


Open Educational Resources Repositories: Current Status and Emerging Trends

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ABSTRACT

Open educational practices (OEP) are being enriched with many repositories to support teaching and learning activities in the modern era. Hence, the study aims to understand the trends of such repositories at global level by making analysis of 782 repositories categorized under learning object repositories (LOR) in directory of open access repositories (OpenDoar) with a focus on identifying open educational resources repositories (OERR) specifically possessing ‘open educational resources’ for reuse, modification, and adaption. The authors looked into LOR under different facets like global distribution, operational status, interface language, etc. A total of 78 OERR identified from the LOR focus mainly on open teaching learning materials when their availability was ascertained by visiting each repository and browsing randomly through “collections and communities,” “content types,” “license statements,” etc. The results reveal that these hail predominantly from North America and Europe with different distribution patterns, while little visibility is evident among other geographical locations.

KEYWORDS

Learning Object Repositories, LOR, OERR, Open Education, Open Educational Resources, Open Educational Resources Repositories

INTRODUCTION

Researchers are increasingly using the term openness over the past two decades to signify its impact in different areas like education, innovation, strategy, governance, etc. (Attard, Orlandi, Scerri & Auer, 2015; Janssen, Charalabidis & Zuiderwijk, 2012; Montgomery & Ren, 2018; Morgado & Teixeira, 2015; Peter & Deimann, 2013). This concept is characterized by access, democracy, transparency and participation (Schlagwein, Conboy, Feller, Leimeister & Morgan, 2017). Modern education has also been significantly impacted by openness through the availability and use of open content under open licensing (Wiley & Green, 2016). According to Hug (2017, p. 75), the term generally means “*without barriers, allowing for passage; broad-minded; free; permeable.*” Openness, as such, is at the core of all OEP and promotes sharing experiences and methods towards the sustainability of OEP

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(Dholakia, King & Baraniuk, 2006). These efforts for enabling sharable and sustainable educational practices can be traced to the evolution of Learning Objects.

Learning objects are defined generally as “*educationally useful, completely self-contained chunks of content*” (Wiley, 2005, p. 2). These can be classified as a “*learning task, supportive information, a case study, a task class, and so forth*” (van Merriënboer & Boot, 2005, p. 53). Learning objects promise to fulfill the three core criteria, i.e., “*cheap, fast and good*,” in developing quality educational materials inexpensively and quickly by making educational resources more reusable. Despite their importance in the “*educational exchange economy*,” their reuse is relatively low (Conole, 2012).

Wiley (2000, p. 6) emphasizes that the reuse of learning objects by teachers should focus for the future of Learning Objects and thus has defined them as “*any digital resource that can be reused to support learning*”. These developments led to the emergence of a related new field of open educational resources (OER) (Conole, 2012). OER can be seen as “*a subset of Learning Objects characterised by their being educationally designed content that is free, modifiable, reusable and shareable*” (McGreal, 2013, p. xviii). Wiley (2009, p. 362) also view OER as “*Learning objects whose intellectual property status is clearly and intentionally labelled and licensed such that designers are free to adapt, modify and redistributed them without the need to seek permission or pay royalties*.”

Both the categories, i.e., reusable learning objects and Open educational resources, overlap in the existing literature. However, the demarcation can be rooted in the differences between the two regarding open licensing provisions associated with OER that allow reuse and includes the freedom of adaption and creation of derivative works (Fulantelli, Gentile, Taibi & Allegra, 2008). Friesen (2009, p. 2) also points towards this general difference separating Learning Objects from OER in terms of the absence of “*any explicit reference to openness or the open and non commercial characteristic of the resource*.” Thus, the OER movement engages educators and institutions in sharing their resources and repurposing and reusing those of others without reinventing the wheel (Havemann, 2016).

Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme (2020) reveal that reuse and adaptation of OER are embedded in teaching and lead to emerging OEP. It includes a broad range of practices used in the open sharing of teaching activities, including creating, using, and reusing OER (Cronin, 2017). OER thus ensure affordable learning for students with access to quality learning resources across all sections of society (Howard, 2019). The evolving trends related to quality, access, and equity of education are supported by how OER are essential in reshaping the online learning environment in the modern world (Tisoglu, Kursun & Cagiltay, 2020). These OER are primarily hosted in repositories for broader visibility and usage to facilitate modern-day teaching and learning in a more vibrant fashion where all the stakeholders mostly use such resources to enrich their experiences. Therefore, we aim to analyse the availability of repositories hosting varied educational resources at the global level and focus on revealing the major contributing countries, type and nature of repositories, the operational status of repositories, interface language, besides distribution of learning objects to reveal the trends using different dimensions.

Thus, under different segments, the present work expects the clarity of enhanced background concept about the theme illustrated with adequate literature, the methodology adopted for the study, data analysis and interpretation by visualizing the data in charts and tables for more clarity and better understanding. It discusses the significant findings and conclusions with important suggestions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The OER movement gained significance and emerged as one of the motivating factors during the first half of the 21st century towards supporting open learning duly endorsed and recognized by global organizations and institutions (Santos-Hermosa, Ferran-Ferrer & Abadal, 2017). The earlier efforts were only localized OER initiatives, but with time, it became a global initiative promoted and supported by organizations like The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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