Equal Education Opportunity through Open Educational Resources

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Abstract: *Open Educational Resources (OER) are essential for advancing equal educational opportunities since they make learning materials accessible to everyone without requiring payment or special status. Since OER aims to provide a variety of resources and learning opportunities for all students, it is intrinsically egalitarian. The use of OER goes beyond saving students money; the usage of open educational resources (OER) promotes student participation in the learning process and the inclusion of previously marginalized voices, creating a more culturally sensitive and responsible learning environment. Additionally, integrating OER into higher education courses can support efforts to make equity a part of institutional culture. Therefore, this paper tries to explore how OER can significantly contribute to providing equal education opportunities by making education more affordable, personalized, dynamic, and responsive to students' lived experiences.*

Keywords: Open Educational Resources, OER, Equal Opportunity in Education, Creative Commons, OER Commons

1. Introduction

Open Educational Resources (OER) play a crucial role in promoting equal education opportunity. OER are freely accessible, high-quality learning materials that can be downloaded, edited, and shared, thereby providing access to learning opportunities and resources for all learners without the expectation of payment or particular status. They are inherently equitable as they strive to offer more accessible and diverse learning experiences, including accessible formatting, diverse learning materials, and diverse assessments. OER also allow for the inclusion of previously excluded voices, leading to a more engaging and culturally relevant learning environment. The use of OER can help equalize access to knowledge and strengthen every student's learning experience, with a focus on developing effective pedagogy and practice along with content. Therefore, OER contribute to creating more equitable and inclusive educational opportunities and environments.

Massive advancement of information technology and the growth of the information society opens up new avenues to more educational options. Though it is believed that every individual must have the right to receive education and knowledge & information, many of the educational materials were locked away by writers or publishers in proprietary systems, making them unavailable to outsiders or others. Open educational resources, or OERs, are designed to dismantle these obstacles and make learning resources freely available to all. 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."

Open Educational Resources (OER) are learning resources that are publicly available under an open license, allowing for their usage, sharing, and adaptation in the context of education. A vast variety of content, including books, courses, lectures, videos, software, and more, are included in these resources. The primary feature of open educational resources (OER) is their release under an open license, usually a Creative Commons license that permits users to use, alter, and distribute the materials without being constrained by conventional copyright laws.

2. Open Educational Resources

Open Educational Resources (OER) in higher education are emerging in the twenty-first century as a component of a larger educational or social movement towards "opening up" that was formerly "closed" to all but for a select group of privileged individuals who had access to or use of information resources and services. When educational resources for teaching and learning are released into the public domain or licensed as publicly accessible resources that are open to use, alter, or distribute.

Open Educational Resources (OER) are materials and resources that are beneficial or useful for research, teaching, and learning in digital media or any other format that is available in the public domain. Naturally, these materials and resources have been made available without restriction under an intellectual property license, allowing for unrestricted access, reuse, and redistribution by others. OER encompasses not only instructional materials but also software, films, and other tools for resource development and execution. The term OER (Open EDucational Resources) was coined by UNESCO 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).

As per 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)"

"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 grants everyone free and perpetual permission to engage in the 5R activities" is what is meant to be described by the terms "open content" and "open educational resources, " according to opencontent.org.

3.Format and Resource Type under OER

Open Educational Resources (OER) come in various formats and resource types, which cater to different learning needs and contexts. Some common formats and resource types include: Text files, Tabular information, Databases, Images, Audio, Open textbooks, Lecture slides, notes and lesson plans, Instructional video. OER can have different formats or media depending on the particular resource, and they frequently overlap and only loosely fall into one or more categories. Making sure that the file type, size, and formatting are completely accessible and adjustable is crucial when using open educational resources (OER).

The following is a list of the various varieties that Creative Common has made available:

● OER Learning Items (materials in digital form)
● Digitized collections of materials known as OER Digitized Object Library Collections
● OER Encyclopedia (collectively produced reference materials)
● Online archives for open educational resources (OER)
● Open Text Resources (OER) Textbooks
● OER Courseware (University Online Courses and Programs that are available for registration by everyone)

● Open Courses: These are short courses that are available to everyone.
● Open Course Library (course indices or archives)
● Online resources (resources that assist the OER community)
● OER Pictures

4.Merits of OER

Open Educational Resources (OER) offer several benefits to students, educators, and institutions. Firstly, OER can provide cost savings for students, making education more accessible and affordable. Secondly, OER can encourage collaboration and innovation among educators, allowing them to share and adapt high-quality course materials. Thirdly, OER can provide access to education where it may not have been possible before, especially in developing countries. Fourthly, OER can offer a more culturally relevant and responsible classroom environment by including previously excluded voices and engaging students in the learning process. Finally, integrating OER into higher education courses can support efforts to make equity a part of institutional culture

5.Demerits of OER

However, there are also some challenges associated with OER. The demerits of Open Educational Resources (OER) are quality control, ensuring the quality of OER can be challenging, as the materials are often created and shared by a wide range of individuals and organizations. Lack of support, educators may face a lack of support in finding, evaluating, and integrating OER into their teaching practices, Copyright issues, navigating the various open licenses and understanding how to legally use, modify, and redistribute OER can be complex and time-consuming. While OER offers numerous advantages, it is important to be mindful of these challenges when considering their implementation.

6.Creative Common/OER Commons

Creative Commons (CC) and OER Commons are two distinct but related entities that aim to promote the use of open educational resources. Creative Commons (CC) is a nonprofit organization that provides a set of licenses that facilitate the use, adaptation, and redistribution of copyrighted works. CC licenses allow creators to retain copyright while enabling others to copy, distribute, and adapt their work under specific conditions. CC licenses come in various types, each with different permissions and restrictions, such as Attribution (CC BY), Attribution-ShareAlike (CC BY-SA), Attribution-NonCommercial (CC BY-NC), and others OER Commons is a public digital library of open educational resources, offering a platform for educators and learners to explore, create, and collaborate with others around the world. OER Commons provides access to a vast collection of open educational resources, including textbooks, lesson plans, and other educational materials. The platform also offers features like Open Author, which allows users to create and publish their own open educational resources.

Additionally, OER Commons has forged alliances with major content partners to provide a single point of access for searching openly licensed resources. In short, Creative Commons is an organization that provides licenses for the use, adaptation, and redistribution of copyrighted works, while OER Commons is a platform that offers access to and promotes the use of open educational resources. Both entities work together to promote the adoption of open educational resources and make them more accessible to educators and learners.

7.Conclusion

Research and education are shifting due to the free and open access program to scientific and educational resources. The use of digital content, online tools, and open educational materials will rise with the introduction of open education and resources, and this will have a significant effect on the conventional teaching and learning system. The creation of new information via collaborative learning will aid in the transition to a new type of educational system that will provide education to all people in a more comprehensive manner. The knowledge society can benefit greatly from lifelong learning through the use of Open Educational Resources (OER).

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