

Open Education ~ I

The 'open licensing policy guidelines' of 2014 state that the release of learning resources, software and technology in an appropriate open licence regime would foster an environment of openness, collaboration and a culture of sharing, reuse and adaptation amongst institutions and teachers to enhance the quality of education in the country



In the current knowledge-driven economy, the higher education system plays a major role in social development and national economic competitiveness. Advanced countries with higher and better levels of knowledge and skills respond more effectively and promptly to challenges and opportunities of globalisation. Education is not only an instrument of enhancing efficiency, but is also an effective tool to enhance democratic participation and improve the overall quality of individual and social life.

India is in transition towards a knowledge-based economy and its competitive edge will be determined by the abilities of its people to create, share and use knowledge more effectively. However, the higher education system faces immense challenges to meet the demand for human and financial resources. Since education brings about socio-economic transformation in society, various measures are being taken to enhance the access of education to the marginalised sections of society. Presently, many institutions are introducing Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into their management, administration and educational programmes in order to serve their students more cost-effectively and to meet the students' and employers' need. In the 21st century, the teaching-learning praxis is not limited within the four walls of a classroom. The advent of ICT has changed the pedagogic approach and mode of delivery. The institutions have to adapt to the changes in such approaches and learning materials (educational resources) to the ICT-based environment. The increased access to online educational resources leads to individualised study and collaborative learning which is the latest pedagogical innovation among the new generation students who are always connected through the social network.

The Massachusetts Insti-

tute of Technology (MIT) released 32 university courses through Open Course Ware in 2002 with the objective to share the educational content via the web. MIT's innovative course-sharing mechanism encouraged UNESCO to organise a 'Forum on the Impact of Open Course Ware for higher education in the Developing Countries' in 2002. The term Open Educational Resources (OER) was first coined by the UNESCO in that forum.

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation defines 'OER as teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property licence that permits their free use and 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.'

OECD defines OER as 'digitised materials offered freely and openly for educators, students, and self-learners to use and reuse for teaching, learning, and research. OER includes learning content, software tools to develop, use, and distribute content, and implementation resources such as open licences.'

According to UNESCO, OER is 'teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open licence that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.'

Therefore, an OER comprises teaching, learning and research material that is available in the public domain free of cost with an open licence to

reuse, remix, and redistribute the materials while retaining its rights. The educational resources may be treated as open educational resources if the same is released in the public domain free of cost and with an appropriate open licence or CC licence. The word 'open' refers not merely to the availability of the educational resources but to what one is allowed to do with the materials. Copyright law provides for licensing any new knowledge generated and it is within these same parameters that authors use a specific type of open licence to allow full or limited use of the original materials created by them. The principle behind the OER is the collaboration to build and improve learning resources upon others' work.



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OER can be seen as a subset of a broader term - 'open education'. It is the simple and powerful idea that the world's knowledge signifies public good and that technology in general and the World Wide Web in particular provide an opportunity for everybody to share, use, and reuse knowledge. Other components of open education are Open Course Ware (OCW) and Open Access (OA). OCWs are course lessons created by universities and published free of cost through Internet. On the other hand, OA is unrestricted online access to peer-reviewed scholarly journals, theses, book chapters and monographs etc.

In 2007, the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) formally recognised the role of OER to upgrade the quality of education. In 2009, the HRD ministry launched the NME-ICT project to develop e-content on a collaborative basis with open licences. In 2012, during the World OER Congress, the UNESCO and Commonwealth of Learning

(COL) urged the educational institutes and governments to adopt the OER policy to promote its use. In accord with the recommendations of NKC (2007) and the HRD ministry's decision (2009), the NME-ICT (MHRD) released the 'open licensing policy guidelines' in 2014 where it states that the release of learning resources, software and technology in an appropriate open licence regime would foster an environment of openness, collaboration and a culture of sharing, reuse and adaptation amongst institutions and teachers to enhance the quality of education in the country. Learners will have easy access to digital and non-digital resources available either freely or at a low cost. Teachers in remote areas will have access to quality resources and can contextualise the materials without worrying about prior permission and copyright issues.

Open licences are the outcome of an effort to protect the authors' rights in an environment where the content (particularly when digitised) can easily be copied and shared without permission. Open licences seek to ensure that copying and sharing should happen within a structured legal framework that is more flexible than the automatic all-rights-reserved status of copyright.

They allow permission to be given accurately, while relaxing the restrictions of traditional copyright. They allow for more flexibility in the use, reuse and adaptation of materials for local context and learning environment, while allowing authors to have their work acknowledged. In this context, OER means teaching and learning materials for which copyright has expired or for which copyright has been explicitly withdrawn by the author. Open licence does not mean that everything is open. Quite simply it gives us the right to use and at the same time impose certain restrictions.

(To be concluded)