

OER 2012: Paris and After

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OER 2012: Paris and After:

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My topic today is ‘OER 2012: Paris and After’ and I have prepared this presentation with my colleagues Ricky Cheng and Dr Sanjaya Mishra

I shall first review a landmark development—the World OER Conference held in Paris in 2012. I will then share some of COL’s contributions that followed this event, look at the trends that have emerged since 2012; briefly touch upon the context of Higher Education in Sri Lanka and look at the ways in which we might make effective use of OER, as we prepare to integrate OER into our CEMBA/MPA programme.

There have been several key developments and statements on OER in the last decade that have had a lasting impact on opening up education and research. We have seen a global movement towards collaboration in the development and sharing of content. COL and UNESCO organized the 2012 World OER Congress in Paris to mark the tenth anniversary of the term OER, with generous support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Participants from 70 countries attended the three-day event which resulted in the Paris Declaration on OER

The Paris Declaration made 10 recommendations. Let me just refer to three that may be of interest to you:

- Foster awareness and use of OER
- Encourage the development and adaptation of OER in a variety of languages and cultural contexts

- Encourage the open licensing of educational materials produced with public funds.

This is an important development as governments tend to take such internationally-agreed documents led by multilateral organisations like UNESCO and COL, seriously.

What are some of the advantages of using OER? It is widely agreed that they have the potential to cut costs, increase access and improve the quality of education.

COL has promoted the development and use of OER among its various stakeholders. As a Commonwealth organization, we are committed to collaboration and sharing on a south-south, north-south basis.

COL has focused on four areas: one, advocacy and awareness generation regarding the benefits and availability of OER; two, policy development on OER at the national and institutional levels; three, capacity building so that more governments, institutions and individuals are able to effectively harness the potential of OER and four, promote research through its publications on OER and its Chairs programme.

Policy advocacy interventions of COL include an event in South Africa, for example, in which 11 SADC countries participated. The goal was to promote an adequate understanding of the rationale and processes of OER policy development for the promotion of access and quality

COL has helped the government of Antigua and Barbuda to embed OER in their ICT in Education Policy. The Ministry will adopt an open licence for all publicly funded materials and have started implementing open textbooks in Maths. Grenada and St Vincent & the Grenadines are next in the process of developing policies.

COL has developed a prototype for developing open textbooks through the use of OER and this is being piloted by Antigua and Barbuda, to be taken up by the other OECS countries.

The Indian government has developed a National Repository on OER and adopted an open licensing policy through COL support for its National Mission on ICT in Education.

COL has developed the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), a consortium of institutions from 31 small states of the Commonwealth which have come together to develop needs-based courses which are freely available, as OER. What makes VUSCC particularly important is that it focuses not only on collaborative content development, but also on capacity building, and on creating communities of practice. It's not simply about cutting costs but also about improving the quality and effectiveness of higher education. Collaboration and partnership are key.

The UKOU Research Hub conducted a survey to assess the use of OER by educators in OpenLearn, Saylor and VUSSC. The consistently high scores across all aspects of teaching and learning by VUSSC educators indicate that OER use is deeply embedded in the practice of educators within the VUSSC network. Why is this so? Because of the participatory approach, sense of ownership and continuous capacity building.

COL established a six-country partnership to develop 20 sets of course materials in print and online formats, based on the secondary curricula of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Seychelles, Trinidad & Tobago and Zambia. The materials have been developed as Open Education Resources (OER), so that without duplicating effort, participating countries can have access to quality materials that they can adopt and adapt as necessary.

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, came forward to support this work that combines the professional development of teachers with the development of OER. It is expected that providing high-quality course materials free of cost and enhancing the capacity of teachers will contribute to improving, among other things, the quality of secondary education in both open and conventional schools in the participating countries.

COL has developed free collaborative content on English Language Teaching which has been used to train teachers in Kenya. This group has found the materials useful and are training other teachers in improving the quality of their classroom practice. Teachers have indicated that students are already demonstrating better learning outcomes.

COL has become one of the major publishers of the latest research and toolkits on OER and is recognized as a leading authority in the field. The Basic Guide to OER has been translated into several languages including German and Spanish.

Our Asia office, CEMCA has developed Guidelines for Quality OER and these are available for free download from our website.

COL maintains an online directory service for OER from the Commonwealth countries. We have identified free courses from different Commonwealth institutions that can be used by other stakeholders in four areas—higher education, secondary schooling, teacher education and skills development—all priority areas for Commonwealth member states. Looking at the data from the Commonwealth, we find that universities from developing countries are publishing large quantities of OER. We find that open universities in India, Nigeria, South Africa and Pakistan are significant producers.

The COL approach is to involve as many stakeholders as possible, particularly teachers in remote and rural locations, who can really benefit from these free resources. COL also promotes collaboration in the development and sharing of OER so as to benefit from collective expertise and experience. The OER must be available in different formats for diverse constituencies and through appropriate technologies especially mobile devices. Finally COL takes a holistic approach and believes that advocacy must lead to capacity building so that OER policy can be developed and deployed.

What are the trends that we have noted since the 2012 World Congress?

The US has been the leader in OER development after Rice University's Connexions and MIT's Open Courseware initiatives. However, more developing countries have now joined the OER movement. Second, even though we still note a great need for advocacy, many countries and institutions are moving from policy to practice. Open textbooks are beginning to capture the

imagination of policy makers and practitioners. While initially OER were primarily available in English, there are more multilingual OER available today. With the rise of MOOCs, we find that while many still use 'closed' content, there is a move towards integrating OER in MOOCs. Let me give examples of each of these trends.

COL took the lead in developing an organisational policy on OER in 2011. The World Bank established an Open Knowledge Repository the following year. More recently UNESCO has adopted an Open Access policy for its publications.

You can see that countries in the Commonwealth such as South Africa, Mauritius and India, among others, have developed OER policies at the national level.

University of South Africa has developed an institutional strategy and identified an action plan to deploy OER. This includes infrastructure support, OER development and the use of OER licenses

As we know textbooks are a costly proposition in the developed world. In the USA, according to David Wiley, 31% students don't register for a course because of textbook costs. But initiatives such as the Utah Textbooks project have demonstrated that it is possible to use OER to get a zero cost online textbook or a \$5 printed copy.

Three provinces in Canada, BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan have signed an MOU to share OER. The BC textbook initiative provides OER textbooks and the Alberta initiative in OER is offering \$2 million to academics to develop OER.

The province of British Columbia, has a Textbook Zero Program—which means that students don't pay for the OER based textbooks. What lessons can we draw from this project? One, that if you wish to implement OER textbooks, you would need systemic change within the institution. Two, senior level champions are essential to make this happen. Three, faculty would require some capacity building support and four, the staff must take ownership.

Today an increasing number of OER are available in different national languages in Russia, Poland etc. Khan Academy is translating its content into various languages and their materials in Urdu are being offered in some schools in Pakistan. Jinpinke is the Chinese government's repository in OER in Mandarin. The European Union has developed a platform for translating OER into different European languages.

COL in partnership with IIT-Kanpur offered a MOOC on mobiles-for-development, covering technology as well as agriculture, mobile learning, inclusive finance and banking. This interdisciplinary open course attracted 2282 registrants from 116 countries, 62% of whom were active participants. What did we learn? It is important to provide high quality materials combined with good teaching. COL and IITK jointly offered a MOOC for *malis* or gardeners early this year and this was delivered through basic mobile phones. The content of both MOOCs are available as OER. OER and MOOCs can introduce a higher degree of openness to universities. Open platforms, open content and open interactions across the globe can make education truly open.

Let us briefly look at the higher education context in Sri Lanka and the implications of OER.

There are 15 public universities under the jurisdiction of UGC, four public universities not under UGC and more than 40 private institutions.

The Age Participation Rates of the 18-24 year-olds in higher education is about 17%, significantly lower than the OECD average of 40-50%, which is required for sustainable economic development in any country. Sri Lanka is exploring various ways of providing quality higher education to its citizens.

There is also a high emigration rate of tertiary graduates out of Sri Lanka, when compared with the Asian average and with that of its neighbours. The data may have changed now after peace in the country.

Open and Distance Learning is considered a viable option to increase access. UGC is supporting public universities to offer distance and online provision. NODES or the National Online Distance Education Service access centres are another way of strengthening ODL infrastructure in the country. COL has supported the development of a draft policy on ODL for Sri Lanka and this has reference to the use of OER.

The OUSL is offering a six month course adapting the CEMCA developed 8-week online course on OER to train its faculty in the various aspects of OER. So we can see that OER is beginning to be adopted at the national and institutional levels in Sri Lanka.

Against this background, let us see how we can support and sustain the development and use of OER.

What are some of the challenges that OER present to stakeholders? A survey of how OER are being used in 13 Asian countries, sums up the key challenges that different constituencies face.

Teachers felt they did not have either the time or the capacity to locate, adapt, and re-purpose OER material relevant to their work.

Learners felt that OER should be fully open, half-open didn't help and materials should be accessible on alternative technologies such as mobile devices.

Technical support personnel said there were no standard practices in the packaging and re-use of OER.

Management was concerned about the challenges relating to intellectual property and copyright issues. Concerns regarding competition and revenues were also raised.

Open licensing as an approach to foster the spread of global public goods is here to stay. Extending copyrights for wider use without compromising the moral and intellectual rights of the creators is a sensitive task that has to be relevant to specific contexts. The open community has

offered different open licensing options: Open Content License; Open Publications License and Creative Commons.

Creative Commons appears to be the most significant licensing framework but licensing options can vary in different countries. Lack of understanding of copyright and open licensing at senior levels in academic institutions as well as ministries is a roadblock for OER Development.

The Masters in Teacher Education or MATE programme offered by our hosts, the OUSL, is being revised and updated—the course on ‘Teacher Educator as an Educational Technologies’ is being enhanced by integrating OER—this is being done in collaboration with COL. Shironica Karunanayake (2014) identifies several challenges that the faculty had and let me just highlight two: one was to align learning outcomes, learning activities and assessment tasks and integrating them with learner experiences. The second was, where to find appropriate OER. Shironica has also proposed the ways to address these challenges. These include training faculty in online course development and delivery as well as promoting research for more effective course design.

When Wawasan Open University developed its ICT in Education course using OER, some of the challenges they faced included combining content with different licenses and dealing with resources that were continually being revised. Mohan Menon (2014) shares the lessons learned—one, to ensure interaction when designing the course—learner-tutor and learner-learner and the second, to avoid overloading the learner with too much content. Both these lessons will be valuable as you design your own CEMBA/MPA courses using OER.

As we start to adopt and adapt OER, let me draw your attention to the great need for localisation of content to suit your specific context. A PhD thesis conducted on the use of OER in a community setting in Nepal, identifies some principles that could be of help. Communities of practice, such as the one we share through the CEMBA/MPA consortium can bolster localisation through shared knowledge. We need to understand our local contexts and localise the OER accordingly. For instance an important case study that you identify will need to be adapted differently for Pakistan or Jamaica.

What incentives and other institutional mechanisms and processes need to be put in place to facilitate the growth and mainstreaming of OER in your institutions? Some of the initiatives need to include:

1. developing an ICT policy within the institution
2. elaborating a policy on copyright
3. providing incentives for faculty members such as increments and recognition of OER towards promotions
4. developing a strategy for involving stakeholders

In conclusion, let us all agree to be champions and promote OER among our colleagues; let us collaborate so that we don't duplicate our efforts and let us also encourage our learners to be active producers of OER and to share them with their peers. Our final goal is the same: to offer quality education to our learners to promote livelihoods opportunities and sustainable development.

With that, let me thank you for your attention.