

The Open Educational Resources (OER): A New Approach to Learning

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Abstract

Open Educational Resources (OER), the term itself reflects the flexibility in the learning process. The resources which are accessible easily through an openly licensed process for everyone and which is a very important factor for equal opportunity in education, collaboration and innovation. Various types of OER have the potential to make paradigm shifts in teaching and learning processes worldwide.

Keywords: Open Educational Resources, OER, Open License

Introduction

The expansion of the information society and the extensive explosions of information technology give birth to new opportunities for education. Access to knowledge and information are the elementary right of every human being. Yet, a large amount of the learning resources were locked up by authors or publishers within proprietary systems, inaccessible for others or outsiders which were often measured as personal intellectual property reachable solely to fortunate groups. The open educational resource (OER) aims to break down such barriers and to encourage and enable resources freely accessible to everyone who wants to learn. It can be said that Open Education is the broader term of Open Educational Resources. According to The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Open Education can be defined as “the simple and powerful idea that the world’s knowledge is a public good and that technology in general and the World Wide Web in particular provide an extraordinary opportunity for everyone to share, use, and reuse knowledge.”

At the same moment, the ongoing teaching and learning community face the challenge to establish views and practices regarding how the teaching and learning process should be structured and carried out. Institutions associated with higher learning have been using the internet, intranet and other digital objects to expand and scatter education for more than a few years.

Open Educational Resources

OER in higher education is coming out in the 21st century as an ingredient of the bigger educational or social movement towards ‘opening up’ which was in the past ‘closed’ to all excluding a number of restricted fortunate’s who have access to or use of information resources and services. When teaching and learning educational materials are made available in public domain or released under the license of freely accessible materials which can be freely used, changed, or shared.

Open Educational Resources (OER) are resources and materials which are helpful or useful for teaching, learning and research in digital media or any other mode that exist in the domain and of course have been unrestricted under an intellectual property license which means permits free access and reuse, and redistribution by others. OER includes not only teaching and learning content, also software, videos or any other tools to use, develop and implementation of resources.

UNESCO has coined the term OER (Open Educational Resources) in 2002. UNESCO defines OER as ‘technology-enabled, open provision of educational resources for consultation, use and adaptation by a community of users for non-commercial purposes’. They are typically made freely available over the Web or the Internet. [and] include learning objects such as lecture material, references and readings, simulations, experiments and demonstrations, as well as syllabi, curricula and teachers' guides. (UNESCO, 2002).

According to opencontent.org “The terms ‘open content’ and ‘open educational resources’ describe any copyrightable work (traditionally excluding software, which is described by other terms like ‘open source’) that is either (1) in the public domain or (2) licensed in a manner that provides everyone with free and perpetual permission to engage in the 5R activities:

Retain - make, own, and control a copy of the resource (e.g., download and keep your own copy)

Revise - edit, adapt, and modify your copy of the resource (e.g., translate into another language)

Remix - combine your original or revised copy of the resource with other existing material to create something new (e.g., make a mashup)

Reuse - use your original, revised, or remixed copy of the resource publicly (e.g., on a website, in a presentation, in a class)

Redistribute - share copies of your original, revised, or remixed copy of the resource with others (e.g., post a copy online or give one to a friend)”

Concept Related to OER

Free in education system is not primarily digital, yet in the present digital era, education is tagged as open technology related. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), open digital textbooks and video lectures are most well-known open educational resources.

Open Educational Resources vs Other Educational Resources

Openness of copying and repurposing of OER materials are the basic difference between OER and other educational resources, which claim to be free of cost. Other types of free of charge materials available online are bound by fair use rights or publishers stated specific licenses, most of them do not allow to be copied or users can not produce their own courses based on them. Large numbers of OER are published under Creative Commons (CC) licenses or as Public Domain so that users are free to use those resources without seeking permission from the copyright holders.

OER Format and Resource Type

OER consists of different types of format which includes text, audio, videos, images (graphics, charts, tables and photos), quizzes and games, multimedia and animation.

Creative Common has provided a list of different types which are as follows:

- OER Learning Objects (digital resources)
- OER Digitized Object Library Collections (digitized collection of resources)
- OER Encyclopedia (reference materials created collaboratively)
- OER Online Archives (repositories of OER)
- OER Text Books (open text materials)
- OER Courseware (Online University Courses and Programmes which are open to register for all)
- Open Courses (Short term courses which are open for all)
- Open Course Library (Archive or indexes of courses)
- Online Tools (Tools which support OER community)
- OER Images

Benefits of OER

- In our traditional educational system incorporation of OER offers a comprehensible technological and scientific environment with technical support and proposes the academicians to contribute directly.
- Well-structured and informative OER is a great help to the teachers in saving their time and effort in creating resources for students.
- OER provides accessible and affordable educational resources free for use independent of their location. The basic theory at the back of OER is to make available opportunities of resources to all, and to support the democratization of knowledge by making teaching and learning material available at a superior scale.
- OER also helps to flourish a new culture of contribution, participation, collaboration and distribution.
- One can share his/her own intellectual creation as OER. Other teachers, professionals, researchers and/or students may be benefited from his/her learning content when one shares it as OER

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Most OER published under CC license, category BY and BY-SA, as both these license permits for commercial usage.

Conclusion

The program of Free and open access to educational and scientific resources are changing the direction of research and education. With the advent of Open Education and Open Educational Resources usage of open educational materials, digital contents and online tools will increase and it will have a great impact on the traditional system of teaching and learning. Generation of new knowledge through collaborative learning will help in evolving into a new spectrum of educational system where education for all will take place in a wider way. Open Educational Resources (OER) can play an important role in lifelong learning for the knowledge society.

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