OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES: INDIAN INITIATIVES

Rabiya Mushtaq
Research Scholar, Centre for Central Asian Studies (CCAS)
University of Kashmir
Asifa Ali
Research Scholar, Department of Library and Information Science
University of Kashmir
Masood Ahmad Bhat
Librarian, Department of Animal and Veterinary Science, Srinagar

ABSTRACT

Information and Communication technology (ICT) forms a back bone of the present information driven era. Internet by means of latest IT technologies has modified the traditional means of information dissemination, as it is due to this blessing of Science that information is available at finger tips and accessible to everyone anytime free from any barrier .Open Access has added to ease of accessibility of information and made it available taking copyrights into consideration as well. Many initiatives of Open Access like Directory of Open Access Repository (DOAR), Directory of Open Access Books (DOAB), Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and Open Educational Resources (OER) has made open access successful and propagated best retrieval and dissemination of information. The OER has gained momentum thus is very helpful in e-learning, distant mode of learning. Various OER initiatives in India have greatly supported distant learning making it possible for students to access information sources at home rather than to visit in person the respective institution .These OERs provide a diversified modes dissemination of information by means of multimedia (audio, video lectures), thus helping teaching learning an interactive process. The present study reveals the concept of Open Educational Resources (OER) and highlights various government initiatives on promoting open access to educational resources. This paper gives a detailed account of various OER initiatives in India, so that it will be helpful to students at different levels to acquit their diversified needs of information.

Keywords: ICT, Information, Open Access, Open Educational Resources (OER), India

Introduction

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has effected almost all spheres of life .ICT can be considered as a modern tact of Science to store, use, manipulate and process data /information. Computer Technology and Communication Technology are two main strong pillars of Information and Communication Technology. The role of ICT cannot be denied in education as information needs are increasing day by day. In the present era every individual wants to be information oriented and has greatly influenced the education sector as well. It has speeded up the information dissemination as it has overcome the barriers that earlier existed for the dissemination of information. Open Access (OA) has influenced and served the basic need of propagation of information on a large scale. According to Loan (2014) OA is the primary thing to access the information on the global level, OA is a new way that is used to define the manner in which information is accessed free of cost , it refers to the availability of information /literature on internet accessible on a public platform, it advocates the unlocking of literature from all the locks.

Pinfield (2005) has explained OA as costless, instant and unhindered content availability. Open Access is meant basically to serve the purpose of making the intellectual work available on a free accessible platform without any hindrance. OA movement is a modern way of communication in scholarly world all over the world (Wani, Gul, Rah,2009) .There are many platforms by which information is available and accessible free of cost Directory of Open Access Repository(DOAR), Open source software , Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Open Educational Resources (OER) are few initiatives that make open access practically possible. Open Educational Resources are considered as the best for the purpose of making information accessible quickly anytime. According to William and Flora Hewlett Foundation *"OER are the teaching, learning and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others. Open educational resources include full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge"*. Present study is an attempt to provide an insight to various OER initiatives in India.

Open Educational Resources (OER) an Indian Scenario

The term 'Open Educational Resources' first came into use at UNESCO's "Forum on the Impact of Open Course Ware for Higher Education in Developing Countries" in 2002.According to UNESCO, Open Educational Resources are defined as "technology enabled, open provision of educational resources for consultation use and adaptation by the community of the users for non –commercial purposes". According to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)"open educational resources are digitized materials offered freely and openly for educators, students and self-learners to use and reuse for teaching, learning and research. OER includes learning content, software tools to develop, use and distribute content and implementation resources such as open licences" **(OECD, 2007).**These present a new idea and platform for dissemination of information. In the present era India has taken several steps for the development and welfare of OERs in India. Government of India via National Knowledge Commission understood the role of OER in the enhancing quality education and access to it in the country. The National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology under the canopy of ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) is an efficient step for the enhancement of OER in India. A brief explanation of some OER initiatives in India is as follows:

1. National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL): It is a Government of India initiative a project funded by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). The initiative was started in 1999 with a prime aim of developing and enhancing the basic knowledge of science and engineering with the help of multimedia and the internet. The main motive of NPTEL is to empower students and prepare them for competition on global level. It is a joint venture by seven Indian Institute of Technology and Indian Institute of Science Bangalore. It acts as a single platform of e-learning to more than 24 subject disciplines including various sub disciplines of Engineering Science and Technology. During its first phase that is Phase I (2003-2007), 110 video courses 129 web courses were produced for dissemination in the India.

2. SAKSHAT: It was launched in on 30 October 2006 by the efforts of Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) for the purpose of supporting and enhancing e- learning. The e documents that are developed through National Mission on Education through ICT (NME ICT) are delivered through this very

portal. This job of development of e-content is done wisely and is taken care by Content Advisory Committee which has representatives from different educational institutions e.g. Delhi University, Kendra Vidayala Sangathan, National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) , National Council For Education Research and Training (NCERT) educationalists in the SAKSHAT serve as one stop portal of education to various efforts of e -learning for instance Talk to a Teacher ,Spoken Tutorial etc

3. Consortium for Educational Communication (CEC): Consortium for Educational Communication (CEC) is one among the University Centers set up by University Grants Commission (UGC).CEC has been primarily set up to address the needs of higher education by the use of powerful television media along with appropriate use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).CEC produces educational programmes in different subjects by coordinating with 21 Media Centres. The e-content of CEC is in the form of audio, video etc.

4.E-PG Patshala: For the development of postgraduate programmes in India the Ministry of Human Resource Development under the canopy of National Mission on Education through ICT (NME ICT) has assigned UGC a assignment for the development of e-content in 77 subjects of postgraduate level .The E-Patshala covers many subjects in its broad spectrum across the disciplines of Arts Humanities ,Languages, Engineering and Technology, Life Science, Medical and Health Science, Physical and Basic Sciences,SocialScience.It strongly advocates "Massive Open Online Course"(MOOCS).

5. e-Gyankosh: e-Gyankosh is a national digital repository meant to store, index, preserve, distribute and share the digital learning resources developed by the Open and Distance Learning Institutions in India. The items in e Gyankosh are protected by copyright. The course material is available in PDF format that is downloadable freely. Resources can be accessed through one time registration. It provides access to videos.

6 .Ekalavya: Ekalavya is another programme launched by Indian Institute of Technology Bombay in the year 2004.It offers several programmes like e-OUTREACH, e-GURU. e-OUTREACH is a programme under which a good quality audios ,videos ,digital text and HTML contents of educational value are created and disseminated e-GURUis an Open Source initiative meant for providing e-guidance and online mentorship to students of B.E., M.C.A. and M.Sc. (CS/ IT/ Electronics) programmes, for their final year projects. This venture is very helpful for the propagation of interactive education.

7. Virtual Learning Environment(VLE) Institute of Life Long Learning: Virtual Learning Environment Institute of Life Long Learning is other OER initiative of University of Delhi .VLE provides e-learning in the disciplines of Commerce and Management Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences, Sciences, Mathematical Sciencesboth at undergraduate level and postgraduate level.

8. National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS): National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) is another OER initiative of Ministry of HRD ,Government of India it claims to be the largest schooling system in the world .NIOS was established with a vision to develop Sustainable inclusive learning with universal and flexible access to quality school education and skill development and a mission to providing relevant, continuing and holistic education up to pre-degree level through Open and Distance Learning System. (ii). Contributing to the Universalisation of School Education. (iii). Catering to the educational needs of the prioritized target groups for equity and social justice. This OER is meant for school level education. NIOS has maintained online course material pertinent to school and secondary school level.

9. National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER): It is another project of OER. It was launched by Ministry of HRD, Govt of India   with a collaborative effort of Central Institute on Educational Technology, NCERT in collaboration with Department of School Education and Literacy. The repository supports education via audio, video, images and textual document on various topics in various subjects which are broadly mapped in 5 categories which are: Math, Science, Social Science, Languages and Art Education.

10. Creation of e-contents on Fermentation Technology: This is a project under National Mission on Education through ICT (NME ICT) for students of microbiology especially covering the area of industrial microbiology. It offers various audio, video lectures in addition to theory and self-assessment through assignments and multiple choice questions etc.

Conclusion

Open Educational Resources (OER) make an important contribution to the diversified supply of learning resources to the global community of learners. OER are a new trend aimed at providing free access to a variety of learning resources over the internet free of cost and has gained enormous momentum in the recent years. India has been witnessing an incremental growth if OER's, where a number of national institutions have established OER portals for providing nationwide access to their educational resources. Institutions with better access to ICT infrastructure will make more use of open resources rather than those lacking adequate infrastructure. So for ensuring equitable access to open resources, equitable access to technology is must. Even the best e- content is of no significance unless there is a widespread awareness among the common masses on the availability of such resources. Library and information professionals can play a proactive role in this direction by making users abreast with such initiatives.

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