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Role of International Organisations in Awareness and Promotion of Open Educational Resources

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Resource sharing among libraries is very common from many decades. The open education movement is a combination of the established traditions of resource sharing and using technology in collaboration with other educators and learners who can contribute to use, access, and create content under this open education movement. Libraries are adopting this OER movement to provide their users access to a large number of educational contents without any additional financial burden. The open educational resources movement has grown at global level consistently due to new initiatives, various guidelines and various declarations held. Such consistent initiatives and projects gave a remarkable impetus in stimulating Open educational resources movement and played an important role to give it a universally renowned movement. This paper describes the role played by leading international organisations in spreading awareness and promotion of Open educational resources at global level.

Keywords: *Open Education, Open Education Movement, Open Educational Resources, Emergence of OER.*

1 INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning communities worldwide are developing many educational resources on the internet to be used freely and openly by everyone. These collaborative efforts have given birth to a new world for libraries where every user can freely access, create or contribute to the wealth of human knowledge. The open educational resources movement is nurturing a society where a culture of learning, cooperating, creating, and sharing knowledge is developed among educators. Technological advancements and OERs together have opened wider and bigger opportunities for libraries to access globally created educational resources by different communities and sectors across the globe.

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Open education movement are built on the belief that anyone can use, access, reuse and redistribute these educational resources without any constraints. Open education movements are helping educational community worldwide in making education more accessible and in making it more effective. Open educational resources movement is an extended version of open access movement that particularly caters to the course curriculum related educational content requirements of teaching and learning community. Smith & Casserly (2006) have explained that open access is not the only feature of open educational resources that distinguishes it from the other content available over the internet. OERs available with open license also permits the users not only to use the resources but also to modify, share and reuse it. Many factors have played an important role in the emergence and introduction of open educational resources such as the availability of a large number of resources in digital format, government initiatives and projects, universal missions on digital literacy and education for all, price hikes for textbooks and subscribed contents and budgetary constraints for libraries etc. all these factors motivated the libraries and librarians in adopting and providing access to open educational resources. Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning, and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation, and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. Both the open access movement and open educational resources movement has grown simultaneously. In open access movement some initiatives were the key points such as Budapest open access initiative in 2002, Bethesda open access publishing statement in 2003, Berlin declaration on Open access in 2003 etc.

The two milestone initiatives in open education movement OER and MOOCS have significantly influenced and transformed the education system globally. There is a tremendous growth in the open educational resources in the recent past and large number of universities and academic organisations are making their resources freely available over the internet which has become a significant source of open educational content. "Universal access to all knowledge" with this mission the Internet Archive was established in the year 1996. The collection consists of millions of books and billions of downloads per month (Wallace, 2019). Similarly, like Merlot project, Rice University started their project Connexions (presently named as OpenStax). This Connexions project, an educational content repository was started in 1999 (Dholakia et al., 2006).

In 2000, teachers of eight south African countries initiated the project STAMP 2000+ to collaborate and share free resources and teaching materials in Science, Math and Technology for free use by other commonwealth teachers (*Commonwealth of Learning - Learning for Sustainable Development*,

n.d.). Then came Wikipedia in the year 2001. Wikipedia is one of the utmost popular websites and has a large collection of free articles that includes about 40 million articles and available in 290 languages.

The other educational institution which played a major role in Open Educational Resources movement is MIT. In 2001, MIT announced Open Courseware (OCW) Initiative. This one pioneer initiative inspired many other universities around the world to make their educational content freely available for everyone which resulted in formation of open courseware consortium (MIT, 2001).

William and Flora foundation funded MIT Open course ware project later it has sponsored many open educational resources initiatives in many countries (Angela DeBarger & Cathy Casserly, 2021).

2 KEY ROLE PLAYERS IN OER MOVEMENT

There are many key role players in the open educational resources movement that has stimulated and facilitated this noble movement to reach at global level from local level. These key role players have supported the open educational resources movement in many ways such as by providing technical support, financial aid, policy making, standardization and in promotion and awareness etc. In the coming section few of the such key role players are listed along with their activities and roles in open educational resources movement. Many philanthropic organisations like Mellon Foundation, UNESCO, Hewlett Foundation and Commonwealth of Learning etc have provided financial support to propel the OER movement worldwide.

2.1 UNESCO

UNESCO is United Nation's one and only agency that has a dedicated programme on open educational resources. The credit of coining the term open educational resources also goes to UNESCO during its forum on open courseware in higher education in 2002. UNESCO believes that "universal access to information through high quality education contributes to peace, sustainable social and economic development, and intercultural dialogue. OER provide a strategic opportunity to improve the quality of learning and knowledge sharing as well as improve policy dialogue, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building globally" (UNESCO, 2012).

Another important milestone related to open educational resources movement that UNESCO has in its credit is adoption of OER recommendations (UNESCO & CoL, 2019). The Recommendation on OER - adopted unanimously by the UNESCO General Conference at its 40th session in November 2019 - supports the creation, use and adaptation of inclusive and quality OER, and facilitates international cooperation in this field.

The UNESCO OER recommendations are the only international standard

framework available in OER area worldwide. The recommendation is the only existing international standard-setting instrument on OER and is the fruit of over a decade of efforts to bring together a wide diversity of stakeholders.

The Recommendation outlines five Areas of Action, namely:

- Building the capacity of stakeholders to create, access, re-use, adapt and redistribute OER;
- Developing supportive policy for OER;
- Encouraging inclusive and equitable quality OER;
- Nurturing the creation of sustainability models for OER; and
- Promoting and reinforcing international cooperation in OER.

22 COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

Commonwealth of learning was established as an intergovernmental organisation with a mission “to promote the development and sharing of open learning and distance education, resources and technologies” (Commonwealth of Learning., 2000). COL is hosted by Canada and its headquarter at British Columbia and regional office at New Delhi. COL is the only International and Intergovernmental organisation that promotes the development of distance education and open learning. Currently around 53 countries are member of commonwealth. COL has done milestone activities in advocating the use and development of OER at global level. Some of the key achievements of COL are mentioned below:

- In 2012 UNESCO and Col in collaboration organised a consultation series where government departments were invited to provide information about policies related to OER.
- COL in Collaboration with Government of Slovenia conducted two global level surveys. The results of these surveys highlighted the several gaps and challenges in the development and implementation of OER. The survey findings were published as the Global OER report 2017.
- In 2016-2017 CoL hosted six regional forums around the world for the OER studies. The findings of this study were summarised in a book “Open educational Resources: from commitment to action”
- COL and UNESCO in collaboration organised the 2nd world OER congress in 2017 at Slovenia. “OER action plan” was formulated in this event which aims to mainstream OER for achieving equitable quality education, capacity building, improve knowledge sharing and to achieve universal access to quality learning and teaching resources by 2030(*Commonwealth of Learning - Learning for Sustainable Development*, n.d.).
- COL organised first world open educational resources congress in Paris. The landmark Paris OER declaration is the outcome of this

event which inspire govt that all educational material developed with public funds should be available with public license.

- In 2019 COL and UNESCO in a joint venture released “Guidelines on the development of open educational resources policies”. It is a specific tool to analyse the current policy status and help in understand the copyright and Licensing/alignment policy(UNESCO &CoL, 2019).
- In 2020 COL in collaboration with UNESCO organised a series of workshops on capacity building. The workshop objectives were to provide awareness about OER policy, to facilitate in OER capacity building, to provide support in the development of OER policy, and to monitor the impact of OER recommendations implementation (Commonwealth of Learning, 2012).

23 SPARC

The acronym SPARC stands for the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resource Coalition. SPARC collaborates with authors, libraries, students, publishers, financial supporters and policy makers. The primary objective of SPARC is to promote open sharing of educational material and research output so that knowledge can be equally accessible. SPARC “works to create a world in which anyone can access, build upon, translate, and improve knowledge. Students should have access to their learning materials and teachers should be able to update, improve, and customize resources with ease. Researchers should be able to read any article and its supporting data without having to negotiate, they should be able to use text and data mining tools that have the potential to optimize their results.

SPARC has different international chapters namely SPARC Europe, SPARC Japan and SPARC Africa. It has around 600 libraries and Academic institutions as global partners. Around 240+ Research and academic libraries of Canada and USA actively work together with SPARC to promote open access of scholarly article, open sharing of research data, and above all creating and adapting open educational resources by member libraries(*Home - SPARC Europe*, n.d.).

From the past few decades, SPARC has promoted research and education at global level by its Open Content plan and its three major parts i) Open Access, ii) Open Data, and iii) Open Education Policies and Practices. SPARC has actively advocated the inclusion of Affordable College Textbook Act in sec 133 of Higher Education Act. Higher Education Act is one of the important legal avenues for promotion and use of OERs at higher educational institutions in Europe(*Open Education - SPARC Europe*, n.d.)

24 OE GLOBAL

OE Global was launched in 2008 at Massachusetts. Initially it was set up

as an open courseware and was popularly known as Open Courseware Consortium. In 2014 due to broader vision and expansion from open courseware to Open Education it was renamed as Open Education Consortium. In 2019 the members again reformed the strategies and priorities and advocated global perspective on open education so the new name to the forum came as Open Education Global.

OE Global is one of the largest open educational resource's networks now. Around 243 universities and institutions from 44 countries are partner in this initiative and are providing open educational resources in 29 different languages.

OE Global is an international level member based non-profit organisation that support the world in development and use of open education. The mission statement of OE Global contains:

- expand access to education enabling every person on earth to access and contribute,
- improve the quality of education,
- make education more affordable,
- improve student success,
- foster collaboration and sharing through co-creation of education materials and the freedom to use, customize, improve and redistribute them,
- generate pedagogical innovation using the collaborative, interactive culture of the Internet,
- foster international partnerships and a global participatory culture of learning, creating, sharing and cooperation”

OE Global in collaboration with other organisations actively participates in creation and promotion of Open Education movement. Since 2013 every year in March it organises Open Education Week to raise awareness and to rejoice the impact of open education at global level on teaching and learning. OE Global also organises annual OE Global Conference. It is one of the exclusive international conferences on open education with a prime motive to improve access, participation, and success in open education. OE Global also gives recognition to outstanding contributors in open education. OE Global Open Education Award for Excellence is given annually in two categories Individual and Research tool and practice award(*OEGlobal – Open Education Global*, n.d.).

25 MOOCS

The open education and open educational resources movement created a pathway for the open online courses popularly known as MOOCs. MOOCs

stands for Massive Open Online Courses. MOOCs provide free, flexible and affordable online courses where anyone can enrol. Currently MOOCs is providing 3000+ online courses. The circuits and electronic course by MIT was the first ever MOOC Course and this course has reached 500000+ learners. Later many other universities also started offering free online courses such as University of Manitoba, Canada and Boston University, USA offered free course on Digital Product Management. At present a large number of universities are offering their courses on MOOCs, and since 2015 learners can also earn academic credits for MOOC course on EdX. Powell, 2013 have mentioned that “the rapid proliferation of MOOCs has forced the higher education institutions to recognise the strategic importance of online learning and open education”.

In the words of McAuley et al., 2010 “MOOC integrates the connectivity of social networking, the facilitation of an acknowledged expert in a field of study, and a collection of freely accessible online resources”. Three MOOC models as broadly categorised by Siemens, 2013 are:

- **cMOOC:** cMOOC are the online courses that are led by the principles of pedagogic innovations in a richly networked and disaggregated mode of social learning.
- **xMOOC:** xMOOC that are massive, institutionally driven and content focused courses that are based on pedagogical models of university.
- **QuasiMOOC:** Quasi MOOCs consists of open educational resources are loosely connected resources provided to learners for specific tasks.

26 CREATIVE COMMONS

Creative Commons is a US based non-profit organisation. Creative Commons was founded by Lawrence Lessig, Eric Eldred and Hal Abelson in 2001. Creative Commons is a global network with an aim to provide educational access and to expand the range of various available creative works to others for use, reuse, reconstruct and reshare them legally. Creative Commons release several copyright licenses free of charge and these licences are popularly known as Creative Commons Licenses. These Creative Commons licenses allow the authors to convey which right they want to reserve and which right they want to waive off and share in public domain for the benefit of society, learners and for other creators. A Creative Commons license provides a flexibility to authors where the author can select to allow copyright for the non-commercial use only to protect it from copyright infringement and further distribution of work (CCL, 2019).

Creative Commons (CC) helps in building and collaborating with an extensive member network and multiple partners that thrive commonly for sharing knowledge and culture. CC also helps in capacity building, in providing

practical solutions and advocates for better open sharing of knowledge and culture that serves the public interest.

Creative Commons license are available in many types of license rights out of which seven licenses are the most frequently used licenses that include.

- Attribution Alone
- Attribution and share alike
- Attribution + Non-Commercial
- Attribution + Non-Commercial + share alike
- Attribution+ No derivatives
- Attribution + No derivatives + Non commercial
- Freeing content globally without any restrictions.

All these creative commons license rights are denoted with symbols which conveys the users about the rights and restrictions(CCL, 2019). Creative Commons has played significant role in promotion and effective utilisation of open education resources. Due to Creative Commons licenses availability many universities / institutions/ authors can share their coursework, textbooks, and study material etc. in public domain that has further facilitated its adoption and customisation keeping in mind particular learner need and requirements.

Creative commons in collaboration with Smithsonian the largest museum of the world has released about three million images and data in public domain so that it can be easily accessed and can be freely used without copyright restrictions. CC also runs certificate program and every year train hundreds of people to be creative commons goodwill ambassadors and sharing experts.

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