Open Education Resources: as a facilitating source of knowledge for distance learners

Kaneez Fatima, Nazar Abbas Nazar, Unees Fatima

Abstract ---Information technology brought revolutionary and significant changes in higher education. This is the age of competition and the nations who are familiar with the importance of education leads the other nations. Only those nations of the world are leading nations who focus on higher education and adopt modern trends of communication and the nations who ignore educational needs remain at the rear in progress. Internet and modern technologies are great blessing in recent age; it ceases the distance by making easy access to knowledge. Especially open education resources are greatly helpful and facilitating source of knowledge for learners. Now world knowledge is public property and it is not limited to an individual rather we can use, share and update us with latest knowledge anywhere in the world just in seconds by open education resource movement. Every lover of knowledge can access latest educational material through OERs without any discrimination of race and territory boundaries in less time and no cost. The study was conducted to (i) discuss the nature of open education resources (ii) to highlight the uses of open education resources in distance education. A sample of 129 students of MS leading to PhD and 28 faculty members of education was taken conveniently. A questionnaire was used as a research tool for the collection of data and instrument reliability was checked. Collected data was analyzed by mean score and percentage. Main findings of the study revealed that OERs are easily in access of every student; these are flexible for learners as well as bridge the gap between teacher and the learner. Moreover Open education resources are excellent source of sharing knowledge, enhance the learning of students, teachers and self learners, it generate sense of competition among the learners as well as test the capacity of learning among the learners. Similarly students and teachers can access OERs to search about material related to their research and support professional development.

Key words: OERs, Revolutionary, Significant, Knowledge lovers, Facilitating.

Kaneez Fatima, Ph.D Scholar ,AIOU,Islamabad(Pak.)

kaneez.fatima82@gmail.com

Nazar Abbas Nazar, Ph.D Scholar,AIOU,Islamabad(Pak.)

Nayyar222@yahoo.com

Unees Fatima, Research fellow, AIOU,Islamabad(Pak.)

manahil.fatima01@gmail.com

Introduction:

"Distance Education is non-traditional system of education in which learners and teachers are separated by distance and sometimes by time" (Sangi, 2005). Similarly, Simonson (2000, P.5) identify distance education as, "Institution based formal education where the learning group is separated geographically and interactive telecommunication systems are used to connect learners, resources and instructors."

Distance education come forward to fulfill the educational needs of those "who would otherwise not be able to participate in face-to-face courses. It encompasses those programs that allow the learner and instructor to be physically apart during the learning process and maintain communication in a variety of ways." (Keegan, 1986)

So distance education (DE) is a mode of education in which students and teachers are separated by time and space. They have not daily face to face interaction like formal system of education but are connected through correspondence and other Medias like internet, radio, television etc. Distance education institutes are providing great educational services to those learners who are deprived of getting education through formal system. This system is doing great contribution in nation building as well as in increasing literacy ratio. Distance education universities facilitate and equip their learners with latest knowledge to a great extent in order to compete in this world of competition. And for this purpose different mediums are used to bridge the gap between teacher and the learner.

Students in distance learning situations are now active participants in learning, which is not always true in traditional settings. As active participants, there must be a sense of ownership as to the learning goals establishing a sense of autonomy, self-control and interdependence (Savery and Duffy, 1995). As an active learner, the student will put forth the effort if they believe in the relevance of the material and it has meaning to him or her. (Saettler, 1990).

In this era, Internet is playing a superb role in education especially in distance education. It has brought abrupt, speedy and revolutionary changes in the field of education and research. Innovations in education occur due to technology with such a speed which we cannot expect few decades before. Desmond Keegan believes that distance learning must do everything possible to recreate the teacher-learner model as an interactive experience (Keegan 1986). According to Sherry (1996, p.346) "this is the basis of the Iowa Model that does everything possible to create traditional, face-to-face instruction using teleconferencing combined with audio-visual interaction." All the development in education is due to the use of internet. Internet and technology has made the access of every individual pretty easy to latest knowledge all over the world. Internet also make possible to explore speedy ways of sharing knowledge and information from universities and colleges to a wide range of users and specially open education resources have great significance in easy access to different modules, textbooks, lectures, videos, so that to get maximum benefits by whole world's educational sources. Open Education Resources is a relatively new phenomenon which may be seen as a part of a larger trend towards openness in higher education. Open Educational Resources (OERs) is a term

used for any educational material that is freely available on the Internet. Open education resources have great significance in facilitating the distance education system, teachers and students.

 Open Educational Resources (OER) is a movement used to facilitate the learners and these resources consist of, "Teaching and learning resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use or re-purposing by others. OERs include full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials or techniques used to support access to knowledge." (William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 2009)

According to (Rowntree, 1994), "Open learning materials are materials put together in such a way that users can learn from them satisfactorily with less shelf than useful for a teacher."

There is not any authentic definition for OERs, it is described as:

"Digitized materials offered freely and openly for educators, students and self-learners to use and reuse for teaching, learning and research" (J, Hylén, 2007).

In 2002 UNESCO held a Forum consist of some people who "wished to develop together a universal educational resource available for the whole of humanity".

(http://opencontent.org/blog)

Open ERs are very helpful for the researchers and the student in their studies. The students can get easy and quick access to latest educational material in no cost through OERs. Open education resources (OERs) are the resources where educators and learners have free access to high quality

educational resources, independent of their location. There are no territory boundaries and other restrictions in using these resources. Anyone anywhere can use these resources easily, only one needs a net connection.

Keeping in mind the current needs, there are four major ways that OER can be used and changed as described by (Wiley, 2007)

Reuse — use the work accurately, just exactly as you found it.

Rework — alter or modify the work so that it better meets your needs.

Remix — combine the (verbatim or altered) work with other works to better meet your needs.

Redistribute — share the verbatim work, the reworked work, or the remixed work with others.

 Looking by future perspective OERs have great importance because this is the age of competition and without adopting the current trends no one can move further. Only those nations and individuals survive in this world who emphasis on latest trends. Internet has made the world a global village, anyone anywhere can access thousand miles away a person and can share and take benefit by knowledge available over net. It is difficult, expensive and time consuming to move to libraries and to buy books so OERs help greatly in facilitating the knowledge seekers to access the latest educational material to satisfy their thirst in less time and low cost. So in this respect OERs are like great blessing for the teachers and learners to access the learning content of the whole world's educational contributors for quality education and the basic objective

of OER initiative is to have open movement worldwide to explore the effective and efficient systems to create, share and evolve open educational learning materials.

In open educational resource initiatives, resources like the ones listed above are made widely accessible across the globe with low and no cost. The impact of open educational resource initiatives is potentially huge for learners, educators and educational institutions in the next years. OERs are liked by learners due to their flexibility and these are highly facilitating source of sharing knowledge for distance learners.

Purpose of the study

The study was designed to discuss the nature of open education resources and to highlight the uses of open education resources in distance education.

Research Methodology

Sampling

The study was descriptive in nature so survey was considered appropriate for this study.

129 students of MS Education program enrolled in session 2011-2012 at AIOU Islamabad as well as 28 academic faculty members of AIOU Islamabad were taken as population and 100% students of MS Education program enrolled in session 2011-2012 at AIOU as well as 100% teachers were included as a sample.

Development of instrument

In this survey a questionnaire on five points (Likert Scale) was used for the collection of data. In the questionnaire items were about the uses of OERs, role of OERs in distance education system were asked to elicit the valuable opinions of the respected respondents.

Administration of research tool

The questionnaire was administered personally to the teachers and students who were present in their workshop at AIOU main campus Islamabad and some by mail. The researcher received 108 questionnaires of student's back, out of 129 and 22 questionnaires of teacher's back, out of 28 which were finally analyzed.

Analysis of data

The data collected through questionnaires was analyzed by applying percentage and mean score.

Questionnaire for Students

Table 1: Use of open education resources

S. No	Statements	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	%	Mean
01	Open education resources are open for all to use.	21	45	18	24	0	62	3.58
02	Open education resources are easily in access of every student.	42	48	09	09	0	84	4.14
03	Open education resources are flexible for learners.	36	66	03	03	0	95	4.25
04	Open education resources bridge the gap between teacher and the learner.	09	57	21	18	03	62	3.47
05	Open education resources are excellent source of sharing knowledge.	33	60	09	03	03	87	4.09
06	Open education resources enhance the learning of students.	15	72	15	06	0	81	3.89
07	Open education resources generate sense of competition among the learners.	15	54	18	18	03	64	3.56
08	Open education resources test the capacity of learning among the learners.	18	78	09	03	0	89	4.03
09	Students can access OERs to search about material related to their research.	48	54	6	0	0	98	4.39
10	Open education resources support professional development.	42	57	06	03	0	92	4.28

Scale value of this table is SA (Strongly Agree) =5, A (Agree) =4, UNC (Uncertain) =3, DA (Disagree) =2, SDA (Strongly Disagree) =1

The above Table shows that open education resources are open for all to use and are easily in access of every student, these are flexible for learners as well as bridge the gap between teacher and the learner. Moreover Open education resources are excellent source of sharing knowledge, enhance the learning of students, generate

.

sense of competition among the learners as well as test the capacity of learning among the learners. Similarly Students can access OERs to search about material related to their research and support professional development. Mean score for all the statements is above than 3.47 which support statements.   .

Questionnaire for Teachers

Table 2: Use of open education resources

S. No	Statements	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA	%	Mean
01	Open education resources support the teacher's competencies.	10	09	02	0	01	86	4.23
02	Teachers can use open education resources to plan a course.	08	10	02	02	0	82	4.10
03	OERs assist to meet the specific needs of distance education.	05	16	0	01	0	95	4.14
04	Using open education resources is less expensive.	04	10	06	02	0	64	3.73
05	Problems in teaching can be resolved through OERs.	01	10	10	0	0	50	3.46
06	Use of open education resources save time.	07	13	02	0	0	91	4.23
07	OERs expand educational opportunities for all.	09	13	0	0	0	100	4.41

Scale value of this table is SA (Strongly Agree) =5, A (Agree) =4, UNC (Uncertain) =3, DA (Disagree) =2, SDA (Strongly Disagree) =1

Table 2 indicates that Open education resources support the teacher's competencies as well as teachers can use open education resources to plan a course, OERs assist to meet the specific needs of distance education and using of open education resources is less expensive. To some extent problems in teaching can be resolved through OERs similarly Use of open education resources save time and OERs expand educational opportunities for all. Mean score for all the statements is above than 3.46 which support the statements.

Conclusions:

Open education resources are of great importance with respect of distance education. Open education resources are the essential need of existing time, and these fulfill the study and research requirements, these are open for all to use and are easily in access of every student, these are flexible for learners as well as bridge the gap between teacher and the learner. Moreover Open education resources are excellent source of sharing knowledge, it enhance the learning of students, generate sense of competition among the learners as well as test the capacity of learning among the learners. Similarly Students can access OERs to search about material related to their research and support professional development. Open education resources

support the teacher's competencies as well as teachers can use open education resources to plan a course, OERs assist to meet the specific needs of distance education and using of open education resources is less expensive. To some extent problems in teaching can be resolved through OERs similarly Use of open education resources save time and OERs expand educational opportunities for all So OERs play a significant role in distance learning system, these are highly facilitating source of knowledge so the need is to adopt this trend for flexible learning.

AIOU may also provide the facility of e-library to its students via OERs. University authorities and planners of distance education may do effort to implement this trend in order to provide online latest material to the students and teachers.

REFRENCES

(1).Clark,T.(1993). "*Attitudes of Higher Education Faculty Toward Distance Education*: A   National Survey." The American Journal of Distance Education **7**(2):

2. *Hylén, Jan (2007). Giving Knowledge for Free: The Emergence of Open Educational Resources. Paris, France: OECD Publishing. p. 30*

3. Keegan, D. (1986). *Foundations of distance education* (2nd. Ed.). New York: Routledge.

4.OECD, (2007), *Giving Knowledge for Free: the Emergence of Open Educational Resources*,   Retrieved   from http://tinyurl.com/62hjx6

5. Rowntree, D, (1994),   *Preparing Material For Open Distance and Flexible Learning:* Published with association with the   institute   of   Educational Technology Open Universty, Koganpage

6. Sangi N., "Engineering Quality Learning through ICT: An AIOU Model for Online Open Education and Research in Proceedings of LDE International Conference   On Learning & Distance Education, New Delhi, November2005

7.Saettler,P. (1990). *A   History of Instructional Technology*. Englewood, Co., LibrariesUnlimited
http://www.cedarcreek.org/distance_learning_summary_paper.htm

8.Savery, J. R. and T. M. Duffy (1995) *Problem Based Learning: An Instructional Model and Its Constructivist Framework.* EducationalTechnology
http://www.cedarcreek.org/distance_learning_summary_paper.htm

9.Simonson, M and Smaldino, S,(2005) , *Teaching and learning at a Distance,* Merrill an imprint of prentice Hall. Upper saddle River, New Jersey Columbus Ohio.

10.Sherry, L (1996), *Issues in Distance Learning*. International Journal of Distance Education

11.William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (2009) *Open Educational Resources* (OER) making high uality educational content and tools freely available on the web. Retrievedfrom http://www.hewlett.org/Programs/Education/OER/ Nov 2011

12.Wiley, D. Open Education License. In Proceedings of Open Education 2007: Localizing and   Learning. Logan, UT, 2007.
13. (*http://opencontent.org/blog*)