

Open educational resources and their use

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Besides bringing meaningful changes in human life, education also contributes to the formation of human beings as productive citizens. That is why perhaps, education is considered to be the bed-rock of the socio-economic, cultural and political uplift of a country. Education is necessary, because educated people are well acquainted with the need-based skills, sufficient knowledge and information. The Government of India has made several attempts to provide basic education to all its citizens. The RTA 2009 is one of such attempts. But, in the context of the challenges of education, only providing basic education is not sufficient, as education also refers to fictional literacy and skilled manpower. In fact, considering the demographic dividends of India (of which more than 50% people are under the age of 25, which is an asset for the country), education, particularly higher education, can be seen as the only way to ensure the targeted economic growth, mobility and development in India.

There is no denying the fact that higher education plays a pivotal role in bringing multifaceted human resource development. Therefore, for making higher education as accessible as possible, different educational avenues are sought to be created. Still,

the Gross Enrolment Ratio is a big challenge for India. Besides, in India, there are misutilization of autonomy in the educational institutions, asymmetrical allocations of public expenditure in various sectors of education, educational disparities, gender disparities, inter-state variation and regional disparity in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio and implementation of the educational policies and programmes. Therefore, adequate number of needful educational institutions should be set up in each state for accelerating knowledge and skills of the people living there and thus make them empowered in every aspects of life. Thus, providing access, equity and quality education to the people in a society forms the basic objectives that have to be kept in mind by an institution while providing education to the learners. Thus, the main goals of higher education are to disseminate knowledge, to use information networks and mass media technologies, to help in the improvement of productivity which can be defined as a way of ensuring the prospect of employability in every nook and corner of the society.

Various attempts and policies have been made from time to time for reforming higher education in terms of access, equity, excellence, efficiency and relevance of the system as a

whole. Today, higher education, just like elementary education, is also considered part of merit goods. For the greater interest of the general public or the stakeholders, the use of the Open Educational Resources (OER) has presented itself as the most viable option to disseminate knowledge and information. With the help of these resources, a knowledge-enabled population can be boosted up in a welfare society. This is very pertinent as ensuring the formation of a knowledge-enabled population is one of the major challenges in the higher education system in a country like ours. Following the licence provided by Creative Commons, the OER has become the buzzword in any educational institution whose social role needs to justify the use of educational resources for all. Thus the OER, in common educational parlance, has been seen as the resources to be used for sharing, adapting and reusing for educating the masses as a whole. Thus, the OER has generated a full-fledged international response. Even in India, the initiatives taken under the name of MOOCs have pushed the OER movement to a significant height in most recent times.

In simple terms, the Open Educational Resource is used to mean a small self-contained unit of self-assessable teaching with a measurable learning objective, often in digital electronic

format, and is generally free to use. Thus, the OER may encourage those learners who desire for a lifelong learning and functional literacy. Besides, in a developing country like ours, where higher education usually benefits only a small section of the people because of its being a very costly affair, the OER provides ample opportunities to enjoy the benefits of education even without going to an educational institute.

In fact, the Open Educational Resources can play the major role to accelerate the literacy of people with the help of the different Community Information Centres, NGOs and other social and government organizations located at different parts of the country. Besides, the open universities and other ODL institutions should be the think tank to design, and considering the local needs and demands for developing the manpower in the society as well as utilizing the local and regional resources of the society, should develop the OER on various professional and vocational areas not only for the learners enrolling in them but also for the common masses. Through the use of the ICT, various programmes in the forms of CD, DVD and other forms of multimedia including mobile apps, can be made available to the common people to be used freely in order to enhance their capacities and skills. The edu-

cational institutions run by both conventional and ODL modes can make the best use of the OER on the basis of available technologies and make knowledge-enabled population in the State a reality.

Hence, such types of initiatives that have already been taken in the Indian perspectives may also transform the educational scenario of the North-eastern part of India, including Assam, which is well known for its bountiful natural resources and opportunities. Still, the GER in higher education in this part of India is far behind the national average. Therefore, the present situation demands the identification of areas where there is a lack of skilled manpower. Hence, in order to mainstreaming these areas, the ODL institutions along with the conventional institutions have an important role to play. Considering the current worldwide practices, the OER may be seen as one of the best practices to educate people on a large scale and enhance their skills even outside the institutionalized educational set-up. The OER can actually help the people of a country to ensure economic mobilization in the society. Even the government should take the necessary initiatives, as with the help of these resources, it can take many reformist steps and implement suitable policies for ensuring the welfare of all sections of the people.