


Chapter 14

Open Educational Resources: The Future of Learning

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ABSTRACT

Open educational resources (OER) has varying explanations, but its broadest definitions include materials offered freely and openly to use and adapt for teaching, learning, development, and research. An open educational resource must have an open license following the 5Rs: retain (make, own, and control your copy of the content), reuse (use the content as-is), revise (adapt, adjust, modify, improve, or alter the content), remix (combine the original or revised content with other OER to create something new), redistribute (share your copies of the original content, revisions or remixes with others). With such open educational content, one can learn from a growing pool of knowledge for free. In this chapter, the authors present the rationale behind the open educational resources (OER), types of OER, the key players, opportunities, and challenges adopting it, and the future scope.

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INTRODUCTION

Open education's rudiments can be traced back to the 17th-century English coffee houses and even before. By offering a free space to read the pamphlets and other printed matter available, they enabled an open sharing of knowledge. The visitors to the coffee houses thereby had some initiation along the lines of a public sphere where they could access printed content, discuss, debate, and form public opinions. As the culture of mandatory formal education spread to different parts of the world and intensified in the 20th century, free and easy access to knowledge has become an essential subject of discussion.

Open Educational Resources (OER) are online teaching, learning, and research resources released under an intellectual property license available in the public domain or liberated under an open license that allows no-cost access, use, alteration, and redistribution by others with no or minimal restrictions. The license permits free access and repurposing to the users. OER can be a complete course, textbooks, topics, study material, videos, tests, open-source software, or other tools or techniques to support free access to knowledge. The critical discriminator here is the copyright status of an open-access document. It is not considered an OER if it is copyrighted under an all-right reserved copyright license. But if it carries a Creative Commons license or any other open copyright license, it is gratis¹ open access.

The term Open Educational Resources (OER) was first used in 2002 at UNESCO's 2002 Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education in Developing Countries (Open Pedagogy, 2022). Since then, the world has seen a massive shift in globalization, digitalization, and innovation, which is expected to grow exponentially in the future as well. Consequently, the importance of education has also increased, not exclusively regarding a degree but in gathering and implementing knowledge. This development has led to severe inflation in student debts as education prices escalate. Hence, the poor cannot afford such higher education, fine-tuning the cycle of systemic poverty.

Dutta (2014) presents, Open access materials could be classified based on the type of license (Copyright Protected, Creative Commons, Public Domain), nature of the content (Reading Material, Modular Course), type of media content (Text, Audio, Visual), etc. We can infer that each OER must be unique and distinct through this classification, resulting in a diverse network of open-source learning material. Furthermore, numerous platforms are established to teach anyone with internet access, which is the breeding ground for most open educational resources. Not only does this include thriving start-up businesses, like Coursera or Cognitive Classes, but many respected institutions are establishing their presence as an Open Educational Resource. These include Stanford (Stanford Online), MIT (MIT OpenCourseWare), etc.

Amidst the pandemic, individuals embrace such open opportunities to learn or teach something new to the world. The primary evidence (Digicon, 2019) for this claim can be observed through social media applications such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, etc. In 2020, YouTube saw a 50% surge in 'beginner' viewers and monthly over two billion active users. Similarly, Instagram saw a 22.9% increase in users during the pandemic. These figures illustrate that open access content is booming around the globe and includes guidance on various activities such as exercise, cooking, drawing, etc.

Nevertheless, accessible resources are highly pertinent to young minds in the classroom and the faculty members. If implemented rightly, OER could be a cost-effective learning tool for students and potentially aid teachers in preparing sustainable course material. However, the integration of such material needs to be carried out effectively and efficiently. Thus, inspired by the UNESCO OER Toolkit Draft, there are approximately eight steps for the ordered execution of accessible resources into the education system. Still, the focal points of the process involve reviewing the validity and reliability of the OER, its admissibility in the curriculum, remixing and filtering the resource to fit the requirements, and evaluating the

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