

THE USING OF OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER) IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS

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Abstract

The present paper focuses on how Open Educational Resources can facilitate the evaluation process during online teaching. Assessments are an integral part of the entire didactic process and they have a great impact upon the desired behavior of the students. Consequently, it is highly recommended that teachers use new methods and strategies in order to stimulate the students. Online means represent a great tool when it comes to evaluation. In this study, I will provide examples of apps and sites that can get the students' interest and attention in the didactic process, without making them feel uncomfortable or even anxious.

Keywords: *evaluation, strategy, techniques, OER, advantages, disadvantages*

Rezumat

Prezenta lucrare se concentrează asupra Resurselor Educaționale Deschise care pot facilita procesul de evaluare în predarea online. Evaluările sunt o parte integrantă a întregului proces didactic și au un impact major asupra comportamentului dezirabil al studenților. Astfel, este recomandat ca profesorii să utilizeze noi metode și strategii în vederea stimulării elevilor. Mijloacele online reprezintă un instrument excelent de evaluare. În acest studiu, voi oferi exemple de aplicații și site-uri care pot atrage interesul și atenția elevilor în cadrul procesului didactic, fără să îi facă să se simtă inconfortabil sau anxioși.

Cuvinte-cheie: *evaluare, strategie, tehnici, RED, avantaje, dezavantaje*

The Concept of Evaluation

The teaching and learning activity materialize into obtained results. There are some findings that support the importance of evaluation, such as the teaching act implies some objectives and the students' performances show if the objectives have been successfully accomplished, the results allow the teacher to adapt the didactic process and the assessments are 40% of the teachers' work (Chiș, 2001, p. 205).

Cristian Stan and Adriana D. Manea state that "the designing of a better educational reality in the absence of a suitable theoretical approach, centered on the issue of studying the integrative manner of self-assessment and educational assessment is unlikely" (Stan & Manea, 2015, p. 497). Consequently, it is very important that the teacher has theoretical knowledge in order to create an appropriate means through which the students should be evaluated.

However, according to V.K. Maheshwari, we also have to keep in mind that the terms *evaluation* and *measurement* are often used interchangeably. He

states that evaluation is somehow confused with testing and/or measurement. Testing, as he says, is only a way of collecting evidence with regards to a pupil's behaviour. The other one, measurement, has the role of providing a quantitative description of the pupil's behaviour. Evaluation includes both testing and measurement and even a qualitative description of the behaviour. Evaluation also includes some value judgment regarding the behaviour measured. Its main objective is the qualitative development of pupils (Maheshwari, 2017).

The process of evaluation focuses on the efficiency of the educational system. The teachers prepare the students for the real world, for all the requirements of it and they must take into consideration what the expectancies of the society are. The students' needs and the society's needs must be brought together by the curriculum and by the teacher in order for the latter to assure the delivery of young men and women into the labour market. The society is the superior system and the educational system is the subordinate one (Vasile & Ene, 2017, p. 77).

Open Educational Resources

According to Dominic Orr, Michele Rimini and Dirk Van Damme, digital technologies are mandatory in our daily life, but it seems that they became a part of the education as well. They facilitate the change and improvement in education. For them, education has the social function of fostering the next generation's development and prosperity on an individual and societal level. Education changes how people carry out their lives now and in the future (Orr et al., 2015, p. 16).

The OER help education systems, as the three authors claim, to become dynamic and it develops the teaching and learning process. They state that "digital technologies have the potential to improve education and enhance teaching and learning processes" (*ibidem*). However, all the improvements, all the resources that are used and all the innovative practices must be developed in a relevant educational environment (*ibidem*).

There are some reasons or some stimuli responsible for the occurrence of the OER. We will enumerate them, according to Jan Hylén. There are technological, economic, social and legal drivers that helped the expansion of OER. Teachers and researchers are given the chance to exploit new capabilities and new technologies through which they can create and share content. The cost of this type of technologies is dropping low, so everyone who wants to teach or learn in an interactive way can use them (Hylén, 2012, p. 19). Another important thing is that through OER people learn that sharing knowledge as a public good is very important for the development of society (Hylén, 2012, p. 19).

According to Dominic Orr, Michele Rimini and Dirk Van Damme, the Open Educational Resources (OER) are defined as being at the same time

teaching, learning and searching for appropriate materials and tools ("open licensing, to permit their free reuse, continuous improvement and repurposing by others for educational purposes") (Orr et al., 2015, p. 17). We might understand that the OER are a cumulation of online texts, images, videos, applications, platforms and games which have an educative purpose and which are free of charge.

In the paper "Open Educational Resources: Analysis of Responses to the OECD Country Questionnaire" Jan Hylén defines the OER as it follows: "Open Educational Resources are digital learning resources offered online (although sometimes in print) freely and openly to teachers, educators, students, and independent learners in order to be used, shared, combined, adapted, and expanded in teaching, learning and research. They include learning content, software tools to develop, use and distribute, and implementation resources such as open licenses" (Hylén, 2012, p. 18).

As we can see in the definition given above, it is very important to keep in mind that the OER are mostly used online and they should be free and accessible for the teachers, but they can also be accessible to students and independent learners. Of course, the resources need to be adapted to the level of the class/student and they have to be placed somewhere in the educational process, to be relevant for a specific type of activity, for achieving the objectives.

If we take a look on the UNESCO's website, we see the following definition of OER: "Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium - digital or otherwise - that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. OER form part of 'Open Solutions', alongside *Free and Open Source software* (FOSS), *Open Access* (OA), *Open Data* (OD) and crowdsourcing platforms" (*Open Educational Resources* (OER) (unesco.org)). We can see that it is always brought into attention that these OER are used for the teaching-learning process, be it digital or not, and that they allow free access, use and share of them, as long as they were released under an open license.

According to Jan Hylén, these resources are open and flexible when it comes to provide learning opportunities. They facilitate both formal and informal learning, which can take place on an unlimited period of time. Of course, it is easier to access the high-quality materials that should help both the teacher and the student in the educational process (Hylén, 2012, p. 19).

Another important advantage is the fact that the OER are not restricted to online education (e-learning or distance education), since they can be used in a classroom as well, with the help maybe of printers, sheets, projector, audios, laptops, connection to the Internet and so on. Finding a place for the

OER in the more traditional environment should enrich the learning experience (*ibidem*).

Jan Hylén also states that "OER also has a strong social purpose since they can bring learning opportunities to hitherto disadvantaged and excluded groups of learners while they also help to mitigate the isolation of the diaspora of scholars" (*ibidem*). As the author says, these OER can help the students to feel safer, to feel included and to feel that they are integrated into the educational process.

Due to the OER, there is an increased efficiency and quality of learning resources. People from all over the world (teachers, educators, researchers, students) can upload different materials, courses or programs which may be of help to others. It is also important that, through technology, even the costs are reduced, because there may not be the case to duplicate papers (*ibidem*). The OER can be continuously adapted, revised, updated and transformed. The users have become active participants in the educative process by constructing what is learned. Even the relationship between teachers and students may develop since both parts contribute to the process of teaching and learning. The entire activity is interactive so the boundaries between the parts are at least blurred (*idem*, p. 20). It is also possible that the students who prepare to become teachers contribute to this field by adding original resources as a part of their training.

Jan Hylén argues that using, producing and sharing OER constitute a great benefit for individual learners, teachers and the global community. He sees this activity as a "systemic transformation in itself since it affects all parts of the educational system" (*ibidem*). The researcher sees the advantages for all the people that use the OER, such as individual learners who gain open and flexible learning opportunities, teachers that may increase their professional recognition, quality and efficiency in the creation of new materials, educational institutions that can attract new students, countries that may increase their support for OER in regular education and the global community, because the OER offer the chance to share knowledge and expertise on global issues (*ibidem*).

There are, as we have already seen, a lot of advantages when using Open Educational Resources. We would like to present next a list of advantages that was created by the University of Maryland and that can be found on their webpage (<https://umd.edu/>), taking into consideration the fact that was stated above, specifically that the universities or schools can take advantage of these OER and attract more and more students.

The institution claims that through OER there is an expanded access to learning, since students all over the world can access resources at any time. Furthermore, they bring into attention the scalability of the OER, since they can be easily distributed at mostly no cost. The adjustment of the class mate-

rials to better align with the learning outcomes or the augmentation of class materials are, again, advantages. It is also more interesting to bring a text which is accompanied by images or videos that help the students to learn easily. Of course, since everyone can upload, modify and distribute this kind of resources, it is obvious that the students can directly interact with them, through creating new ones or improving the already existing ones. The students can also be in touch with the institution they are part of through these resources and can continue with a lifelong program of learning (<https://libguides.umgc.edu/c.php?g=23404&p=138771#:~:text=Advantages%20of%20using%20OERs%20include:%20expanded%20access%20to,time,%20and%20they%20can%20access%20the%20material%20repeatedly>).

First of all, it is very important that the teacher is instructed on how to choose appropriate and relevant digital resources for the teaching-learning-evaluation activities, in order to facilitate and improve the entire educational process. Also, the teachers should be able to create by themselves open resources for achieving the objectives, in different pedagogical contexts. (CRED, 2014-2020).

When using OER for creating assessment for the students, the teacher should discover and use high-quality resources to determine the level of the students' progress. There should be used concrete data which can offer a better support and which can be personalized for each student, according to their strengths and weaknesses, needs and interests (<https://practices.learningaccelerator.org/problem-of-practice/how-can-i-leverage-open-educational-resources-when-planning-lessons-and-assessments-to-meet-my-students-needs-in-my-personalized-learning-classroom>).

The open resources are dynamic and can be personalized at any time for didactic activities. Educators now tend to use them, in order to create student-centred lessons and assessments, which offer a more active and deeper engagement of the students (<https://practices.learningaccelerator.org/problem-of-practice/how-can-i-leverage-open-educational-resources-when-planning-lessons-and-assessments-to-meet-my-students-needs-in-my-personalized-learning-classroom>). This can be done through different means, such as videos, support for language learning, simulations, webinars, comics, games, applications and so on.

When the teacher wants to evaluate the students with the help of open resources, he/she needs to ask himself/herself the following questions for which we will also try to provide answers (<https://practices.learningaccelerator.org/problem-of-practice/how-can-i-leverage-open-educational-resources-when-planning-lessons-and-assessments-to-meet-my-students-needs-in-my-personalized-learning-classroom>). On which standards do you want to assess your students?; How do you plan to use the assessment data?; Can any of your current open resources meet your and students' needs?; How do you determine the alignment and rigor of the assessment?

It is known that, first of all, the teacher has to know exactly what he/she is evaluating and on which standards he/she plans to assess the students. The educator should take a close look to the content he/she provided for the students and at the general and specific objectives of the discipline. The teacher has to find relevant and interesting open resources that are adapted to the students' level and interests, so that the evaluation is realized not on the principle of equality, but on the principle of equity. Some students may prefer writing to speaking or some may prefer to record themselves talking about a given topic, or to make projects and so on.

The teacher also needs to take into account the fact that the after-assessment collected data must be used in order to find solutions for the improvement of the students' abilities, capacities, knowledge or behaviour. Of course, he/she needs to make sure that the open resources are appropriate for the educative process and that they have relevance for what it is evaluated. Furthermore, the educator needs to know how to make the difference between a good resource and a bad one or between a relevant and a not so relevant one for a specific objective.

We would like to provide some examples of the OER that can be found online. We will just enumerate them and we will provide links and some explanations where possible (<https://libraryguides.lib.iup.edu/c.php?g=660341&p=4636709>).

1. *OpenCourseWare (OCW)* – this is a free and online publication of different educational materials, organized as courses; the courses can be found on YouTube - <https://youtu.be/ZfvxfkBVLqQ>;
2. *Learning modules* – these modules are created with the help of PowerPoint and have a great impact upon the students because they can bring together texts, images, videos, charts and so on. <https://youtu.be/eQRF4EsdXMU> – this is a YouTube video about how to create learning modules;
3. *Open textbooks* – typically they belong to the universities, but are published online, so people can have free access;
4. *Streaming video* – the content is sent over the Internet and people can view it in real time - <https://youtu.be/AeJzoqtuf-o>;
5. *Open access journals* – provide free, immediate and online availability of articles in the digital environment - <https://youtu.be/L5rVH1KGBCY>;
6. *Online tutorials* – provide a self study activity designed to teach a specific learning outcome - https://youtu.be/BdliEq_0qeQ;
7. *Digital learning objects* – can include a lesson, an activity and an assessment; the teacher can use the assessment part, in order to provide a digital type of evaluation - <https://youtu.be/E6jf71MYDII>;

8. *Ted Talks* – they can be also used even when evaluating students; the teacher can ask them to write down 10 important ideas presented in the video or to make a summary of the discussion; also, the teacher can ask the students to debate the same topic that was presented in the video;
9. <https://www.merlot.org/merlot/index.htm> – where you can find a great amount of materials;
10. <https://www.curriki.org/> - again, a place where you can find materials, blogs, articles;
11. <https://cnx.org/> - both teachers and students can find here materials for many disciplines;
12. <https://www.oercommons.org/> - this site provides help for teachers; the materials here can easily be used for creating an assessment.

Furthermore, we would like to introduce some platforms and applications that can be used for the creation of assessments. The first one that we will talk about is Google Forms (<https://www.google.com/forms/about/>). This platform is very simple to use. You can either choose to create a form for personal or business purpose. After choosing the purpose for which you plan to create a form, you can select the type of form you like: Blank, Blank Quiz, Course evaluation, Assessment or Exit Ticket. The teacher can easily evaluate students using the Blank Quiz type of form and then adding questions that can have short or long answers, that can have multiple choice, checkboxes or dropdown. You can select for every question the type of answer you desire to receive.

Another platform that can be easily used for assessments is Microsoft Teams. Firstly, here you can add as many classes as you wish and as many students as needed. This platform is relevant for the evaluation activity, since it gives you the opportunity to create assignments that must be returned at a specific time. The students can also see their grade directly on the platform.

Google Classroom is another platform that can be used in order to provide digital means of evaluation and it is interesting to use. You can create assessments as well, you can insert comments and grades directly on the platform, as was the case of Microsoft Teams. As a teacher, you can always see the progress, the ones who uploaded their assignments and you can always change the grade or add new comments if it is the case.

Google Jamboard is also relevant for assessing, since the teacher can ask the students to create Jams with their observations, ideas, answers and so on. The teacher can observe the comprehension of a text or oral discourse (for example), how the students write in English and how developed their digital skills are.

As we have already seen, there are lots of advantages when using Open Educational Resource for creating assessments. We consider that these OER facilitate the didactic activity, because there is no need to print papers anymore, there are no limits of downloading or using the materials, there are low costs or even no costs at all. The students are happier and more interested to use digital and open resources, because they bring together the education and the real life. They are free to express themselves through different means and to have different types of support, such as videos, images, texts or audios.

But there may be some disadvantages as well. It is known that the teacher should do a lot of research before choosing and using an open resource, since not all resources are relevant or even appropriate for a type of activity or for some students. There can also be some quality issues. The teacher will have to put some effort into adapting some of the existing resources to the classes' needs. Also, some of the resources are created in such a way that they will not need the intervention of a teacher, so there will be a lack of human interaction (<https://libguides.umgc.edu/c.php?g=23404&p=138771#:~:text=Advantages%20of%20using%20OERs%20include:%20expanded%20access%20to,time,%20and%20they%20can%20access%20the%20material%20repeatedly>). Of course, when using digital resources, there can appear some technological issues, such as having a bad connection to the Internet or no connection at all. Also, some students and some parents may see these open resources as being something not relevant or something synthetic. They may believe that the students will not be able to assimilate information or to develop skills through these resources. And, if they have this opinion about digital and open resources, they will certainly not agree with assessments based on them.

Conclusions

We defined the Open Educational Resources and presented the advantages and disadvantages of using them in the educational process, especially in the evaluation part. We also brought some examples of OER that helped us to argue the fact that using OER is relevant for creating different types of assessments that can focus on the students' needs and skills.

We strongly believe that students are more likely to participate actively and to pay attention when the teacher uses OER. Through those, the student can trace a line between what he learns in school and what he does or wants to do in real life. The students can choose from a variety of resources or may even create new ones, which make the students feel included in the process as active participants.

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