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Ankita Khanna
Assistant Professor
Guru Nanak College of
Education, Punjabi Bagh, New
Delhi, India

Open educational resources and blended learning

Ankita Khanna

Abstract

In today's integrated and communication technological scenario, teaching learning takes place in a number of ways, be it the classroom teaching, online teaching or teaching through mobiles. Blended learning which is also known as hybrid learning is a style of education in which students learn and teachers teach in a traditional classroom or face-to face teaching via online or electronic learning. Whereas Open Educational resources (OER) are teaching-learning materials in any medium- can be online or offline, which are prepared for public domain having open licence which are free to access with or without any restrictions. The OER can be reused by the students as well as for the teachers at any point of time for educational or research purposes. The OER and blended learning has shown a new face to the traditional classroom teaching and learning process and has provide an innovation. In this article the importance of OER and blended learning has been discussed along with integration of these innovations in the face-to-face classrooms. The significant use of OER and blended learning by both individuals and by organizations can have creative and economic benefit as well.

Keywords: Open Educational Resources, Blended, Learning.

Introduction

Present society is a knowledgeable society and with change in time and scenario, society based on knowledge demands and require enduring learning more than ever. With today's digital and technological advancements, present generation demands advanced knowledge with the help of which they can make themselves competitive in the society. In order to establish their identity as an individual the education has taken a step forward and has accepted many changes which are required according to the pace of the changing world. The emerging trends and advancement in technology have inspired the educators and redefined their traditional role from the 'teacher' who only used to instruct the students to 'facilitator' who now focuses on empowering the skills and knowledge of the students and make them independent learners. When a teacher emphasizes on learning through such kind of activities or by providing the material through online resources which engages the students after the classroom is said to be the active teaching and learning by using open educational resources and when uses the digital resources or technology into the face-to-face classroom setting is said to be using the blended learning.

Open Educational Resources- A new approach

Open Educational Resources (OER) are the resources available in public domain that are used for teaching, learning and for research purposes in any medium, digital or otherwise and provide free access. As per UNESCO, *"Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning or research materials that are in the public domain or released with intellectual property licenses that facilitate the free use, adaptation and distribution or resources".*

These resources have an open access that is free to use, anyone can adapt, share or redistribute without any restrictions. These resources are in the form of study material, textbooks, courses, tests, videos, software etc. These resources focus on sharing of content especially of scholarly nature without any restriction or license. The promoters of open education believe that everyone in any field has a right to have an access to high-quality educational resources. The distance learning / online education pave the way to open resources for its students. These resources are also updated by the scholars by whom the same are commenced.

Correspondence
Ankita Khanna
Assistant Professor
Guru Nanak College of
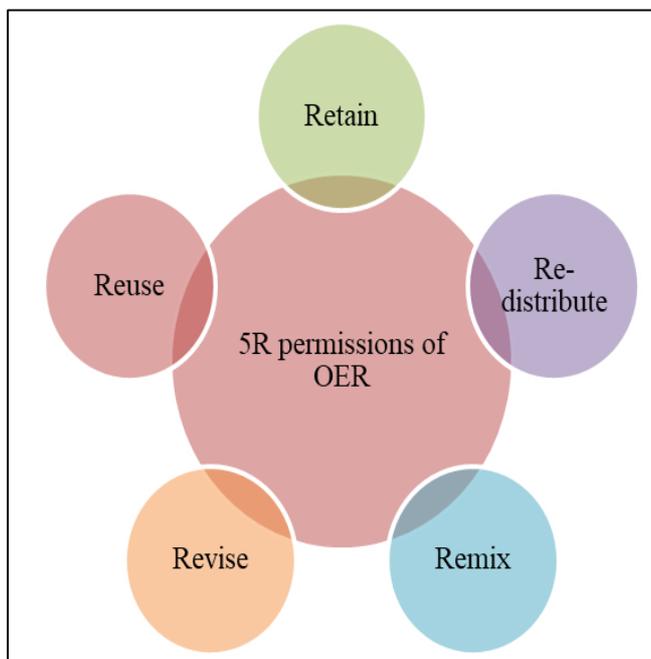Education, Punjabi Bagh, New
Delhi, India

Need for OER

The open education resources are needed by teachers, students, scholars, professionals etc. in various fields. These are advertently used by teachers and they can supplement and increase their importance by providing suggestive improvements according to the needs of the society. Also, OER can reduce the costing of schooling and the costing of costly books as everything is provided in these open educational resources. Students should be aware of these types of resources and they should be exposed to a wide range of digital learning tools in the form of open textbooks, open courseware programs and various self-assessment tools where students can evaluate themselves and gets the feedback for their improvement. These resources also focus on the learner-centered, self-paced formal or informal learning by providing various opportunities.

How open is open source?

Although many open source resources are available in public domain and accessible by everyone, in some resources open access is granted subject to certain permissions. These permissions and restrictions are applicable on the users availing such resources. The open source owns the following rights on which permissions are granted.

1. Retain – The creator has the right to make and own copies.
2. Reuse – The creator has the right to use it in wide range of ways.
3. Revise – the creator has the right to adapt, modify and improve.
4. Remix – The creator has the right to combine two or more of such works.
5. Redistribute – The creator has the right to share with others.

5R permissions of OER

Some open educational sources underlines the requirements or mandate and impose restrictions on users so that the same couldn't be used for private benefits or commercial use for instance. These restrictions sometimes make open content less open for the users.

Towards Blended Learning

Blended learning is an approach to education which conglomerates the online educational materials with that of traditional classroom materials and instructions. It is also used to describe the way e-learning is used to combine the online resources with that of normal classroom teaching in a hybrid way. Blended learning complements the traditional learning or face-to-face learning in a new way and the students as well as the teachers used to enjoy while blending the regular classroom instructions with that of new technology. Students might use to attend the classes in the formal settings on regular basis but they can complement it by using online resources as well. It is getting very popular these days which is used by the teachers as well as the students and also many organizations use it in the form of Learning Management System (LMS) which enhances the classroom teaching. Students as well as teachers can share and work with other students in the form of collaborative work beyond the classroom can have enriched learning experience and advanced learning.

But successful blended learning occurs when the traditional classroom teaching and technology inform each other in a way when material or content reaches the students in a dynamic way in variety of learning styles or we can say that the material or activities which can engage students after the classroom settings also. Blended learning is also a way of progressive learning which has removed the gap between the traditional teaching and the digital resources.

As the technological innovations have been introduced in the traditional classroom setting, blended learning improves the flexibility of teacher as well as of the students. Teachers can make their teaching interesting by incorporating technology with that of classroom instructions and students can create flexible study plans. Also learners can customize the learning styles according to their need and requirement. Teachers can increase the classroom interactions by using different means of electronics thus making the students to think critically.

Technology based learning has been proven to increase the interest and retention of the students in classrooms as blended learning involve a number of tools that increases the creativity of the teacher as well as of the students. This makes the students engage in the learning process and encourages them to recreate the learning that they have gained in the classroom and raises the retention rate of the students by decreasing the dropout rate. Blended learning used to increase the student engagement in the classroom by making the passive learners to express themselves. When a teacher involves the students in the teaching-learning process actively, with the increase in the knowledge the test scores of the students improves.

OER based blended learning

Teaching and learning are a combination of classroom environment. Blended learning enhances and entails the classroom teaching with online course material and other resources which supplements the face-to-face interaction. But to make the face-to-face and online learning modes successful the learning objectives should be taken into account and both should be deliberately linked with each other. A blended course can be viewed as either face-to-face

teaching or an online course with face-to-face teaching both enhances each other. A teacher can convert the traditional classroom into online class and can blend the traditional classroom with the online resources while maintaining the classroom environment and providing effective knowledge. Now it is a myth that effective teaching-learning can take place only in the traditional face-to-face classrooms, but nowadays by combining face-to-face classroom with synchronous conversations with asynchronous interactions, a strong online learning environment is created.

As technology is changing the society so it is changing the education and provides a much larger menu of learning opportunities as compared to the earlier education. As OER is providing learning materials for free and provides an open access it has increased the area and scope of education and when face-to-face classroom is blended with technological resources it has increased the learning interest of the students. But for implementing OER and blended learning into the classrooms and introducing them into an organization schools need appropriately equipped technology and teachers must be trained properly about the use of technology into the classroom and also how to use OER and how to provide material to the students through OER to the students. Still for many teachers who are not technology savvy combining traditional classrooms with blended learning and OER is a threatening process as they believe in face-to-face classroom teaching only. But according to the demand of the society the new strategies should be inculcated into teaching so that the critical thinking of the students should be increased and the old tradition of rote learning should be abolished and it is only possible when classrooms are equipped with new technology.

Conclusion
Many schools propose to be an OER online and offline resources and is using the blended learning approach into the classrooms. The organizations are also providing proper training to their teachers and introducing them with the open educational resources and is informing them about the blended learning approach so that they can make their teaching more effective by blending it with technological resources. Teachers have started providing the video modules and other type of material for the students online like on LMS so that the students can get the classroom content and can increase the knowledge that is gained in the classroom.

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