Collection and Accessibility of OER for Learners of the Universities in West Bengal

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Abstract: *University library is considered as a nerve centre of teaching, learning and research activities of the University. Now-a-days 'Open Educational Resources (OER)' are the essential freely accessible, open licensed resources at the University library collection to support access the knowledge to their users. This paper examines the collection, accessibility of Open Education Resources and awareness among staffs (teaching & non-teaching) and students on the types of OER available at University libraries in West Bengal. In digital environment, collection development policy and accessibility of OER are more complex than printed resources due to diversity of digital resources and copy right issues. The major constraints in the use of OER are dependency on librarian assistance, low internet connectivity, inadequate number of digital gadgets, struggle from the digital divide etc. This paper also attempts to emphasize on collection development policy and accessibility of OER at 10 potential selected Universities in West Bengal. This present paper also throws light on trends of collection pattern as well as accessibility. Besides, awareness on OER among University library users should be created to improve access to OER available at University Libraries in West Bengal.*

Keywords: Open Educational Resources (OER), Types of OER, Awareness on OER, Access, Collection development, University library

1. Introduction

World-wide, open educational resources (OER) have come up as a very useful medium in the fields of education, research and training. 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) 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 among the selected Universities of West Bengal. The paper is based on secondary data collected from various sources and websites of Universities. The paper also discusses various OER initiatives taken up in West Bengal by different University. The paper analyses the challenges associated with the development and use of OERs of the ten Universities in West Bengal.

2. Literature Review

Kumar, M.S.V. (2009) raised the various issues and gave recommendations that address organisational considerations and infrastructure readiness as part of a systemic and sustainable strategy to make effective use of Open Educational Resources in the Indian context. Das, A.K. (2011) critically examined the evolution of open educational resources OER initiatives in India and how OER movement emerges from the open access movement in the backdrop of an emerging knowledge-based economy. He illustrated how OER help in democratizing lifelong learning spaces that eventually help in skills development and examined to understand India's stand on OER in comparison with other promising developing countries. He analysed impact of OER on Indian systems of education, ranging from lifelong learning, technical and vocational education and training to higher education systems and also illustrated various models of innovations which are shaping up multi-dimensional lifelong learning pathways to cater to career aspirations of young Indians. He showed that Indian OER initiatives make use of textual platforms as well as audio-visual platforms embracing YouTube, Metacafe and other web-based streaming video channels and collaboration patterns in OER initiatives in order to attain sustainability, optimum usage and integration with formal curriculum of skills development programmes. Research. He suggested some sustainable models for OER deployment, lessons learned and challenges faced by practitioners and users communities. Actually he took a unique attempt to produce a state-of-the-art report on the emergence of the OER movement in a transitional emerging economy. Das, A. K. (2014) highlighted the OER initiatives receiving National Mission on Education through ICT (NMEICT) established by MHRD support during the Eleventh and Twelfth Five Year Plan period. Kurelovic, E. K. (2016) explained the aspect of legality, accessibility of OER and examined the financial and technological barrier to use of OER . He also explained the limitation to implement the OER in particular for small, non English speaking countries. He analysed the attitudes toward OER among the scholars at few smaller public faculties in Croatia and their practice of sharing knowledge and teaching materials. Hylén, J. (2017) explained the opportunity and challenges of OED and considered the key intellectual property in a competitive higher education world. Rabiya Mustaq & Asifa Ali (2017) explained the concept of Open Educational Resources (OER) and highlighted various government initiatives on promoting open access to educational resources. He explained a detailed account of various OER initiatives in India. Thomas, R. (2017) discussed various opportunities and challenges presented by the use of OERs in the education system today. The various meaningful initiatives taken in India aiming at proper utilization of ICTs are also highlighted. He also discussed the role of libraries in promoting the use of OER's in educational institutions. Padhi , N. (2018) focused on faculty perception by applying Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model. She also identified the challenges associated with OER. The survey data is collected by her from 22 Indian universities located in pan India.

3. Objective

The purpose of the study is to find out the collection development towards the open access resource and their accessibility in selected ten Universities in West Bengal.

4. Scope

Universities: University of Burdwan (BU),University of Calcutta (CU), Jadavpur University(JU),University of Kalyani (KU), University of North Bengal (NBU), Presidency University (PU), Rabindra Bharati University (RBU), University of Gourbanga (UGB), Vidyasagar University (VU), West Bengal State University (WBSU).

5. Type of OER

The various types of OERs that are available from the Universities, based on the documents listed on their websites. These are:

a. E-books

b. E-journals

c. Articles repository

d. Thesis and dissertation

e. Video lectures

f. Open access databases

g. Old question papers

h. Syllabus

i. Digital databases

j. Rare documents

k. University publications

l. Departmental journals

m. Medical dissertations

n. Talking books

o. Braille documents

These are just some of the OER types that may be available from the universities. It's encouraging to see that there is a wide variety of resources available, which can help to promote lifelong learning and support academic research & inquiry.
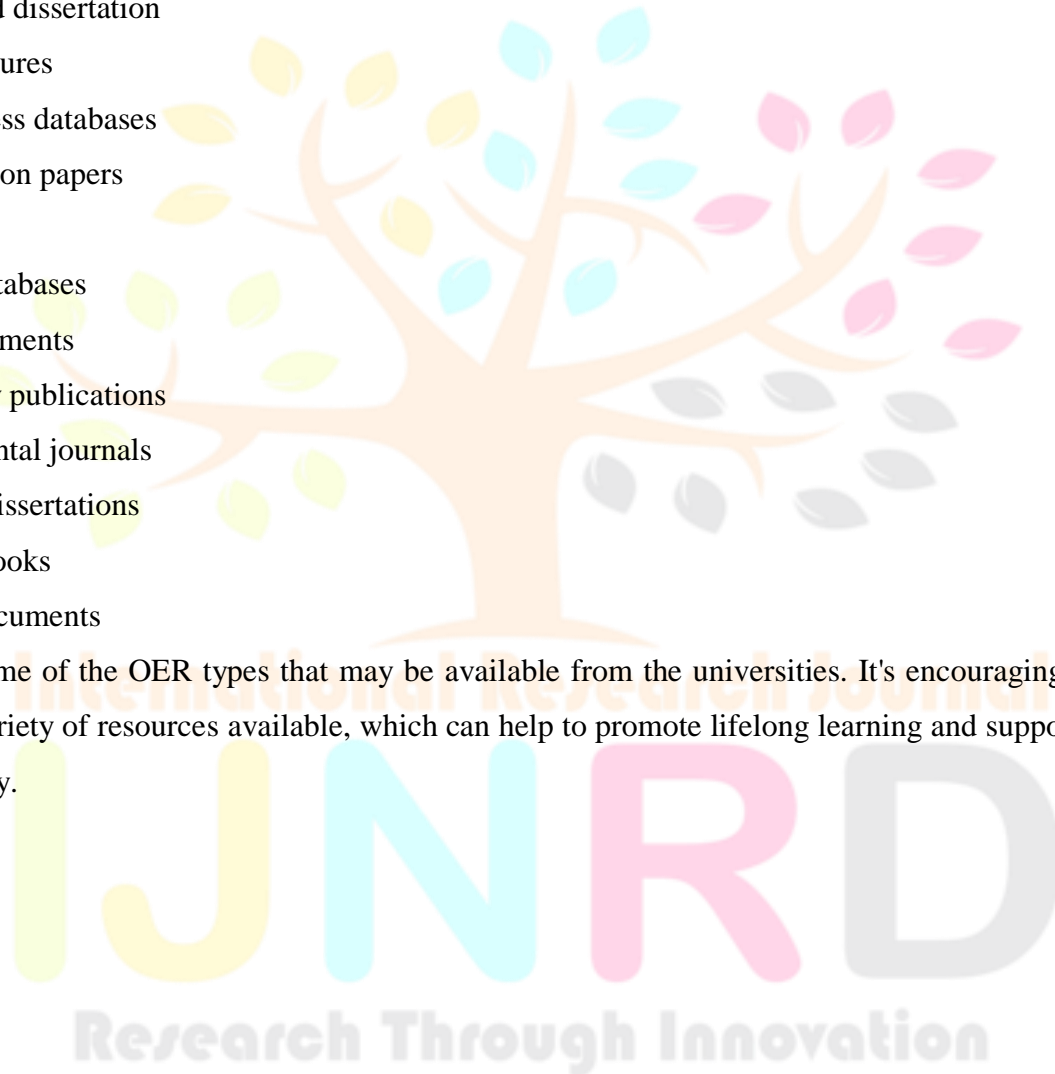
5.1 Type of OER Available in Different Universities of West Bengal

NAME OF UNIVERSITY / NUMBER OF DOCUMENT	BU	CU	JU	KU	NBU	PU	RBU	UGB	VU	WBSU
E-BOOK	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	×	×	✓	✓
E JOURNAL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	×	×	✓	×
ARTICLES REPOSITORY	×	✓	✓	×	×		×	×	×	×
THESIS AND DISSERTATION	✓	✓	✓	×	×	✓	×	×	×	×
VIDEO LECTUES	×	✓	✓	×	5	×	×	×	×	×
OPEN ACCESS DATABASES AND DOCUMENTS	✓	✓	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
OLD QUESTION PAPER	✓	✓	✓	×	×	×	×	✓	✓	×
TALKING BOOK	×	×	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
RESOURCE DATABASE	×	×	✓	✓	×	×	×	×	✓	×
SHODH GANGA	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×	×	×	×
TUTORIALS	×	×	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
DIGITAL DATABASES	✓	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	✓	×
E-SODHSINDHU	✓	×	×	×		×	×	×		×
ACADEMIC RESOURCES	×	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	✓	×
ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS	×	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×	×	✓	
RARE DOCUMENTS	×	✓	×	×	✓	×	×	×	×	×
UNIVERSITY PUBLICATION	×	✓	×	×	✓	×	×	×	×	×
OLD SYLLABUS(DEPARTMENT)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

5.2 Number of OER Documents available in Different Universities in West Bengal

ts Available In Different Universities In West Bengal

NAME OF UNIVERSITY / NUMBER OF DOCUMENT	BU	CU	JU	KU	NBU	PU	RBU	UGB	VU	WBSU
E-BOOK	8	9322	6222	732	795	×	×	×	444	442
E JOURNAL	12	15763	11762	25	8024	×	×	×	981	×
ARTICLES REPOSITORY	×	232	67	×	×		×	×	×	×
THESIS AND DISSERTATION	338	6258	3836	×	×	10	×	×	×	×
VIDEO LECTUES	×	18	5	×	5	×	×	×	×	×
OPEN ACCESS DATABASES AND DOCUMENTS	12	356	189	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
OLD QUESTION PAPER	432	18322	13742	×	×	×	×	58	1067	×
TALKING BOOK	×	×	2	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
RESOURCE DATABASE	×	×	24	14	×	×	×	×	14	×
SHODH GANGA	2593	12573	928	×	1943	×	×	×	×	×
TUTORIALS	×	×	5	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
DIGITAL DATABASES	14	×	×	×	7	×	×	×	14	×
E-SODHSINDHU	20	×	×	×		×	×	×		×
ACADEMIC RESOURCES	×	×	×	×	1929	×	×	×	270	×
ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS	×	738	×	×	199	892	×	×	2983	
RARE DOCUMENTS	×	325	×	×	609	×	×	×	×	×
UNIVERSITY PUBLICATION	×	152	×	×	1062	×	×	×	×	×
OLD SYLLABUS(DEPARTMENT)	26(PG)	138(PG)	37(PG)	28(PG)	23(PG)	×	26(PG)	27(PG)	29(PG)	30 (P.G)
	39(UG)	218(UG)	43(UG)	63(UG)	34(UG)		33(UG)	32(UG)	38(UG)	68 (U.G)

6. Accessibility of OER in Different Universities of West Bengal

Most of the Universities have given permission to access e-books, e-journals, thesis and dissertations, databases, old question papers, syllabus to their teachers, researcher and under graduation and post-graduation students. In Burdwan University, Calcutta University, Jadavpur University and North Bengal University have successfully uploaded their PhD theses in Shodhganga Platform. Burdwan University has given permission to their stack holder to access e-book, e-Journal, Thesis and Dissertation, Database and Documents, Old question Paper, Digital datases, e-Sodhsindhu, and also videos of Online Classes .Calcutta University have given permission to access e-books, e-Journals , Thesis and Dissertation in Full Text , Medical Dissertations 40 subtopic within the medical science to their stakeholders only. Many Video Lectures, Database ,Old question Paper(1891-1980) and University Old Syllabi (1955-1977 some Rare Documents, selective University Publications and Some Departmental Journals (1911-2014) are also accessible to all. E-books, e-Journals, Resource Databases, Talking book , Brail Documents are accessible in restricted way but Old Question Papers, Thesis and dissertations, syllabus are accessible to all. In Presidency University, e-book, e-Journal, e-databases , e- resource are accessed by their stake holders only. In Vidyasagar University free e-book, e-Journal, Old Question Paper are archived for all but UGC Infonet, shodh sindhu are used by only research scholars and teachers. Kalyani University have given permission to access e-resources through Shodh sindhu to only their stakeholders. In North Bengal University Institutional Repository provides Academic Resources, Administative and Academic Documents, Rare Document, University Publications, Open Access e-Resources like e-book, e-journal, Thesis and dissertations , Old Question free for all . SWAYAM, NPTEL Video Lectures, e-PG Pathshala, National Digital Library of India are linked with their website. E-shodhsindhu, purchaged e-books, e-journals are accessed only by their stake holders. In West Bengal State University, Open accessed e-book and old question papers are available for all. Gour banga University only have uploaded Old question Papers for all. It's great to see that many universities have made e-books, e-journals, thesis and dissertations, databases, old question papers, syllabi, and other academic resources accessible to their stakeholders, including teachers, researchers, and undergraduate and postgraduate students. The use of institutional repositories and platforms such as Shodhganga, UGC Infonet and e-Shodhsindhu is a positive step towards promoting open access to academic resources. It allows for easier discovery and sharing of scholarly works, and can facilitate collaboration and knowledge exchange among researchers and scholars.
It's also worth noting that while some resources may only be accessible to stakeholders there are still many free and open resources available to the wider public. This can be particularly helpful for independent researchers, lifelong learners, and members of the public who are interested in accessing academic resources. Overall, the trend towards greater accessibility and openness in academic research and It's also worth noting that while some resources may only be accessible to stakeholders, there are still many free and open resources available to the wider public. This can be particularly helpful for independent researchers, lifelong learners, and members of the public who are interested in accessing academic resources.

7. Challenges faced by Librarians

There are different types of challenges faced by the Librarians such as about Awareness and training, Infrastructure, Policy, attitude and management, Plagiarism and copyright etc.

a. Awareness and training

- ❖ Lack of awareness of OER
- ❖ Lack of knowledge & skill to use OER
- ❖ Awareness is lacking on the learning and teaching side with regard to use of OER
- ❖ Not techno- savvy, absence of proper guidance.
- ❖ Perhaps because of problems related to access, attitude, linguistic barriers
- ❖ Lack of knowledge of availability of such resources.
- ❖ The faculty is not oriented about how to use OER in teaching.
- ❖ Due to Non Awareness. The Culture of using need to be developed as it can disseminate education and promote collaborative learning

- ❖ Lack of training to the teacher regarding OER technologies is the biggest hurdle
- ❖ Ignorance about OER
- ❖ Lack of awareness on uses rights (licensing) of OER material

b. Infrastructure

- ➢ There are many factors like access, speed of Internet, economical conditions of the students, reach in rural area, etc.
- ➢ Lack of resources / technology to access Internet.
- ➢ Insufficient access to OER for the students.
- ➢ Faculty does not have access to OER sites (e g, we do not have access to YouTube
- ➢ and FB from university). This brings in challenges in accessing
- ➢ Shortage of multimedia based OER in Indian context,
- ➢ Shortage of OER in vernacular languages of India

c. Policy, attitude and management

- ▸ Lack of strong institutional policies
- ▸ Now a days Internet in flooded with OER, there must be some mechanism to evaluate those OER and a comprehensive list can be prepared subject wise and updated regularly by bodies like UGC, AICTE, MCI, etc.
- ▸ May be the faculty has doubts in the quality of OER as they are freely available. Also the authenticity of the material is under question.
- ▸ Absence of proper database by Indian regulatory bodies is also a matter of concern shown by respondents problems related to access, attitude.
- ▸ Even today, teachers and students do not use OER in regular teaching and learning. It is treated as supplementary resource. Also OER faces the problem of its authenticity. Since syllabus and evaluation pattern differs, OER available can not used as it is.
- ▸ Cost of Use and technical illiteracy, non-support from the employer, mindset of teachers

d. Plagiarism and copyright

- ❖ May be due to plagiarism- Respondents fear about plagiarism issues that may arise due to usage of OER.
- ❖ Copy right issues.
- ❖ Fear because of no proper copyright guidelines.
- ❖ Many academicians do not want to share their content or want to keep ownership with them
- ❖ Apprehensions that the hard work of a person might just get copy pasted without his approval or knowledge.

8. Suggestion

- ▸ At the University level, an OER Committee should be constituted to frame the policy such as the production, processing, delivery and access of OER.

- ▸ Such OER Committee may be constituted with the following members: Vice-chancellor, Registrar, Librarians, Directors of the Schools of Studies, OER experts nominated by the Vice-Chancellor

▸ The OER materials which will be published by faculty or staff of the University use only educational purposes.

▸ The teaching-learning materials produced by the University should be shared in a suitable online platform.

▸ The central IT department shall be responsible for providing access to all the stakeholders, and maintenance of the platform.

▸ Copyright and license matters should be looked after by the authority at regular interval.

▸ Regular updating should be supervised by the IT department for smooth functioning the activities surrounded by OER.

9. Conclusion

Digital technologies have revolutionized academic research, and open educational resources (OER) have become increasingly important, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. OERs are freely accessible, openly licensed educational materials that can be used for teaching, learning, research, and other purposes. OERs are particularly useful in situations where learners cannot attend traditional classrooms, such as during a pandemic. The pandemic has highlighted the need for open access to educational resources, and OERs have emerged as a critical tool for providing remote and flexible learning opportunities. OERs have the potential to democratize education by making high quality educational materials available to all, regardless of their geographic location or financial status.

Librarians play an important role in promoting the use of OERs among learners. They can help learners locate and access relevant OERs, evaluate their quality, and incorporate them into their learning activities. Librarians can also help to bridge the gap between formal and informal learning by providing access to a wide range of educational resources, including OERs.

In conclusion, OERs have the potential to transform education and promote lifelong learning, and librarians can play a vital role in bridging the gap between OERs and learners. As digital technologies continue to evolve, we can expect OERs to become even more important in the future of education and research.

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