

Chapter 12

Learning4Content: WikiEducator's Training Initiative in Education

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ABSTRACT

The world over, some common factors have contributed to the emergence and growth of open educational resources. These can be to increase access to educational materials, to reduce the costs, to enhance the quality of educational content through working collaboratively, and to be used for capacity building and research. The WikiEducator project has been the foremost initiative to turn digital divide into digital dividends through free content and open networks. WikiEducator was established on 1 May 2006, and since then, it has grown a very big network of more than 66,700 registered WikiEducators. Learning4Content is one of the flagship initiative of WikiEducator providing free training for teachers. In this chapter, the author discusses building a vibrant and sustainable global community contributing to design, development, and delivery of free content for learning and providing training to develop wiki skills for mass collaboration to create high quality learning resources.

INTRODUCTION

“Turning the digital divide into digital dividends using free content and open networks” is the mantra of Wikieducator project. It is a community of teachers, trainers and scholars dedicated to collab-

oratively creating free educational content / open educational resources (OERs). These OERs are being used in different teaching settings. Wiley (2009) provided definition of ‘Open’ for open content. The thought on ‘open’ and ‘content’ had its bearing from “open source” we traditionally associate with software and source-codes. Wiley (2009) contends “...“Open” is a continuous, not

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binary, construct. A door can be wide open, completely shut, or open part way. So can a window. So can a faucet. So can your eyes. Our commonsense, every day experience teaches us that “open” is continuous. Anyone who will argue that “open” is a binary construct is forced to admit that a door cracked open one centimeter is just as open as a door standing wide open, because their conception of the term is overly simplified and has no nuance.” Thus, he lays the openness of content in the form of rights of content a user can be allowed. On this premise he gave 4Rs framework highlighting four rights of contents:

1. **Reuse:** The right to reuse the content in its unaltered / verbatim form;
2. **Revise:** The right to adapt, adjust, modify, or alter the content itself;
3. **Remix:** The right to combine the original or revised content with other content to create something new;
4. **Redistribute:** The right to make and share copies of the original content, your revisions, or your remixes with others (Wiley, 2009).

Thus the academic community can create new educational content by reusing, revising, remixing or redistributing. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has acknowledged the use of OERs as a rapidly growing phenomenon providing learning opportunities to teachers and trainers across the globe. However this has posed a challenge too in terms of how knowledge can be shared and how teaching can be organised and carried out. There are various benefits of sharing of open resources like it results in development of new learning materials, brings in innovation and reuse, and increases the access to educational materials. OECD (2007) identified four challenges for higher education: globalisation, demographic changes, changing governance

and technology. It identifies the role of OERs as an important tool in meeting these challenges by increasing access to learning resources for everyone, cutting costs by developing OERs, faster production and distribution and bridging the gap between formal, informal and non-formal learning.

Siemens (2003) also justified sharing of learning resources by educators in that being no cost in sharing digital resources, being democratic, one way to preserve public education, and that it provides them alternatives. Since the launch of MIT OpenCourseWare (OCW) in 2001 there have been many and successful cases of OER initiatives like Rice University’s Connexions, Carnegie Mellon University’s Open Learning Initiative, National Repository of Open Educational Resources of the government of India, Beijing Open University’s non-formal educational courses, formal degree programmes of the Virtual University of Pakistan, Vietnam’s Open Text Books initiative, and many more. During early 2006, UNESCO IIEP created a wiki on useful OERs for the benefit of teachers and scholars (D’Antoni, 2006).

Rossini (2013) also found the OERs as a viable option. Due to OERs the educational publishing landscape are being reshaped due to IP based markets resulting from digital libraries and user generated content. She reflects, “OER itself is a positive addition to the mix (many publishers are embracing OER). However, in the face of “free” content the old distinctions between basal and supplemental are relatively unimportant. We need a voice for high quality, professionally produced, pro-grade tools that save teachers time and save schools money.” The WikiEducator project was launched on 1 May 2006 as a community project with philosophy driven by Free Culture Movement towards a free version of the education curriculum by 2015. The core to the WikiEducator is community governance model coordinated by WikiEducator’s Open Community Council.

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