Promoting Use and Contribution of Open Educational Resources

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Hello, everyone!

Most of my works in the last several years are in the area of Open Educational Resources (OER) and today, I am going to talk about one of my research works on use and contribution of OER.

Sharing is a basic human value. Many businesses and online platforms, today, are built on this 'shared economy'. People share almost anything or everything online with their friends and also the general public. But when it comes to sharing of educational materials teachers either do not share or face a predicament of whether to share or not.

Copyright over what teachers produce has become a big monster stopping them from sharing. But, there are also many of us who do share our creative works irrespective of the challenge of copyright.

Luckily today, we have ways and means to share legally due to the emergence of the open licensing and open educational resources. These are teaching and learning materials that are either available in the public domain or are released with an open license.

There are over 1.2 billion Creative Commons licensed materials, most of which can be considered OER.

But, how open are our educational institutions? Especially my research on OER is based on this aspect. At the time of my research in India, there were over 700 universities, but only 4 had committed to some kind of support for OER.

Despite several sporadic efforts to use and create OER, there were not many activities happening in India. In the ecosystem of OER, teachers play a very important role – rather a central role. Thanks to IDRC and the Research on OER for Development (ROER4D) project at University of Cape Town, I could undertake a study to explore why some teachers share their work openly while others do not.

Previous research indicates that teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning influences how they teach and engage students in classroom, and therefore, we posited our research within a conceptual framework of attitudes, motivation, quality and barriers. We believe understanding teachers attitudes, motivations, barriers to use and their conceptions of quality of OER would help develop better policies and environment for promoting uptake of OER.

We used a mixed method research approach, used a questionnaire to survey teachers, conducted interviews and organised workshops as modified focus group discussions in 4 different universities. In the

process we developed a scale to measure attitudes towards OER and I would urge you to go through the full research monograph to read about the detailed methodology and research locations. The monograph is available at COL's institutional repository.

Let me now present what we know about the research questions that we asked to help us understand use and contribution of OER better.

We find that teachers share for the pleasure of sharing and to disseminate their ideas to others. They consider sharing as a responsibility of teachers, and they felt happy to share their work and receive feedback from others. They also believed sharing would lead to reciprocal behaviour by others. Overall, they had positive attitudes towards OER, which did not differ significantly across demographic variables. However, attitudes towards sharing was higher than attitude to adapt. This is a significant point to note: low preference to adapt materials developed by others in their teaching. So, "not invented here" phenomenon was prevalent to some extent amongst the teachers.

Teachers were highly motivated to share educational materials as OER. Motivated by altruistic reasons such as OER will help developing countries or sharing is an academic value. They also think that OER increases learning opportunity for them. However, motivation to use and share OER is not significantly different across variables, except age and qualification. Younger teachers were more motivated to use OER and those with PhD had higher motivation than just master degree holders. These may be related to ICT skills and better academic skills of those with PhD.

When it comes to quality of education, teachers are normally very conservative. They would use OER based on appropriateness and from trustworthy sources/ reputed sources, if the pedagogical needs are fulfilled. However, they think most OER needs localisation to improve quality and lack of peer review is a problem in OER use. Interestingly those who have not created OER are more critical about OER than those who have created and shared educational materials. Quality assurance of OER should be the responsibility of those who prepare the materials, and institutions should create mechanisms to assure quality.

Overall, the top barriers were lack of understanding of copyright and licensing, followed by workload. They also believed there is no recognition or reward system for those developing OER. In the institutions surveyed there were lack of technological support to promote use and contribution of OER, and the present level of funding is also an important barrier. Users and contributors of OER were particularly concerned about time to integrate OER in teaching and learning. While OER may save time in long run, adaptation to local language and contexts normally take time. Lack of institutional policy to support OER compounded the barriers to use and adaptation.

Now, let me turn to the recommendations from this work.

In order to take advantage of the strong positive attitudes of the teachers supported by intrinsic motivations to use and contribute OER, institutional OER policy and appropriate knowledge and skills about OER is important, and provisions to support extrinsic motivation needed. Teachers would support use of OER based on assessment of quality for fitness of purpose and source reputation and trust. Increased ICT skills would help teachers to find and integrate OER. Adaptation of OER will be based on their evaluation of existing OER and would be a result of lack of fit of existing materials.

To mainstream OER in Indian higher education, there is a need for a comprehensive campaign to advocate and create awareness for OER. A national OER policy is currently being considered and needs adoption at the earliest. Teachers need incentives to take up OER work and integrate OER in teaching and learning. Institutional QA mechanisms need to be in place to build confidence on available OER to reuse.

And, continuous professional development on OER is needed to update about the benefits of OER to the large number of teachers.

Thank you for your attention.