

Online Educational Resources: beyond technological challenges

Theme: Emerging issues, Human Rights

#OERs #educational_content #quality #empowerment #fragmentation #emerging_technologies

Abstract

Today there is a fast increase in numbers of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), open data and educational content (Open Educational Resources (OERs)) on the Internet and the process is getting even faster with emerging technologies: mobile, virtual and augmented reality etc. More and more educational programs depend on Internet resources. And online education services now are major approaches for empowering people. Access to such a large and unregulated body of information, as exists on the Internet, suggests a need for content quality ranking and critical evaluation of related educational Internet resources as the information there might be both not relevant, not up to date and not scientific.

Due to the use of cloud services, one company/organization might use cloud services which might be found illegal in the country and the whole cloud service will be blocked which would lead to the blockage at the same time other resources using that cloud service - including educational resources/services. That is why there is the question how to protect educational resources using cloud services from the blocking (fragmentation) - shall we ask cloud service providers to introduce separate IP-address for the cloud which is used for educational purposes so that it will avoid blockage?

We faced situation when Telegram was blocked in Russia and due to that efforts Google and Amazon cloud services were blocked and some of the Google services (even for education were not available) and some services which were using Amazon Cloud services were not also available.

This workshop will be a continuation of 4 workshops from previous IGFs: “Empowering displaced people and migrants through online services” (IGF 2013), “Empowerment displaced people through online educational services” (IGF 2014) and “OERs and empowerment through quality online content” which was held in 2015, and “Empowerment through Quality Online Education” which was held in 2016 at the IGF and was of a high interest by different stakeholders.

Emerging issues: fragmentation

Massive open online courses as well as other education platforms are posing threat of fragmentation. Internet fragmentation is one of the main threats to the existence of the Internet. Fragmentation can lead to numerous negative consequences.

Experts of the Internet Governance Forum consider that there are three levels of fragmentation of Internet.

Technical Fragmentation: conditions in the underlying infrastructure that impede the ability of systems to fully interoperate and exchange data packets and of the Internet to function consistently at all end points.

Governmental Fragmentation: Government policies and actions that constrain or prevent certain users of the Internet to create, distribute, or access information resources.

Commercial Fragmentation: Business practices that constrain or prevent certain users of the Internet to create, distribute, or access information resources.

Statement of purpose and relevance to the IGF

During the workshop on “Empowerment through Quality Online Education” which was held during the IGF 2016 in Guadalajara, Mexico, there were several proposed key questions for the audience and speakers:

Who is responsible for content quality control?

How it should be executed?

Best practices?

Can Open Educational Resources (OERs) bridge the digital divide gap?

How can we leverage the use of OERs in the global enable the development of new forms of learning?

What are the perceived challenges facing adoption of OERs?

Panelists and a couple of discussants expressed the same view that OERs should have peer reviews to rate content. Besides, experts in subject matters were noted to be a great asset in ensuring quality of OERs content. In conclusion, panelists and discussants seemed to have a common view that OERs are the future of education, in line with UNESCO perception on OERs. From the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), goal 4 is related to education, while other goals like 8 (decent work and economic growth) and 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) have direct linkages with education. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been recognized in the WSIS processes to have a direct impact on achieving these goals, thus the only way to create an open knowledge society is through OERs.

The only possible consequence of the "closing" of the Internet due to fragmentation and blocking and filtering of the content will be the infringement of constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens in the information sphere, including education rights. The network, which operates within a single country, will not be the Internet but the internal network only within one country.

Internet, under strict censorship by the state control (limits access to foreign websites, blocking oppositional resources) is also not a guarantee of objective presentation of social and political information.

In this case, in a sense, the Internet remains a platform for the free exchange of ideas. However, the restrictions imposed on Internet resources, should not be political in nature – it is manifestation of the principle of net neutrality. According to the draft Charter of Rights and the principles of the Internet, developed by the Dynamic Coalition on Internet Rights and the principles of the UN Internet Governance Forum, the information space of the web it is in the public domain. Its architecture must be protected and serve as a means to free, open, equitable sharing of information, communication and culture. There should be no special privileges or obstacles for economic, social, cultural, or political grounds. This does not preclude affirmative action to promote equity and diversity in Internet

List of questions

This topic has strong connection with Emerging technologies, Diversity, Sustainable development, Digital literacy and Human rights and access to the information and also has strong influence on both local people and people who arrived to the particular country if we are talking about national level of governance.

1. Which educational facilities of the Internet could be posed in threat due to governmental filtering and/or fragmentation?
2. How can governmental fragmentation impose threats to the open educational resources?
3. How are these threats recognized by different stakeholder groups in different countries?

4. What is the economic and social effect of the governmental restrictions of the education resources?
5. Which legal and organizational measures could be taken to keep OERs safe from fragmentation?

All these questions will be discussed during the IGF 2018.

Expected results from the workshop

As a result from the workshop there should be a proposed multi-stakeholder position on the educational content quality control with possible steps for further implementation within ranking system for the content. There also will be a detailed list of problems related to the lack of educational quality control on the Internet and influence on human rights. Best practices will also be shared and recommended for adoption by institutions to move Africa from the Universal Primary Education (UPE) into the Education for All (EFA) UN SDG agenda using OERs.