun Shrestha. Saroj Ghimire committed to prepare a detailed project plan by next month and work on developing other next level projects that would be aligned to SKI objectives.

NSF project

Raju Adhikari and Gokul Pokhrel summarized the NSF overall objectives and progress since its registration formally in 2013. Major portion of the initial seed money for NSF has been committed from Upendra Mahato, Shesh Ghlae, Chandra Yonzon, Bhaban Bhatta and NRN Oceania. Gokul Pokhrel provided details of the pipeline projects such a Science Policy Seminar, NSF partnership with the Media, membership drive etc. He requested SKI to further support the approval of NRs.70, 000 for the next 3 months activities.

Saroj G mentioned that Brain-Drain seminar could be streamlined through NSF as one of its activities and Hem Raj Sharma also echoed that NSF could provide a proper forum to S&T related NRNA seminar in Nepal. The action plan of NSF will be submitted to SKI ASAP.

Miscellaneous Discussions

SKI networking at regional level: Hem Raj Sharma suggested that SKI should participate and make presentation in Regional or NCC seminar and share SKI activities. He considered that SKI working with NCCs would be good future strategy. He also suggested that contemporary Nepal appears on the hostile side in Diaspora matters rather than being warmly welcoming. He suggested that using NSF and SKI like forums to percolate information and broaden dialogues could bear good results.

Oceania SKI workshop: Jagadish Timilsena provided detail information about the forthcoming Oceania workshop in July 19th, 2014. He said 14 presentations are confirmed and abstract received. A proceeding of the workshop will also be published. Based on the recommendation of the

workshop, NCC SKI will select a project and work together with ICC. He said all information of the SKI workshop is available in NRN Australia website.

Public Health: Navin Vaidya from USA updated some of the project works and regular conferences organized in Nepal through Association of Nepalese Mathematicians. He says that with his applied mathematical background he and people like him could carry out public health projects in Nepal and said professional expertise is not a limitation and any skill and knowledge can be useful to any project. All members agreed that this is the strength of SKI where various expertise work together a team beyond their field of expertise. He also said that the association of mathematicians and SKI could be collaborating in the future.

Multidisciplinary Academics and Research: Drona Rasali highlighted that our knowledge initiatives would be better off if they are multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary in nature. He stressed that our scientific and educational missions, including Open University, ought to stress this dimension.

Additional Member: Drona Rasali recommended Dr. Dinesh Gautam for SKI committee member. He is one of the few Nepali who has published in breakthrough journal such as Science, Nature and PNAS. The committee will endorse his name through email as the request was not included as an agenda for this meeting. His email is dinesh_gautam@hotmail.com.

Meeting Resolution

1. Pramod Dhakal (OUI) to share the ToR and Project Plan prepared by the OUNI Task Force at the time of circulating these minutes.
2. Shree Napit/Drona Rasali (SKI Inventory), Saroj Ghimire (Brain-Drain seminar), Raju Adhikari/Gokul Pokhrel (NSF), to share executive summary along with action plan for 16 months within the next 6 weeks.
3. SKI committee members and regional representatives including Navin Vaidya (USA), Jagadish Timilsena (Oceania SKI workshop) to provide their project proposals and proposed plans in the next 6 weeks.
4. SKI committee to compile and provide the report to ICC Strategic review meeting by early July.

Due to time difference, many members couldn't join. The member also agreed that this is the only options as it is difficult to find a suitable time for all.

Next meeting to be held 16th November, 2014