OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES IN CIS: PRELIMINARY STUDY OF THE STATE-OF-THE-ART AND PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

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Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been increasingly utilized by higher education institutions worldwide in open and distance learning, for developing course material, delivering and sharing content, communication between learners and teachers, creation and delivery of presentations and lectures, academic research. Open education is closely linked with other open initiatives: Open Source Software, Open Access Initiative, Open Educational Resources (OER), Open Course Ware (OCW), Open Standards, Open Licenses, etc.

Since 2002 UNESCO has been promoting the initiative for OER, which are critically important for ensuring wide access to quality formal, non-formal and informal education and lifelong learning (Forum on Open Courseware for Developing Countries, UNESCO, Paris, 1–3 July, 2002). In 2005–2007, more than 600 members contributed to the international Community of Interest established by UNESCO. The online deliberations of the Community focused on the open content for education and OER.

In 2006, OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation launched a major investigative research project on OER, which resulted in the publication "Giving Knowledge for Free" in 2007. Major recommendations of the study for countries keen to promote OER and open access movement: *academic and research output as well as the natural heritage made available in digital format with the use of public funds should also be available for free for education.*

The Cape Town Open Education Declaration (2007) called on educators, authors, publishers and institutions to release their resources openly: *OER should be freely shared through open licenses and published in formats that facilitate both use and editing, and that accommodate a diversity of technical platforms. Whenever possible, they should also be available in formats that are accessible to people with disabilities and people who do not yet have access to the Internet. With an OER initiative for production and use of the accumulated knowledge in formats accessible and appropriate to anyone for re-use to cater to their need, we have an opportunity to dramatically improve the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world through freely available, high-quality, locally relevant educational and learning opportunities.*

The Maastricht message included OER as a priority area (Global ICDE and EADTU conference, June, 2009). The importance of OER for the world education community has been stressed in the Communiqué of the World Conference on Higher Education: The New Dynamics of Higher Education and Research for Societal Change and Development as "ODL approaches and ICTs present opportunities to widen access to quality education, particularly when Open Educational Resources are readily shared by many countries and higher education institutions" (UNESCO, Paris, 5–8 July 2009).

In 2006, (OECD/CERI, 2007) more than 3,000 OCW are available in 300 universities in the U.S.A. (the most famous example is MIT), China (CORE Consortium), Japan (JOCW Consortium), France (Paris Tech OCW project), UK Open Univ., Australia: AEShare Net, and Europe (MORIL). There are many other OER projects maintaining online repositories: MERLOT (USA), ARIADNE (EU), UN University OpenCourseWare, LORNET（Canada), EduCommons, Euro-

pean Schoolnet, LACRO (Latin-American Community of Learning Objects), NIME-glad, etc. OER appear in different formats addressing the needs of different types of learners: some Open-CourseWare is based on the traditional educational courses taught at a university (e. g., MIT) developed using the most advanced technologies; other open courses are based on open/distance education education (OpenLearn OU UK). The national and international OER initiatives collaborate in creating a broad and deep body of open educational content using a shared model within The OpenCourseWare Consortium, which currently joins 183 higher education institutions and associated organizations from 40 countries. Regrettably, during the recession leads the largest OER producers and repositories to consider paywall, the OER projects of some universities turn into marketing campaign.

The preliminary study of the state-of-the-art of OER in Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mongolia, People's Republic of China, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, initiated by the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education revealed that all these countries are at a very early stage of OER movement; some of them being more advanced, others less. The concept of OER is not widely recognized in most of these countries. The majority of faculty and management staff in higher education institutions remains unfamiliar with OER and related activities. While there are educational resources openly accessible via Internet, very few of the meet the UNESCO definition of OER: educational resources are enabled by information and communication technologies and provided openly for consultation, use and adaptation by a community of users for non-commercial purposes. Even fewer resources fit into the Hewlett Foundation definition: "OER are teaching, learning and research resources that reside in the public domain or *have been released under an intellectual property license* that permits their free use or re-purposing by others. Open educational resources include full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials or techniques used to support access to knowledge". There are also resources available upon registration, restricted to users from a certain educational institution or country, which are not OER in the pure sense of the word.

The introduction of OER contains a number of challenges of strategic, financial, legal, pedagogical, cultural, etc. character at institutional and national levels. The following factors that prevent wider introduction of OER into educational practices in the surveyed countries were most frequently mentioned by the experts:

- national and institutional strategies of informatization of education seldom encourage the development of open educational resources;
- lack of awareness of educators about the availability and opportunities provided by OER;
- national intellectual property rights regulations are hardly compatible with Creative Commons licenses;
- language barrier is a common issue in OER (for some CIS countries still sharing common educational traditions and using Russian language, OER in Russian could play the role similar to that played by English-language OER in English-speaking countries and worldwide, i. e., lingva franca);
- accepted pedagogical approaches are not adopted to the use of OER;
- quality assessment and assurance provisions for OER are non-existing;
- the reward/encouragement system to introduce OER in practice is non-existing at educational institutions;
- lack of knowledge-sharing culture and re-using of materials traditions.

There are some other country-specific barriers:

- in some countries, the current level of development of ICT infrastructure is insufficient to support the development;
- lack of or insufficient ICT skills (to use open source software and OER in daily practice) of academic personnel in some countries.

The cross-national review of the state-of-the-art of OER in several countries identified examples of best practices and different patterns of OER movement – from national initiatives on localization of English-language OCW/OER or establishment of national repositories to the efforts of individual professors who publish their lectures on the Internet. All experts agree that the OER movement should develop both top-down and bottom-up: strategic decisions at the national level, administrative decisions at institutional and activity of educators should supplement each other.

Promotion of OER movement in CIS countries should contribute to the formation of the Common Educational Space of the CIS. The activities planned within the IITE OER project for CIS envisage awareness raising on the advantages of OER for educators, both for policy-makers and educational institutions, and developing capacity of educators in OER production and re-use. A special emphasis should be put on integration of the target community in international OER communities and networking. Further research on quality assurance and sustainability of OER is planned. The issues related to copyright and licensing with respect to OER will be considered in the context of CIS legal regulations on intellectual property rights.

LITERATURE

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