

Chapter 4

Open Educational Resources in Supporting Online Education During COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the most significant global crisis that brought humanity to a halt. The world is currently facing many issues evolving through these situations, ranging from health issues, economic breakdown, unemployment due to job losses, and, more severely, the challenges faced in educational setups. The closure of educational institutions and the subsequent shift of classrooms to online teaching led to further crises. The prominent challenges include increased workload, inadequate training, and less familiarity with the availability of ready-to-use online educational resources. Many world organizations and policymakers in the field of education and open learning have unanimously supported the use of open educational resources (OER) in online teaching and learning during the present times. The current study highlights the importance of OER in online learning by reviewing important initiatives, reports, and collaborative arrangements by prominent organizations for promoting the use of OER in online learning as a significant response to COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) at unprecedented growth resulted in substantial mortality and morbidity (Rundle, Park, Herbstman, Kinsey & Wang,

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-0094-7.ch004

2020). The World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic in March 2020, and subsequent lockdowns by different nations brought humanity to the verge of a complete halt. These situations resulted in unmatched issues and challenges ranging from economic instability, unemployment due to Job losses, mental and psychological health, and more severely, its effect on global education at all levels is unprecedented (Nicola et al.,2020). The worst affected educational institutions were those without an online learning platform to address the situation arising due to the pandemic, where online education and distance learning are highly prioritised (Ozili & Arun, 2020).

These situations, coupled with the motive of continuing the education provisions for all, led to the massive shift from classroom to online teaching on an unprecedented scale. This scenario led to the increased workload due to a new, challenging environment with inadequate training and less familiarity with the availability of different online educational resources, primarily through open access.

The staff in many educational institutions is acquiring new skills to meet these evolving challenges concerning off-campus teaching, learning, and research activities. Many educational institutions are turning to Open Educational Resources (OERs) to effectively support teaching-learning activities by populating new digitised modules from existing resources or adapting directly to their courses (Morrissey,2020). Open education has always been supported through the availability of OER, which resulted in reducing textbook costs and managing affordable learning for all, which can be seen as one of the best aspects of openness.

Therefore, the present work discusses the concept and development of OER and its importance in supporting Open Educational Practices. Furthermore, it aims to explore and identify essential initiatives taken at the global level by world organisations to support and promote the use of OER in online teaching and learning during the most testing times like COVID-19.

METHODOLOGY

The literature survey is carried out using reputed databases and search engines like Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar, Directory of Open Access Journals, publishing houses like Wiley, Emerald, Taylor and Francis, etc., and other initiatives in the area like OER Research Hub, OERworldmap, OER for Development (OER4D), OER Knowledge Cloud, etc., in an attempt to identify substantial works about different aspects concerning OER and Covid-19. The literature survey, coupled with further digging into the websites and initiative portals of various important organisations and critical players in OER, helped to identify and explore many such important

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