Transcript

1. This presentation explains the concept of Open Educational Resources, some of the opportunities and challenges that they bring, and the implications for educational institutions.
2. This is a definition of OER.

Although they were first defined in the year 2000, they have not made the impact expected in academic communities, particularly in areas in which resources are scare.

1. This slide unpicks the definition – OER are free resources, which can take many forms and no royalties are paid to the author. It also highlights some of the issues that emerge. In particular, the quantity of material available can be daunting, and the quality and usefulness needs to be judged by the user. This calls for new skills – particularly in environments where educators are used to being supplied with ‘approved’ materials from a central source.
2. Why do people publish OER? Why do they make their content available for free?

Here are some of the reasons: it is about establishing a reputation, drawing people in to your institution and contributing to the greater good.

Educational institutions need to have a policies in place about OER. These can be quite general. Eg OU 10% of course content is published as OER.

There also need to be policies on use - are lecturers and teachers trusted to find and select materials that will help them to do a better job - or do all the teaching materials have to be vetted?

The next two slides introduce two organisations committed to the use and production of OER

1. The Commonwealth of Learning is an intergovernmental organisation, whose mission is to support sustainable development through education. A section of their website is dedicated to open educational resources. They support the production and dissemination of these resources throughout the Commonwealth.
2. The Open University is an open access, distance learning University. 10% of all content is published in the form of OER on two websites call OpenLearn and OpenLearn Create. Both have free courses, many of which are used by individuals and organisations for professional development – or people do them simply as a hobby. The idea is to draw people in to the university.

Some courses have quizzes and a digital badge which can be downloaded and used as evidence of study

1. There are many reasons why people use OER. These include

* Gaining access to more resources, including those which might help them to develop new and innovative pedagogies.
* Finding out more about what is going on in their field internationally and supporting collaboration. Adapting materials for use provides the opportunity for developmental professional conversations and can lead to new understandings

1. This slide describes what has become known as the OER cycle. As an educator it is unlikely that you will find materials that are directly relevant to your context.

This is best illustrated with an example from real life:

People working for French NGO in Senegal, wanted some materials to support school leadership. Their search produced some resources written to support headteachers in India. A review of these resources revealed that the pedagogy and ideas were exactly what they were looking for, but the context was wrong – the examples and case studies described people and places in India. Also – they were written in English. So they adapted and translated the materials – much cheaper and easier than starting from scratch - and in the process created a team, who went on to work together to introduce head teachers to the materials and support them in their use. The original authors were made aware of these materials and translated them back into English for use within their network. Finally they were re-published on a different website.

1. Drawing on the ideas from the last few slides – here is a vision for OER.

* Professionals who see themselves as learners;
* curriculum development that draws on best practice from around the world;
* professionals who are willing to learn from each other, take risks and value feedback;
* and people who are willing to collaborate and share the responsibility for the resources they produce. The use of OER and the associated practices can lead to innovation, new pedagogies and courses fit for the 21st Century.

What has to be in place for this vision to be realised?

1. Academics from South Africa have thought this and produced this pyramid which provides a way of thinking about how you might support the use of OER. The aim is to achieve ‘volition’ ie. individuals taking the initiative to use, adapt and ultimately create high quality resources. But to reach that stage, certain things have to be in place: access, which means connectivity; permissions from the institution and knowledge of the various licenses; awareness of the concept of OER; capacity, to critically review, select and adapt resources and the availability of materials that might be useful.
2. There are challenges associated with every level of the pyramid

Access relies on having connectivity, devices and technical skills

Educators need autonomy – permission to seek and develop their own resources and knowledge of the licenses

Research shows that 46% of lectures in Higher education are not aware of OER

But being aware is not enough, people need the skills and knowledge to critically review resources, and there need to be appropriate resources available.

As well has highlighting the challenges, the pyramid highlights questions to ask within an institution.

1. If you want to use OER to innovate these are the questions that you will need to consider. Starting at the bottom:

* How will people access OER?
* How much autonomy will they have to find, use, adapt and produce resources?
* How will you help people to become aware of the OER repositories available – can you do research yourself, or who will you appoint to do this?
* What training could you provide to increase capacity? What mechanisms are there in your institution for sharing and adapting available resources?

There is a lot to think about! Individuals need training; institutions need to provide access to ICT, structures to support collaboration, and to create an ethos of openness to new ideas.

Finally, let’s reflect on the difference between the IT and Education communities…….

1. The open source software movement are considerably ahead of the OER movement. Technical people have embraced open source software and are developing many innovations – the Open University of Sudan for example used freely available software to develop an innovative online examination system.

IT professionals have a ‘hacker’ mentality; they work collaboratively to solve problems that no one could solve alone and are comfortable with using each other’s work.

In Education on the other hand – there is a tradition of individuality – people are in control in their own classroom. Individual expertise is highly valued, people are protective of their work and there are fewer collaborative networks.

The two contexts are very different – but there is no doubt that the education community has much to learn – and much to gain if it is able to capitalise on the potential of OER to bring about change.