

Venkataraman Balaji



Dr. Venkataraman Balaji, a specialist in the area of Information and Communication Technology applied to human development, is the Director for Technology and Knowledge Management at the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), an inter-governmental organization founded by the Commonwealth Heads of Government. He is based in Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Balaji received his first degree from the Indian Institute of Technology in Kanpur and completed his PhD in Energy Studies from the University of Madras in India. He served as a senior staff member in a leading not-for-profit organization in India for a decade before joining ICRISAT, a research center that is a member of the multi-lateral Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers. He moved to COL in 2010.

Balaji has been active in developing and directing a number of international research and development projects in the area of learning technology, focusing on areas with serious limitations on infrastructure and access. His work towards creation of rural knowledge centers in India in the '90s has been covered in professional publications and global media extensively. He served as a leader of a consortium of research institutes and universities that created a suite of semantic web applications called Agropedia, along with innovative mobile-based services for farmers and rural learners. His current interests are in the areas of Open Educational Resources, in mobile devices in support of learning in developing countries, and in innovative adaptations of scalable learning technologies - in short MOOC for Development.

Balaji has worked with the FAO, UNESCO, UNDP-GEF, IDRC (Canada) and with a host of international organizations on over a dozen projects. He served as a member of the top level Management Committee for the World Congress on Open Educational Resources, jointly organized by COL and UNESCO (June 2012) and is associated in an advisory capacity with the EU-based LinkedUp Data consortium, anchored in the University of Hanover. He has been associated with the IFIP IP3 GIC since 2011. He is a member of a number of professional societies such as the IEEE and the ACM and serves as editor or reviewer for journals and professional conferences in knowledge management, ICT-for-development and Geomatics. Over the last two decades, Balaji has served as an advisor for twelve graduate students in their doctoral programs.