Editorial

Open Learning Systems and Data Privacy in Digital Era

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If you have ever applied for a bank loan, credit card, filed income tax return, passport, driving licence etc, the list is endless, you have been sharing your personal information – either offline or online - with public or private entities. With ever increasing use of technology in our daily lives and advances in digital platforms, while on one hand has brought advantages, on the other it has its dark side too. Data theft, cyberbullying, and unauthorised business use of personal and private data are some of the concerns we face when use digital platforms for storing, transferring and exchanging data and information. In 2015, criminals stole 21.5 million records from the US Office of Personnel Management that contained the highly sensitive personal data of federal employees and their family members. While technology is an enabler of digital economy (PWC, 2018). To make diverse technology platforms work cohesively for growth of digital economy, the systems capture a variety of data. Recent Facebook scandal has put the concerns over data protection and privacy into the limelight. How to handle personal data has become a hot topic. Educational entities capture personal data to be processed for admissions, evaluation and career opportunities. They need to ensure the legitimate use of this personal data, alongwith its integrity and confidentiality.

With advanced algorithms, artificial intelligence and digital analytics tools, data processing and interpretations have changed dramatically.

Business interests have made "datafication" and the commodification of personal data, a matter of concern, that the governments have to take note of it and to re-examine the policies and practices dealing with data collection and protection. The seriousness of situation can be gauzed from concerns expressed by Sir Tim Berners-Lee (the inventor of the World Wide Web) when he identified biggest challenges of the web, viz., loosing control over our personal data, fake news or spreading misinformation online, and the need for more transparency and understanding of digital political advertising (World Wide Web Foundation, 2017).

The European Union adopted a Directive on General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which became a law just few months ago, on Friday 25 May 2018. The directive states that all EU states must have data protection laws that prohibit the processing of personal data unless there is a legitimate purpose and/or when the data subject has given informed consent. This has serious implications for organisations and entities processing personal data and thus various initiatives have been adopted by governments globally. The APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) developed APEC Privacy Principles in 2017. Although the African Union adopted a Convention on Cyber-Security and Personal Data Protection in June 2014, however till June 2017 only Senegal took the lead. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has also effected a

data protection authority in seven of its member states. In United States, financial data privacy is covered under the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA) and protected health information is regulated through the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

A survey by UNCTAD (2016) of 48 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean revealed that low and middle-income countries have weaker data protection systems and legislation. Mexico, the Philippines and South Africa have data protection laws in effect but some countries like Brazil, Indonesia, India and Nigeria are yet to adopt them. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India, brought out a white paper in Feb 2018 highlighting "Digital India" initiative envisioned to serve the citizen. There are around 450 million internet users in India and with growth rate of 7-8%, it is fast developing digital economy. There are many schemes of Indian government which generate lot of data. Government of India has constituted a Committee of Experts to study various issues relating to data protection in India and suggest a draft Data Protection Bill. The OBJECTIVE is to "ensure growth of the digital economy while keeping personal data of citizens secure and protected." Globally, the companies now have had to adopt measure to avoid unauthorised access, use, modification, transfer or disclosure of personal data collected. The Privacy Policies have been examined and updated. User choices are being sought about the use of their data. 'data breach' is going to become a bigger challenge because companies are freely sharing and / or selling information for their business interests.

With big data being implemented on scale by organisations, DATA ETHICS becomes all the more relevant. Data ethics makes us understand what is right or wrong when processing data, in particular the personal data.

There are certain principles for data ethics: ownership (individuals own their own data), transaction transparency, consent, privacy, currency and openness.

How can open learning universities respond to these issues and come up to speed with all of the different regulations of various governments if they have set up multi-countries campuses. Globalisation and internalization of education, in particular open and distance learning has made it a choice among the learners to avail opportunities to study with such multi-countries institutions. Thus how can these institutions get alerted to changes in and implement privacy policies that stay on the right side of the law, without drowning in red tape? They can follow some steps: do not gather any personally identifiable information into their database unless they are really going to need it for a specific purpose. Further, they need to build their privacy policy around the strictest regime in which they operate and then apply that to all their branches of operation.

This issue has nine articles that look at different dimensions of pedagogy and applications of online technology. Implementation and realization of Sustainable Development Goals has regularly been under scanner of governments and researchers. Umesh PANDEY looks at the quality, scope and diversity of these goals in the context of educational diplomacy through the regional networking of open and distance learning institutions in South Asia. He calls for an urgent need for development of Human Resources and up gradation of Skills in areas like Education, Health, Agriculture, Rural Development and Business and puts a caution that a non cohesive South Asia is likely to perpetuate the systems which perpetuate poverty, will breed inequality and make development unsustainable.

Next article details a Guided Self Paced Learning through an Online Course on Basics of Nature Cure in India.

This is an interesting initiative where awareness about foundations of understanding health and happiness was created based on science and philosophy of nature cure. The goal of this online course was to enhance the understanding of people about vitality through nature cure which is different from medicinal philosophy. Author used various social media platforms for delivering this popular course.

Third article is by Dr Maria Antonia Lima GOMES in which she explains the construction of a 3D modeling of the São João da Bahia Theater in Brazil based on socio-constructivist approach to understand a concept (or a subject, in this case History) and to build new knowledge (metacognition) through meaningful learning, mediated by the practice of visitation and interaction of the learners with the simulated platform. The article further examines how the theories of Vygotsky, Bakhtin and Gramsci could be implemented when the subjects' interacts in the Virtual Museum theater São João da Bahia.

Luciano SATHLER and Josiane Maria de Freitas TONELOTTO in their article describe status of higher distance education in Brazil and how the BRICS Network University can meet the challenges through effective use of technologies and methodologies and establishing multilateral research networks, exchange programmes and partnerships.

Julia PARRA, Azadeh OSANLOO, Carolyn RAYNOR, Sherry HAIR, Thomas KORANG, Cristina PADILLA, & Suparna CHATTERJEE describe a graduate online course which modeled Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to teach UDL through the perspective of instructor and learners about course design principles of ADDIE, Quality Matters Standards, and UDL. The authors recommend design-focused research and identification of engaging strategies for information access and skill development.

Matheus Batalha Moreira NERY highlights the Brazil's Social Justice Policies for Higher Education with a focus on what can be learnt from Asia. He recommends a more comprehensive rationality involving a long-term thinking strategy for its primary, secondary and tertiary education, mixing government funds and social engagement, to boost academic quality and enrollments.

LI has proposed a teaching design and applications of diversified open English educational resources in Open Distance Learning in China. She explains CDIO (Conceive-Design-Implement-Operate) Initiative, which has been widely adopted internationally for engineering education. She recommends that this method is fit for the Open Distance Learning, as it supports personalized, active learning method in computer English teaching and Learning.

Alfredo MATTA, Francisca De Paula Da SILVA, António AMORIM, & Edivaldo BOAVENTURA discuss an approximation between History and digital technologies. They investigate about the relationship between research and knowledge in History and the Digital Technology like Databases; Computation Techniques and its influence on Historical research; GPS and its use in History research; Virtual museums, 3D modelling and other modellingsto represent past knowledge on History; education digital games; WEB Pages, and Hypertextuality; Open Education resources and Ancestry, Ancestral History Mapping and community.

There is one more article focusing on SDGs. Ebba OSSIANNILSSON identifies that SDG-4 must provide for education should be available to all, at anytime, anywhere, and through any device. This necessitates learners to take leadership of their learning. With so much use of digital technologies in our everyday lives, there is a need for a new agenda for higher education, which globally is facing a digital challenge. She recommends that the universities must adapt traditional teaching methods and offer a mix of face-to-face and online learning possibilities,

such as massive open online courses (MOOC), which allow individuals to access education anywhere, at any time, and through any device. Actions must be taken to develop human capital as it is crucial in cultural change, which includes ownership, inclusiveness, trust, and participation. The Leaders should promote a culture of open pedagogy, situated learning, and self-directed learning.

Technology trends indicate a gradual increase in mobile learning application around the globe. Daniel MILLS and Jeremy WHITE reviewed the popular book, "Implementing Mobile Language Learning in Japan" by Steve McCarty, Hiroyuki Obari & Takeshi Sato. This book highlights implementation of mobile language learning applications and technologies in Japanese universities.

Vinod Kumar KANVARIA in his report on international conference on ICT for education provides glimpses and highlghts issues related like teaching, learning, evaluation, supervision and management.The conference was atteneded by around 65 academics who shared recent developments pertaining to application and implication of ICT in the field of education.

With this issue, we have got our team expanded. We are now pleased to have Prakash V ARUMUGAM on board as an Assistant Editor. He works at Wawasan Open University, Malaysia as Dean (acting) of School of Business and Administration. We look forward to his continuing contributions at the highest level.

We are honoured to have new expert members on our Editorial Advisory Board. A warm and hearty welcome to Samantha Adams BECKER, Curtis BONK, Aras BOZKURT, Steve FOERSTER, Badrul H. KHAN, Fredrick LITTO, Carmel McNAUGHT, Santosh PANDA, Thomas REEVES, Alan TAIT, John TRAXLER, and Junhong XIAO. We look forward to your advice and guidance on themes Asian Journal of Distance Education would cover and enhancing the impact of distance and open education research with a special focus on Asia.

Enjoy reading the articles!

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