

ICDE Task Force Open Educational Resources – Inquiry Results

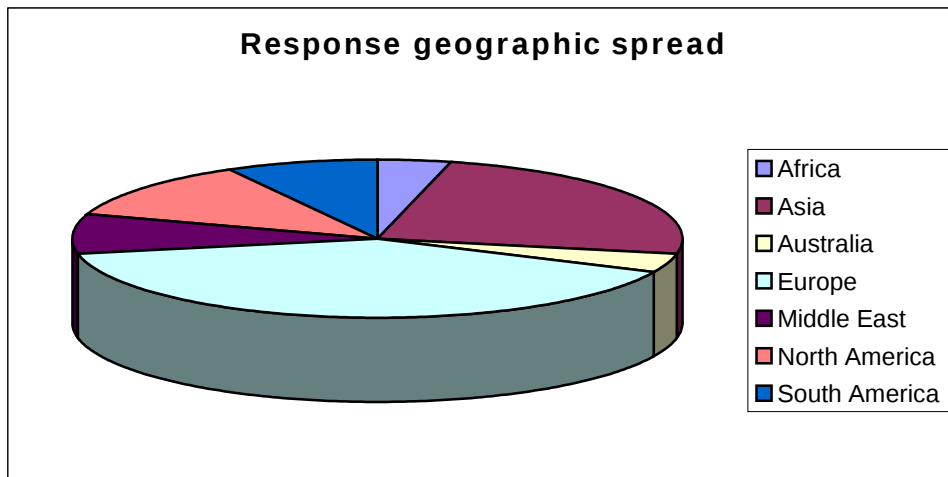
ICDE announced the formation of an ICDE Global Task Force on Open Educational Resources during the recent 22nd ICDE World Conference in Rio de Janeiro last September.

The mandate of the Task Force is to develop a report on Open Educational Resources. This report is aiming at contributing to the global movement of OER, adding specific 'ICDE' flavour and value by adopting the self-and-distance-learning perspective rather than the current mainstream content-in-classroom perspective.

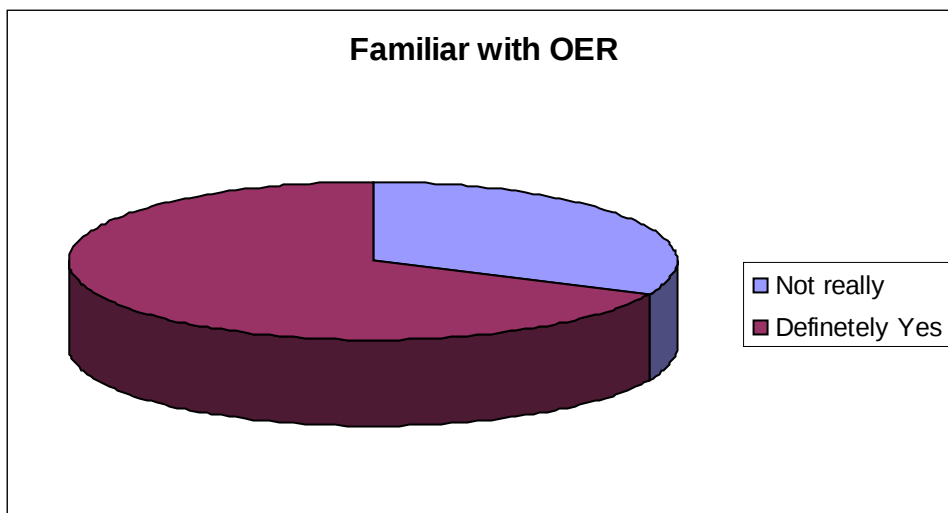
Results of the Inquiry:

In order to give the Task Force an efficient start ICDE sent its members an Inquiry on Open Educational Resources (OER) in the middle of October 2006. The purpose was to get an overview on the issue of Open Educational Resources and the level of involvement of the ICDE membership in this movement.

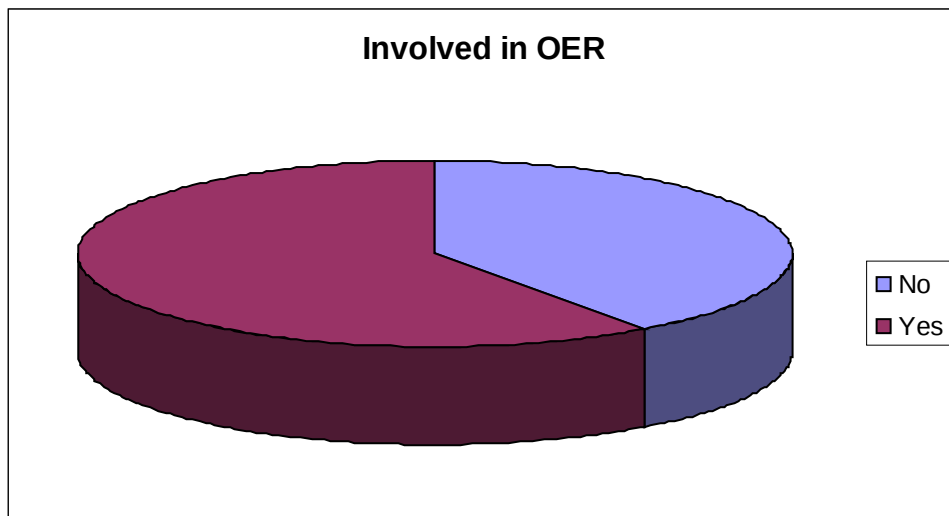
A good number of ICDE members representing different world regions responded to the inquiry. The results showed that Open Educational Resources is a very actual theme for many institutions around the world.



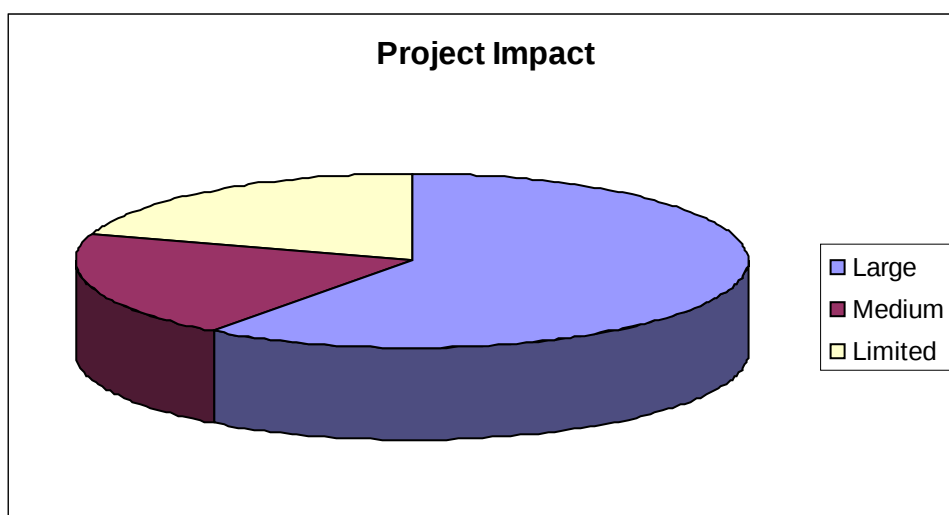
To the question about their knowledge on the OER movement, 68% was definitely acquainted with the movement, while 32% was not too familiar with it.



To the question on the institution's involvement or planning to becoming involved in a project on OER, 60% was positive while 40% was negative. Those involved in projects have also described them, and provided links to the relevant websites.



Many of the respondents have already projects in place regarding OER. Below is a summary of the answers from the point of view of their impact:



Answers:

- The Virtual University for the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) a network of 26 countries. Participants are Ministries of Education and their national institutions. Concept started in 2000, approved by ministers in 2003, activities started in late 2005. See: www.col.org/vussc .
- UT is now involved in a project to develop a Learning Object Repository in collaboration with Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University of Thailand. The project is funded by the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada. Once the Repository is completed, it will be dedicated as an open resource for other distance learning communities, especially those in Asia. www.pandora-asia.org.
- We are currently in the process of enabling our learning content materials to be shared by using various media such as broadcasting (TV and radio), printed

textbooks, and the Internet for their delivery, keeping in mind that an indexing system for content organization that is common to all Open Educational Resources would be necessary in order to facilitate the broader use of its contents.

- The goal of “Daneshestan” with the mission to develop OER is to provide On-Line resource for all courses. In Oct.2006 two courses started for the first time via the Web. The students are chosen without entrance exams. All educational activities are defined On-Line, including resources. 15 students enrolled for a BSc (Computer Sci) and 430 for an MSc. (Moral Sci). The budget comes mainly from the fees. <http://www.vuict.com>
- Project Goals: Digitalise the SLM on Journalism and Mass Communication. Period: two years. Participants: All Open Universities and institute of distance education in India. Budget: To be prepared
- Handbook of multimedia design principles, published as a 6500-word online article in EURODL (http://www.eurodl.org/materials/contrib/2005/Jack_Koumi.htm).
- 1- Modern Distance Education Resources Website- <http://www.mder.com.cn/WebCenter/>) 2-- Collaboration with MIT Open courses CORE -- http://www.mder.com.cn/WebCenter/item/part/outside/114_masheng.htm
- We are studying the possibility of our Association organizing the repositories of reusable learning objects and other OERs made by our member institutions on a national level within our country. Still too early to be able to furnish details on how we will do this.
- We are planning an open access university press that will publish monographs as well as journals. The first monographs will be out next year. The volumes and journal will appear on line no charge. We are also investigating the implications of making our on line courses freely available. There some key issues that will need resolution. We have experimented with creative commons licensing.
- IOU is a network of affiliations, universities and institutions for higher education in Europe, Asia, North America, and Africa.
- As the main support provider in Scotland for teachers, schools and local authority and advice body on curriculum, learning and teaching and ICT we provide a very broad range of materials. We therefore strongly assist the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers, managers and leaders. They can access practical support and advice to improve the quality of their work and help young people in Scotland achieve their full potential. Our online services provide comprehensive materials and are widely used. We are now leading in the management of a new schools intranet covering every school in Scotland (3000+) which will enable every teachers, local authority, parent in Scotland to access and share resources and ideas if they wish. Within this development (called GLOW) the CPD portal should be particularly beneficial. [http:// www.ltscotland.org.uk](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk).
- Between 1995 and 2001 we offered a course on Media and Communication in which the study material and the study guides were assessable for free on the web. A discussion forum and a series of seminars were only available for student that have signed up fro the course and paid the registration fee. In 2001 we considered the course outdated and took it off the programme.
- In 2004, the Municipal Educational Commission of Shanghai decided to launch a project called Shanghai Education Resources Centre, which aims at speeding up the construction and application of ICT in the educational field in Shanghai. Shanghai TV University and Shanghai Audio-Visual Educational Studio which are under Shanghai

Distance Education Group was chosen to implement this project. It plans to take about three years from 2004 to 2006 with budget of 70,000,000RMB (equivalent to 8,900,000 USD) to complete this project, resulting in easy access for all education organizations and teachers in Shanghai, promoting educational resources of the centre rich and diverse. <http://www.sherc.net/sherc/>

- There is an initiative of leading Polish Universities (5) of delivering the content of some courses on the basis of Internet resources.
- Open Educational Resources has always been part of the general policy of NETTUNO before and now of the new International Telematic University UNINETTUNO. Video-lessons have been broadcasted in two non-encrypted satellite channels since 1996. The didactic website has always been open and the didactic materials available to anyone. In addition, the International Telematic University UNINETTUNO is participating at the "MORIL" project (Multilingual Open Resources for Independent Learning), preparing from the EADTU, funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, preparing for the launch of a first wave of Open Educational Resources (OER), to be disseminated freely and online, throughout Europe in a multilingual format. (Project information: <http://www.eadtu.nl>)

Opportunities of OER

On the major opportunities that OER could bring to open, flexible and distance learning institutions, the main points are as follows:

- Make resources available to disadvantaged institutions
- Greater volume of good quality learning resources available to all
- Open educational resources can enrich the learning process. They are at the same time can help distance learning providers to be more cost effective in developing its learning materials and supports. The open educational resources can also become a benchmark for ODL providers so that eventually they will improve the total quality of open, flexible, and distance learning materials and processes.
- Providing additional services in the area of lifelong education to meet the various needs of various learners.
- The institutions can benefit from their present resources to enhance them for On-Line purposes. They can benefit from huge demand exist in for higher education, in particular in Developing countries.
- Greater variety and diversity of learning resources creating more flexible learning opportunities.
- Raised profile. Opportunities for partnerships through a "share-alike" protective clause in a Creative Commons license, which means that if the licensee modifies an institution's OER, the licensee must share that adaptation in a reciprocal manner.
- Underdeveloped nations and institutions with scarce resources can leap ahead in obtaining learning material to build programs that help solve capacity problems; knowledge will be advanced to a broader audience more rapidly; publishers may be bypassed and information obtained more cheaply.
- Sharing of open resources

- Group work; know new experiences and initiatives
- Save money by not “reinventing the wheel”, by using already-existing resources which meet the proper standards of quality, and by being able to do this on a global scale.
- The major opportunity is enriching the materials that are available globally for life long learning. It could well help make more educated students when they decide to more formally enrol. It could also ensure excellence through best practises.
- Learner centred education
- Ease of access: time, place, and format. Increased range of opportunities. Encouragement of lifelong learning. Overcoming barriers of distance learning centres, thereby open up opportunities.
- Enlarge interest in learning; increase opportunities for collaboration in learning resource and pedagogy; much more available resources available to learners; sharing of learning objects; increased visibility for participation institutions.
- Reaching a wider audience. Promoting collaboration among educational institutions. Supporting the exchange of ideas and academic discussion. Killing the ‘not invented here syndrome’.
- Ability to differentiate in areas of value-add, such as students support, rather than have to reinvent or just re-package common content.
- It is a great opportunity to facilitate: ·the common sharing of open education resources for all, · capacity building of all education institutions and organizations, professional development of teachers and staff in the DE field; system change of education administration in DE institutions and organisations.
- Voting definitely for it. It brings a fresh look at all we do.
- Opportunities: Increase Access to flexible learning opportunities, connected to appropriate networks like the NEPAD e-school initiative in Africa, could enhance access to textbooks and learning materials.
- Opportunities: All the people who could never attend the university, this way can finally receive the teaching by the best teachers without leaving their home. The value of the contents, in English, French, Arabic and Italian give our contents the highest price. The value of this model of distance education is in the fact that not only the university students can b use the contents, but all normal citizen who can access through internet and connecting to the TV. Distributing knowledge for free to all citizens favours the progress of the society in its whole.

Threats:

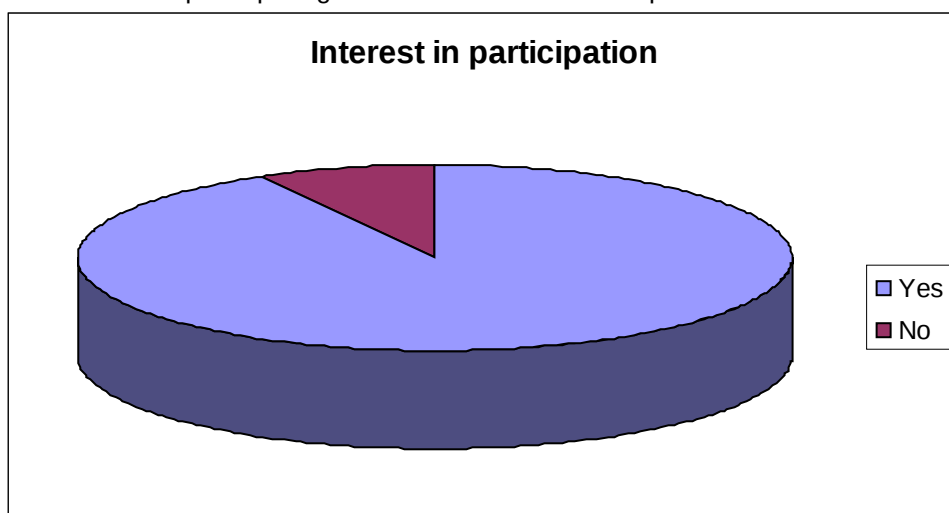
On the major threats that OER could represent for open, flexible and distance learning institutions, the main points:

- Threats: I do not see negative effects in the distribution of knowledge. It is important that people providing the contents are really great experts in their field.

- Threats: Cost of the project; implementation in areas where there is low connectivity; IPR issues; convincing donors to support the project, resistance to its operations
- Threat and also a new challenge to: the nowadays distribution system of educational resources, the current way to develop educational resources, the current teaching language and teaching method, the intelligence property right of educational resources.
- May not make much headway unless elite institutions are involved. Need to ensure content creators' IP is properly valued, or OER could be stymied by legal wars.
- The lack of a viable business model. If students learn the art of self-study and have all the resources available as open resources, educational institutions have to rely on government support to produce the Open Learning Resources.
- Question about reliability of information to learner; confusion to learners or 'shopping' mentality developed in learners; loss of proprietary resources; copying by other providers; pressure on institutions to 'outdo' one another or to reduce fees.
- Potential increased in digital divide from people / areas with and without ease of access. Quality assurance materials. Person to person interface. Copyright infringement.
- Government control and bureaucracy.
- The key treats are: some universities will not invest the capital required to develop new courses. Private for profit universities will be able to further improve their competitive position and threaten the viability and funding for public or not for profit post secondary institutions. How can we ensure appropriate behaviours in a highly competitive environment? For example US legislation forbids US federal funds supporting US students taking distance education courses from foreign distance education institutions. What would stop a US for profit provider from harvesting on line resources and using these in a for profit context. The tendency might also be for a globalisation of curriculum when perhaps increasing diversity is needed. As the e environment demands greater sophistication and therefore greater capital investment in course development – are there going to be fewer and fewer institutions doing course development? Will global homogenisation be the order of the day as national government move through cycles of economy?
- Lack of initiatives.
- Threat to Copyrights.
- Threats: Someone pays, and the risk is that producers of knowledge may lose incentives to produce new knowledge; there are issues about quality—who screens new open access knowledge to assure it is legitimate; without skilled faculty and institutional experts to guide students with structured programs, students may get lost in the maze of information; chaos may result.
- Threats: A commercial entrepreneur might adapt and package your product then sell it for profit, (unless you imposed a non-commercial clause but this would restrict incorporating your resource with other free content).
- Opportunities are numerous, but the major threat is that the making resources available should be mistaken for teaching or learning. Resources in themselves are important but must not hide the learning and teaching activities themselves.

- The 'not invented here' syndrome, the complexity of copyright and intellectual property issues and the academic preference to constantly modify learning materials to tailor to specific learning objectives unique to a course, institution or country.
- No scope for research and innovations, uniform prescription of textual material, brand institutions may attract more and more students.
- The interaction between Private Sector and virtual Univ. and the virtual Univ. and traditional Univ. is a threat, if this movement considered locally only.
- More demands resulting from the increase in the variety of needs, the increase in disparity between the learners' needs and the services that our institution can offer, the inconsistency between the needs of our institution's learners and the conditions/requirements for creating the contents which can be used in the Open Educational Resources, intellectual property rights violation, our academic contents being used by for-profit organizations.
- Open educational resources without appropriate review processes can lead to low quality materials and thus low ODL provision and supports. There is also a danger of domination from more developed and resourceful institutions over the less advanced ones. In addition, for some distance learning providers, learning materials sales are parts of the income generation strategies to subsidy the low tuition fees. Therefore, publishing resources publicly and freely may jeopardize the sustainability of such institutions.
- The potential for copyright infringements of restricted works by authors of OER.
- Language barriers and cultural barriers

At last, 92% of those that answered the inquiry responded positive to the question about their interest in participating in ICDE activities in this topic.



The ICDE OER Task Force will produce a report available to our members that will be presented at the SCOP meeting to be held in Heerlen (The Netherlands) on 3-5 June 2007. We invite our member institutions and associations to participate in the work on OER and

follow the activities that ICDE is undertaking in this area, which will be closely connected to UNESCO policies and actions.