



## EMBRACING OF THE FULL POTENTIAL OF ODL RESOURCES: A STUDY ON COURSE WORK RELATED AUDIO AND VIDEO PRODUCTION AT OUSL

*Mayanthi Kulatunga Jayakody*

*Centre for Educational Technology and Media, The Open University of Sri Lanka*

### Abstract

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) prioritizes course material as the main mode of knowledge transferring since the ODL system does not consider student attendance at day schools to be compulsory. In order to facilitate this situation, the ODL system primarily relies on three main components: course/instructional, online as well as audio and video (A/V) material. Apart from writing course material, an ODL academic is also expected to produce A/V material that further enhance the teaching learning process. The Centre for Educational Technology and Media (CETMe) provides guidelines for designing self-instructional materials, designing and developing educational resources through media. Yet, when you consider the output of such material produced at the OUSL, the numbers seem significantly low. Furthermore, a considerable amount of A/V material are temporarily stalled at the editing stage. Therefore, this study focused on discovering the issues behind the less number of course work-related A/V material produced by the OUSL academics. So far, no studies have been conducted on the said issues. Accordingly, a questionnaire was shared among all OUSL academics focusing on their experience/non-experience in producing course work related A/V material, issues faced, their future intentions of producing such material and the training they have received from the University. A content analysis was made on the data collected relying on the quantitative research method. The results evidenced reasons such as time constrains caused by the heavy workload, academics going on study leave, technical crew being assigned for other work, transport issues for outdoor shooting, not having received guidance as well as lack of motivation from course teams. They could be minimized by realizing the integral part played by A/V material in the ODL system, assigning another related academic to attend to unfinished productions and following the correct procedure when booking a technical officer, CETMe Studio and transportation. Richer data could have been gathered had more academics responded to the questionnaire. Nevertheless, the study evidenced that OUSL academics should make more effort in embracing the full potential of the ODL resources available within the University in producing course work related A/V material by minimizing the prevailing issues.

**Key words:** Course work related audio and video material, ODL resources, CETMe, OUSL academics



## EMBRACING OF THE FULL POTENTIAL OF ODL RESOURCES: A STUDY ON COURSE WORK RELATED AUDIO AND VIDEO PRODUCTION AT OUSL

*Mayanthi Kulatunga Jayakody*

*Centre for Educational Technology and Media, The Open University of Sri Lanka*

### INTRODUCTION

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL), being the premier Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Institution in Sri Lanka, prioritizes course material as the main mode of knowledge transferring that replaces face-to-face teaching of the conventional university system, since the ODL system does not consider student attendance at day schools to be compulsory (Jayakody, 2022). In order to facilitate this situation, the ODL system primarily relies on three main components: course/instructional, online as well as audio and video (A/V) material, which is the practice at the OUSL as well. Accordingly, it provides flexible learning opportunities for the learner through a variety of means. A/V material expand the opportunities for the learner to study at their own pace, time and place. While the foremost service that is expected of an academic employed in the ODL system is writing course material (Jayakody, 2022), they are also expected to produce A/V material that further enhance the teaching learning process. Accordingly, the OUSL too provides necessary facilities to their academics to create their own A/V material to suit their teaching purposes. In fact, the Centre for Educational Technology and Media (CETMe), which is an exclusive entity to the OUSL, plays a pivotal role in providing guidelines for designing self-instructional materials, designing and developing educational resources through media while ensuring quality standards of the OUSL course materials, and acts as a service provider to all the faculties developing their courses including online courses (Shanmugalingam, 2020). Once such material are produced and received approval after undergoing a quality assurance check, the A/V material are uploaded to the Learning Management System (LMS) and/or the official YouTube channel of the OUSL. Nevertheless, until recently, print/digital course material remained the main medium of instruction due to the students' (mainly, the remote students) inaccessibility to e-technologies (Jayatilleke, Wijesekara & Ranawaka, 2017). However, since the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a temporary standstill in academic activities, academics were compelled to reconsider using technology at various levels of education making sure that education continued amidst the worldwide social lockdown (Chick *et al*, 2020). As a result, the need to produce course work related A/V material is now more than ever. Yet, when you consider the output of such material produced at the OUSL, the numbers seem significantly low as opposed to the potential of resources available for such productions at the CETMe. In addition, there is a considerable amount of A/V material that need to be completed since they are temporarily stalled at the editing stage. Accordingly, this study focused on discovering the issues behind the less number of course work-related A/V material produced by the OUSL academics despite having a fully equipped centre within the Main Campus that provides all necessary facilities. Thus, it aimed at looking at the possibilities of minimizing these issues to strengthen the ODL practices at the OUSL.

### METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted by circulating a questionnaire among 400 OUSL academics via email. However, there were only 30 responses thus making it a random sample. The significant low number of respondents made the researcher rely on very limited data. Yet, the study was carried out with the hopes of paving the path for future studies on A/V production since no published/unpublished literature is available on reasons behind the dearth of such productions at the OUSL.



The questionnaire contained both close and open-ended questions that extracted data on their experience/non-experience in producing course work related A/V material, issues faced, their future intentions of producing such material and the training they have received from the University. A content analysis was made on the data collected relying on the quantitative research method, while the respondents provided stipulated optional responses as well as their own opinions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most of the respondents (23/30) were senior lecturers while the rest were lecturers on probation, and they represented the faculties of Natural Sciences, Engineering Technology, Humanities and Social Sciences and Health Sciences since no academic from the Faculties of Education and Management Studies responded to the questionnaire though it was circulated among all OUSL academic staff. However, just over half the respondents had made A/V material for their students, and that too, except for 02 respondents, the rest had made only 01 video each proving how little time had been spent on this task. Even among them, there were productions yet to be completed, hauled at the editing stage. Some of these productions had commenced as early as April 2021, and some of the reasons for the delay in completing them are as follows.

Table 1: Reasons for incompleteness of production of A/V material

1. Workload at department making it difficult to prioritize A/V material development
2. Academics being on study leave
3. Crew being assigned to other jobs (promotional work for faculties, departments etc.)
4. Transport issues for outdoor shooting
5. Needing training and guidance
6. Lack of motivation and guidance of the course team

Among the provided reasons, the most common was the time constraints faced due to their departmental workload that was delaying the production process. However, it must be noted that producing course related A/V material is an integral component of the job profile of an ODL academic; thus, it should be given equal priority. Another considerable number of video material are left uncompleted because the relevant academics are on study leave and this issue could be rectified assigning another related academic to attend to the unfinished task. In the meantime, in order to avoid hassles such as technical officers being assigned to other work when they are needed at the editor’s table, best is to follow the correct procedure of booking a technical officer and the Studio (if needed) two weeks prior to the production, and once the shooting/recording is done, attend to the editing within the following few days itself so that the production is completed while the interest and enthusiasm of the team are intact. A similar procedure must be followed if one needs university transport for outdoor shooting so that the booking is made within the stipulated time.

The table also evidences that there are academics who are yet to receive training on A/V production. In fact, the figure below shows that 25% of the respondents have not received training on this regard.

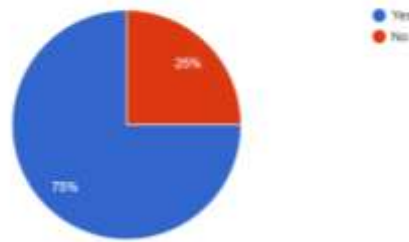


Figure 1: Academics who have received training

However, as mentioned previously, the CETMe conducts training programmes on producing A/V material providing sufficient knowledge on planning, script writing, filming, editing and other related areas. In addition, there are academics and technical officers attached to the Centre assigned to a particular production who will be assisting the producer in various related aspects. Furthermore, once the production is completed, a team of experts in quality assurance will view it and advise on how it could be further improved if needed. In order to reap the best results of this process, academics must inform their Heads of Departments their wish to be trained so that the latter may request Director/CETMe to organize such a programme. Yet, surprisingly, there were a considerable number of respondents who were not aware of the facilities provided by the CETMe for producing A/V material. This seemed an alarming revelation since all OUSL academics are informed of their job

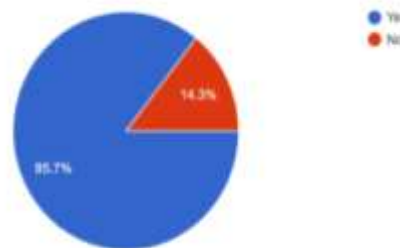


Figure 2: Academics who are not aware of the training provided by CETMe

profile in which it is clearly stated that they are to practice and develop the ODL system within their capacity as an academic, towards which the CETMe makes a key contribution. In addition, they are also taught how an ODL academic differs from a conventional university academic at the compulsory course Certificate for Teachers in Higher Education (CTHE) offered by the Staff Development Centre (SDC).

In the meantime, respondents who had undergone training from the CETMe revealed their level of satisfaction under different categories as follows, and the relevant data prove that the guidance they have received have greatly fulfilled their requirements.

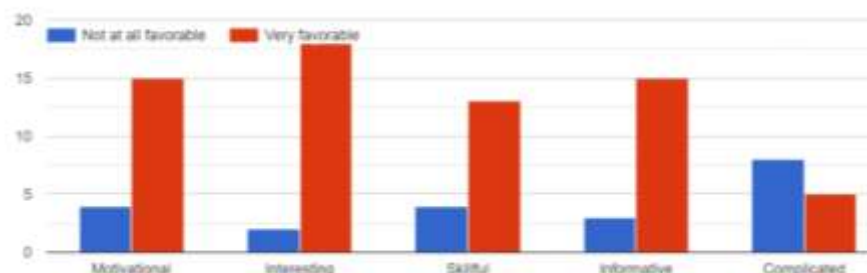


Figure 3: Level of satisfaction on training received from CETMe on A/V production



However, in response to the inquiry on the most challenging steps in the production process, a significant number of respondents found scriptwriting to be quite complicating which clearly is an area the trainers need to pay attention to. A considerable number of academics admitted to be having camera and/or microphone fright which could be remedied by replacing him/her with a substitute who would deliver the content as per the relevant academic's instructions.

Despite the above-mentioned shortcomings, almost everybody agreed that course work related A/V material is an important component in the ODL system and what most of them have produced so far have made an impact on their students' learning and performance, and they do intend to produce such material in the future. A few who had already undergone training expressed their wish to attend more such workshops to refresh their knowledge so that newer methods can be included in their future productions.

## CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite having sufficient facilities to produce A/V material of high standard within the university itself, the output of such material related to course work at the OUSL is significantly low. It so happens due to various reasons such as time constrains caused by the heavy workload at departments, academics (who are yet to complete production) going on study leave, crew being assigned for other work, transport issues for outdoor shooting, not having received guidance and training as well as lack of motivation and guidance among course teams. However, these issues could be minimized by realizing the integral part played by A/V material in the ODL system, assigning another related academic to attend to unfinished productions and following the correct procedure when booking a technical officer, CETMe Studio and transportation (if needed). The few academics who are not aware of the facilities provided by the CETMe and who are yet to receive them, should request for training workshops so that the available resources are duly utilized. A majority of the respondents agreed that course work related A/V material is a vital component in the ODL system and expressed their wish to produce such material in the future.

However, it must be noted that richer data could have been gathered had more academics responded to the questionnaire within the stipulated time. Nevertheless, this study evidenced that OUSL academics should make more effort in embracing the full potential of the ODL resources available within the university in producing course work related A/V material by minimizing the prevailing issues as discussed.

## REFERENCES

- Chick, R. C., Clifton, G. T., Peace, K. M., Propper, B. W., Hale, D. F., Alseidi, A. A. & Vreeland, T. J. (2020). Using technology to maintain the education of residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Surgical Education*, Elsevier, Vol. 77 No. 4, p 729-732.
- Jayakody, M. K. (2022). *A Study on the User-Friendliness of Language in Selected OUSL Course Material*. Paper Presented at the International Open University Research Conference (iOURS 2022).
- G. Jayatilleke, G. G. W. C. Wijesekara and G. R. Ranawaka (2017). Access and Use of Electronic Technologies by Undergraduates of the Faculty of Health Sciences. *Proceedings of the 15th Open University Research Sessions*, p 5-9.
- Shanmugalingam, N. (2020). *Institutional Review Report* (Doctoral dissertation, The Open University of Sri Lanka).

