What we don’t know about Open Education Resources?

Professor Asha Kanwar
President & Chief Executive Officer
Commonwealth of Learning
Why OER?

- Reduces costs
- Enhance access
- Improve quality
OER and Textbooks

- **Brazil**: a study found that for 75% of students at University of São Paulo, the cost of acquiring books was higher than the family’s monthly income.
- **USA**: Utah Open Textbooks project: $5 per printed and zero for online content
- **South Africa**: R 1.5 billion for textbooks: Department of Basic Education decides to develop OER textbooks.
Access: Malawi

- Bunda College of Agriculture
  - 102 page Communications Skills textbook
  - 75% OER
  - Adapted by adding contextually relevant materials, activities, assignments
Can OER contribute to Quality?

- 611 institutions in India
  - KSS Women’s Engineering College, Andhra Pradesh
  - Maya Devi Educational Foundation, Uttarakhand
  - Bhilai Institute of Technology, Chattisgarh
Does open education support the goals that we stand by as educationalists? Are we leading to a world in which everyone is free to learn as much as they want are able to?

Is access enough? Is content enough? How do we bridge the gap between our goals and providing real opportunity for millions who have inadequate primary and secondary education?
1. Do we know how to reach stakeholders?

- We do not know about our primary stakeholders’ role in OER
- We see them only as students (in Paulo Freire’s terms-- “depositing” information from teachers to students) and not as ‘partners in learning’
- What are their needs and contexts? we ask them to adjust to our “supply conditions”
Open Schooling

- Open Schooling in Bangladesh
- Potential girl students (who are not going to schools) were mobilized and involved in discussions relating to curriculum and pedagogy

An Equalizer for educational opportunities: I left school in year 5 when I got married at the age of 12. I am now 22 and have 3 children. I want to get back to school so that I can help my children with their schoolwork.
L3F in Asia and Africa

- Where the learners contribute in defining the content, flow, developing materials and assessments
- Localized, contextualized and very specific learning.

K. Balasubramanian
Healthy Communities

- Rural women involved in defining the context, mode of delivery through Community Radio
- Develop the programmes in local languages
- Partnership between the community and health specialists
Involving the stakeholders means

- Understanding the needs of stakeholders
- Encouraging multiple interactions: learner-learner; learner-teacher/facilitator; learner-content
- Localising content and providing materials in local languages
- Providing multiple technology options
- Stakeholders become *producers* rather than mere *consumers*
2. Are OER a product or a process?
UNESCO Definition of OER

technology-enabled, open provision of educational resources for consultation, use and adaptation by a community of users for non-commercial purposes....Their principal use is by teachers ....Open Educational Resources include learning objects such as lecture material, references and readings, simulations, experiments and demonstrations, as well as syllabi, curricula and teachers’ guides.

(UNESCO 2002)
Open Educational Resources (OER)

- **OER are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits their free use and in some instances, re-purposing by others**

  Atkins, Brown & Hammond, 2007
According to these definitions:

- OER: a product
- Teachers and Educational Institutions decide
- Students only users

Are OER simply a product?
The Freedom Culture

- Freedom to use
- Freedom to study
- Freedom to redistribute
- Freedom to modify and reshape

- Richard Stallman
44% countries have low levels of freedom and 33% moderate freedom in managing non-governmental schools.
Social Exclusion of Education in India: By Caste and Gender

Source: Census of India 2001 (http://www.censusindia.net/results/C Series)
OER by itself will not be able to address inequality
Another Definition

The phenomenon of OER is an empowerment process driven by technology in which various types of stakeholders are able to interact, collaborate, create, and use materials and processes that are freely available, for enhancing access, reducing costs, and improving the quality of education at all levels.

3. What do we know about the quality of OER?
Issues in QA for OER

- Who is responsible for the quality of repurposed content?
- How do institutions ensure the integrity of content?
- What is the role of QA agencies?
Issues specific to OER

- Accessibility
- Localisation
- Technological barriers
- Discoverability
- Interoperability
Quality

- Do we have standards to evaluate quality?
- Who will set the standards?
4 USING THE GUIDELINES

The TIPS Framework offers guidelines to prospective OER authors, teachers, or students. These persons, either as individuals, in partnership with other matter-experts, or in teams of like-minded authors are invited to reflect on these criteria given here as ideas for improving the quality of the authors’ work.

There are several reasons for trying to improve the quality of any OER. One reason is to develop professional reflection-in-action and so improve individual practice. Another reason is to improve the efficiency of teaching by recording and storing evidence later on, and thereby share on own future time, effort, and costs. Finally, another reason is that others work with others either locally or around the world so as to promote education for all.

Prospective authors are encouraged to look at their own teaching materials, such as syllabus, lesson plans, detailed notes and content materials. After reading through these Guidelines and seeing ways in which they might choose to re-use their materials so as to make storing and retrieving easier, they can share with a colleague and perhaps after testing out two of them can talk about further ways to improve the quality of the guidelines. Authors are also expected to be of some use.

Of secondary purpose, teachers or students after reading through the examples might feel better able to judge the quality of OER they retrieve from any source. In both cases of authoring and of re-using OER, these Guidelines are expected to be the gradual development of a culture of quality surrounding the sharing of OER to generally improve teaching and learning.
Finally

- How can we involve the stakeholders?
- How do we facilitate the harnessing of OER and technology by stakeholders?
- How to manage the quality in a participatory manner without succumbing to "power" relations?
THANK YOU

www.col.org