Open Education ~ II

In India, governments play an important role in framing policies for higher education systems and provide funds to the universities. They have an interest in ensuring that public investments in higher education make a useful and cost-effective contribution to socio-economic development

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restrictive the licence, the more useful the resource can potentially be for other educators.

An open licence affixed to educational resources makes it relevant and up-to-date. As resource is available online, an author is motivated to ensure that its quality is continually improved and its relevance enhanced. An open licence also permits the circulation of knowledge, by allowing re-mixing and re-distribution. When institutions make good quality courses and educational content is available online, they can attract new students, expand their institutional reputation and advance their public service.
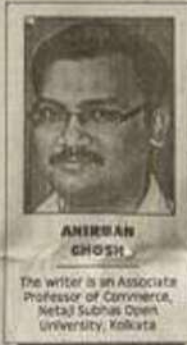
The sharing of educational materials has significant potential to improve the quality, transparency and accessibility of higher education systems. The OER has the tremendous potential to provide groups of people particularly who cannot afford a formal education and are disadvantaged

with access to higher education. OER can contribute to the democratisation of higher education not only locally or regionally, but globally as well. It can help democratise content and make knowledge accessible to everybody. Students are able to access quality academic content/resources offered by the university all over the world. Likewise, governments can use open licensing regimes to increase the leverage of public investments, by facilitating widespread reuse of those resources. The role of governments in higher education and the relationships of governments with institutions in this sector is very important.

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investments in higher education make a useful and cost-effective contribution to socio-economic development. In this context, governments may ensure that educationally useful material developed with public funds be made available under open licences. The initiative will also minimise the cost of development of academic content and avoid duplication of work.

So far as the OER policy is concerned, the HRD ministry's NME-ICT project has released all its resources under CC-BY-SA licence and NIOS and NCERT released their educational content under CC-BY-NC-SA and CC-BY-SA licence respectively. Currently, Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University (Rajasthan), KK Handique State Open University (Assam), Uttarakhand Open University (Uttarakhand), Odisha State Open University (Odisha) and Netaji Subhas Open University (West Bengal) in India have adopted their intuitional OER policy for their educational resources and have developed their OER Repositories.

The former President, Mr Pranab Mukherjee had launched Swayam, Swayam Prabha and the National Academic Depository on 9 July 2017. The objective of *'Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds'* (SWAYAM) programme is to take the teaching-learning resources to all, including the disadvantaged groups, especially those who have not been able to join the mainstream education system. Academic content such video lectures, e-text will be released as OER with appropriate licence on these platforms. The UGC and IGNOU have been entrusted to offer courses through SWAYAM (post-graduate degree courses) and Swayam Prabha (certificate and diploma course)

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respectively. UGC has already issued guidelines for transfer of credit facilities for the courses. This is a welcome step on the part of the HRD ministry in order to address the three key issues of the country's higher education system – access, equity and quality. Open education is primarily an objective associated with removing barriers to education.

The aim is to increase access to and ensure successful participation in formal and non-formal education by offering multiple ways of learning and sharing of knowledge. The OER is the collaboration to build and improve learning resources upon others' work. Such academic resources can be improved continuously with the permissible CC licence. Though the OER has multiple benefits, it has not become popular in our country till now for three major reasons – lack of motivation; lack of awareness; lack of internet connectivity. Suitable programmes ought to be undertaken both by the government and higher education institutions to facilitate effective use of OER.

OER can even help address the social challenges of higher education in populous countries like ours, through widening access to higher education and alleviating costs for disadvantaged youth and adults, especially women. So, in order to make available the academic content on the public domain, every institution should come forward with their academic content. At the moment there is no such government policy on OER. Different institutes are adopting different types of OER policy to protect the interest of all stakeholders. Education is in the concurrent list of our Constitution. If there is a National OER Policy, it would be easier for State universities to adopt the policy. There will then be a uniform OER policy throughout the country. It will help students get quality academic resources anywhere, any time through the OER Repository.

(Concluded)