

Awareness and Use of Open Educational Resources in Library and Information Science

Mrs. Shilpa N. Hirekhan
Librarian

Seth Kesarimal Porwal College of Arts & Science, and Commerce, Kamptee

Abstract: -

This paper discussed the awareness and use of open educational resources by Library and Information Science. Open educational resources have the potential to make education more accessible, enable the creation of relevant teaching materials, improve the quality of content, and empower learners to be critical thinkers and knowledge creators. OER can be utilized to improve the quality of higher education and give more people in developing countries the opportunity to receive a higher education while keeping the total cost for education down. Open educational resources (OER) have become an important method of providing access to, and enhancing, the teaching and learning experience for both lecturers and students.

Keywords: - Open educational Resources, Awareness, Library and Information Science

A. Introduction: -

The use of Open Educational Resources (OER) in research and education has recently increased due to the development of ICT. Teaching, learning and research materials that are freely available in the public domain for unrestricted use and modification by others, or freely available under a Creative Commons license, are called Open Educational Resources (OER). Since its introduction in 2002 by UNESCO, Open Educational Resources (OER) has transformed access to education and research by providing a cost-effective alternative to traditional academic materials. OER is particularly helpful for researchers who rely on access to the most recent scholarly materials to support their studies and research, and it reflects elements of continuous quality development. Despite the benefits of OER, it remains underutilized in many universities. One of the main projects in India is Access to Open Educational Resources, which provides a wealth of scholarly content online through platforms such as Rai Open Courseware, NPTEL, CEC, OSCAR, e-Gyankosh, NCERT, NSDL and NDLI. (Munisamy and Sivaraman).

B. Open Educational Resources (OER) Policies:

1. International Efforts and Guidelines: UNESCO: UNESCO has been a significant player in advocating for OER. It first adopted the term at its 2002 Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education in Developing Countries. UNESCO has released various documents and guidelines aimed at promoting the creation, use, and sharing of OER globally. Currently, UNESCO is working on draft recommendations to further support OER adoption.
2. European Union Initiatives: In December 2012, European Union Ministers issued recommendations on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, which included considerations for OER. The Culture and Education Committee of the European Parliament has explored the advantages of OER in adult education and issued recommendations for European decision-makers.

3. **National Initiatives:** United States: SPARC (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition) has advocated for OER at the state level in the US through initiatives like the OER State Policy Playbook. This playbook recommends actions such as establishing OER grant programs and requiring the marking of OER use in course schedules.

Nigeria: Nigeria has developed its Open Educational Resources Policy for Higher Education, aiming to strengthen the commitment to OER among Higher Education Institutions and stakeholders nationwide.

4. **Institutional Policies:** At the institutional level, UNESCO's Basic Guide to Open Educational Resources identifies four main policy areas:
 - **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Copyright:** Providing clarity on the use and licensing of OER to ensure legal compliance and openness.
 - **Human Resource Policies:** Guidelines for educators and staff regarding the creation, adaptation, and use of OER.
 - **ICT Policies:** Policies to support the technological infrastructure needed for creating, storing, and disseminating OER.
 - **Materials Development and Quality Assurance:** Establishing guidelines to ensure the quality and relevance of OER materials.

C. Advantages of Open Educational Resources (OER):

Equitable Access to Knowledge: OER promotes democratic access to knowledge by removing financial barriers. It allows anyone, regardless of income level, to access and use educational resources freely, provided they have access to the internet or other technical means. **Support for Life-long Learning:** OER supports continuous learning beyond formal education settings. It is accessible to learners of all ages and backgrounds, enabling them to pursue self-directed learning and professional development.

- **Diversity of Knowledge:** OER offers a diverse range of educational materials sourced from various contributors worldwide. This diversity includes materials from different regions, perspectives, and languages, enriching the learning experience and catering to diverse educational needs.
- **Interactive and Engaging Learning:** OER encourages active participation from learners. Instead of passively consuming content, learners can engage in creating and modifying educational resources, fostering a more dynamic and interactive learning environment.

D. Role of academic Libraries in OER: Academic libraries are committed to improving dissemination to scholarly and educational content for their users and, with that aim in mind; they regularly create and organize collections of learning and teaching materials. But in the preparation, collection, management and dissemination of OERs, the libraries are not been widely recognized yet at the same level as their role in Open Access to science and data. In development and management of OER, academic libraries may play a big role. However, it is debatable whether this role would be as creator of OER or helper in creating OER and make accessible to the end users as other library resources. After reviewing what has been discussed above so far, libraries can offer advice and collaborate with the institutions, academic staff, and students as they engage with OERs in the following areas:

- Preserving of created OERs
- Lend expertise in search and discovery
- Metadata and resource description

- Information management and resource dissemination
- Digital or Information literacy (finding and evaluating OERs)
- Subject-based guides to finding resources
- Managing Intellectual Property Rights and promoting appropriate open licensing
- Financial support for the promotion of OERs
- Integrating OERs with library resources

Conclusions: In addition, library and information science professionals will need to stay informed and lead the way in collaborating with their institutions, publishers, organizations, and other academic libraries to develop new funding mechanisms and incentives to support faculty involvement in open access publishing. The time has come to encourage decision makers in governments and institutions to invest in the systematic production, adaptation and use of OER and to bring them into the mainstream of higher education in order to improve the quality of curricula and teaching and to reduce costs.

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