COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

# Open Educational Resources in the Commonwealth 2016

# Open Educational Resources in the Commonwealth 2016

**B. Phalachandra and Ishan Abeywardena**

**Open Educational Resources in the Commonwealth 2016**

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to promote the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.

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# Foreword

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is the only intergovernmental organisation with the mandate to promote the development and sharing of open and distance learning (ODL) knowledge and expertise. COL works in the 52 Member States of the Commonwealth, which span all regions of the globe — from the Caribbean to Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Its mission is to help Commonwealth Member States and institutions harness the potential of technologies for expanding access to quality education and training. COL believes that learning is the key to sustainable development and that it must lead to economic growth, social inclusion and environmental conservation.

Access to relevant, quality learning resources is key to learning, yet the ability to provide access at the necessary scale is proving a challenge to many in the developing world. COL has identified the development of open educational resources (OER) as a potential answer to these challenges. OER provide governments, institutions, organisations and individuals with access to some of the best materials available globally, allow them to adapt the materials to fit local contexts, and reduce the costs associated with materials and course development. OER increase access to education for those who need it the most, such as the underprivileged and the marginalised. COL publishes its materials under open licences, and an increasing number of our partners are doing likewise.

Understanding the current status of the development, use and reuse of OER is critical in identifying the challenges of fostering use and informing efforts to promote openness. Within this context, the present study was conducted as part of COL's OER for Skills Development initiative, which is generously supported by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, to establish a baseline of OER activities in the Commonwealth. The study attempts to answer six key questions stemming from four recommendations of the 2012 Paris OER Declaration. COL believes that systematic capacity building, driven by appropriate policy frameworks at national, institutional and project levels, is a major driving force for the successful adoption of OER, as reiterated in this report.

COL's long-term vision is for institutions and organisations across the Commonwealth to develop and use OER-based courses and materials in order to provide access to quality education and training that lead to opportunities for sustainable livelihoods for all Commonwealth citizens. I thank the authors, editors and all respondents to our survey for contributing to this important study, which I hope will be an important milestone in our journey towards achieving lifelong learning for all by 2030.

Professor Asha Kanwar
President and Chief Executive Officer
Commonwealth of Learning

# Key findings

The key findings are as follows:

**Participation in OER-related training activities** is high for faculty/teachers in vocational institutes (64%) and to a lesser extent in open universities (54%). However, respondents who had not participated in OER-related training programs were the highest users or **consumers of OER** (47%). Further probing revealed that 39% of those who had not received training had learned about OER through self-study, whilst 43% had learned about OER by working with colleagues on related activities.

Training does empower teachers to develop and help others develop OER, which **increases OER production**. However, OER workshops are short in most cases, with few hands-on activities. There are also **gaps in the development of OER** throughout the Commonwealth.

Sixty-five per cent of respondents indicated that they had **used OER** for *teaching and learning*, and 60% had used OER to *supplement existing lessons*.

Sixty-eight per cent of the respondents indicated that the **use of OER results in cost savings for students**.

The majority perceived OER to be a **good solution to improve quality and minimise costs related to a course or programme**; 82% found OER to be of good or excellent quality.

Fifty-six per cent of respondents preferred to **check the authenticity and credibility of a material before using it**. OER originating from reputable institutions, which have established quality assurance mechanisms, were generally perceived as good-quality OER.

Ninety-four per cent of respondents emphasised that **open licensing is important when using a resource in their teaching**. In terms of the Creative Commons licences, respondents were most confident about explaining the CC BY (37%) licence, followed by the CC0 Public Domain licence (32.5%). They were not very comfortable with explaining the CC BY-NC-ND licence (36%). In general, the **confidence level about explaining the meaning of different types of licences was low**.

Seventy-two per cent of the **respondents don't openly share their teaching materials**. Only 12% allow reuse and revision of their teaching materials, whilst 15% don't allow reuse and revision, even though the materials are publicly available.

Lack of information on the quality of OER (46%) and the scarcity of OER in video and audio formats (44%) are **the biggest challenges in using OER**.

Respondents indicated that lack of time, lack of awareness and low Internet connectivity are the **main barriers to using OER**. Interestingly, they did not consider lack of rewards or recognition to be a major barrier.

**Text materials are considered the easiest to adopt and reuse** (76%), followed by lecture notes (54%) and slides (53%).

Sixty-two per cent of respondents considered **"easy to download" to be the most important factor for adopting OER**.

Respondents indicated that in terms of **ease of adaptation**, Word (85%), PDF (52%) and HTML (21%) formats are preferred.

Seventy-eight per cent of respondents frequently used **search engines** to find OER, whilst only 22% used **repositories**. Amongst the search engines, Google was used more frequently (89%) than other search engines. The most commonly used repositories were: OER Commons (36%), Wikimedia Commons (32%) and COL's Directory of Open Educational Resources (COL-DOER, 23%).
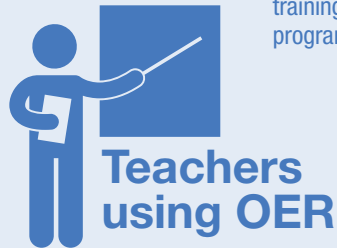
Respondents indicated that they experienced most difficulty with **finding appropriate** open textbooks (46%), course modules (40%) and videos (39%).

These findings are further elaborated in the report.

## Teachers using OER

**Participation in OER-related training activities:**

**64%** IN VOCATIONAL INSTITUTES

**54%** IN OPEN UNIVERSITIES

**Highest consumers of OER:**

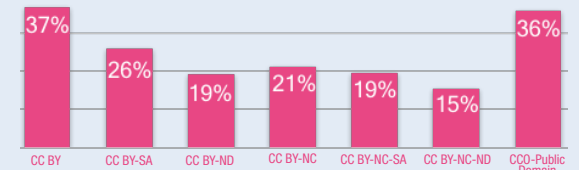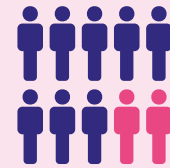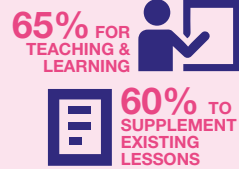**47%** of respondents had not participated in OER-related training programs

**Training empowers teachers** to develop and help others develop OER, which increases OER production

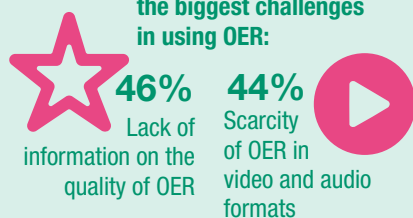**There are gaps** in the development of OER throughout the Commonwealth

## Perceptions of OER

**Use of OER:**

**65%** FOR TEACHING & LEARNING

**60%** TO SUPPLEMENT EXISTING LESSONS

**82%** say OER is of good or excellent quality

**68%** COST SAVINGS FOR STUDENTS

**56%** prefer to check the authenticity and credibility of a material before using it

## Reuse, revision, remixing and redistribution

| CC BY | CC BY-SA | CC BY-ND | CC BY-NC | CC BY-NC-SA | CC BY-NC-ND | CCO-Public Domain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 37% | 26% | 19% | 21% | 19% | 15% | 36% |

**Confidence level** about explaining different licences is low

**94%** Open licensing is important when using a resource in their teaching

**72%** of respondents don't openly share their teaching materials
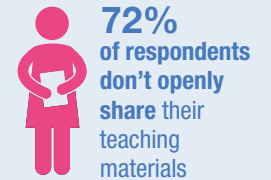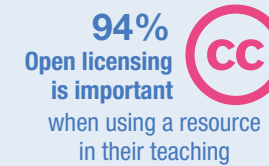
## The challenges

**Main barriers to using OER:** lack of time, lack of awareness and low Internet connectivity

**the biggest challenges in using OER:**

**46%** Lack of information on the quality of OER

**44%** Scarcity of OER in video and audio formats

## Adopting & sharing materials

**OER easiest to adopt and reuse:**

**76%** TEXT MATERIALS

**54%** LECTURE NOTES

**53%** SLIDES

**Ease of adaptation:** preferred formats

**85%** WORD

**52%** PDF

**21%** HTML

**Most important factor for adopting OER:**

**62%** "easy to download"

## Locating & retrieving OER

**Most difficult to find:**

**46%** OPEN TEXTBOOKS

**40%** COURSE MODULES

**39%** VIDEOS

**How OER are found:**

**78%** SEARCH ENGINES

**22%** REPOSITORIES

**89%** Google

**The most commonly used repositories were:**

**36%** OER COMMONS

**32%** Wikimedia Commons

**23%** COL's Directory of Open Educational Resources (COL-DOER).

# Acknowledgements

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# Executive Summary

This study was conducted as part of the OER for Skills Development[1] project of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), supported by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The objective of the study was to collect baseline data from Commonwealth institutions with respect to: the development, use and reuse of OER; the availability of support; and the challenges of fostering the use of OER. After a review of previous studies, six research questions were formed to analyse the status of OER in the Commonwealth, based on four recommendations in the 2012 Paris OER Declaration. A survey instrument was developed and peer-reviewed to collect data from the stakeholders.

As part of the data collection strategy, Fluid Survey was used and 20 champions were engaged to facilitate data collection across the Commonwealth. A total of 1,220 responses were received, of which 657 were complete. Of these 657 respondents, 374 were women (56.92%) and 282 were men (42.92%). They belonged to 214 institutions from 28 countries across the Commonwealth.

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1   See https://www.col.org/programmes/open-educational-resources.

# Introduction

Education systems globally are facing pressure to increase access to affordable quality education and training. Governments have endorsed international agreements in support of education as a fundamental human right, leading to the Education for All goal, which advocates for an inclusive approach to education and training. Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), adopted by the international community, strives to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"* by 2030. However, many governments are finding it difficult to meet the obligations set out in these agreements. In particular, countries are facing challenges in providing quality skills training at scale to help citizens achieve sustainable livelihoods and a better quality of life. The lack of access to relevant learning resources, especially for women, has further compounded the problem of under-educated citizens. The ability to access the right content in a timely manner is an important aspect of lifelong learning.

By 2012, 621 million young people in developing countries were not in education, employment or training (World Bank, 2012). Lack of skills and high rates of unemployment are major concerns for many Commonwealth countries. For example, over 20% of the youth population in sub-Saharan Africa, which is about 200 million, are either unemployed or in low-paid/precarious jobs (Afeti, 2014). This has put great pressure on providers of education and training to expand their enrolment of young people. Without education and job-related skills, young people and adults cannot benefit from employment opportunities that offer a decent income. Another important component of this challenge is the lack of access to high-quality, relevant learning materials to support education and training. The International Telecommunication Union points out that *"lack of content is the major barrier that governments need to tackle"* (ITU, 2010).

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has identified the development of relevant open educational resources (OER) as a potential route for overcoming these impediments and has addressed

this in its six-year strategic plan (Commonwealth of Learning, 2015) by focusing on the skills sector. According to an OECD report titled *Open Educational Resources: A Catalyst for Innovation* (Orr, Rimini, & van Damme, 2015), OER can contribute to addressing six key educational challenges presently of concern to education systems: (i) fostering the use of new forms of learning for the 21st century; (ii) fostering teachers' professional development and engagement; (iii) containing the public and private costs of education; (iv) continually improving the quality of educational resources; (v) widening the distribution of high-quality educational resources; and (vi) reducing barriers to learning opportunities. The report concludes that policy support is necessary for OER to reach their full potential as social innovations. It further elaborates that policy makers should focus on the existence and discoverability of OER, the new role of teachers in the context of OER, new quality assurance procedures and more research. COL plays a major role in several ways: advocating for OER; supporting governments, institutions and organisations in developing policies in this area; identifying models for OER use; and supporting capacity building so that more institutions and organisations develop and use OER.

COL strongly believes that OER gives governments, institutions and organisations broader access to the best globally available materials. In turn, these materials can be repurposed locally to reduce the costs associated with materials development, resulting in better opportunities for youths to develop their skills.

# Open Educational Resources

In 2002, the UNESCO forum defined open educational resources as

*the open provision of educational resources, enabled by information and communication technologies, for consultation, use and adaptation by a community of users for non-commercial purposes. (UNESCO, 2002, p. 24)*

The World OER Congress 2012, organised jointly by COL and UNESCO with the support of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, published the 2012 Paris OER Declaration, which makes ten recommendations in four areas for promoting the use of OER. These areas are advocacy and awareness generation, OER policies, capacity development and research.

The UNESCO Paris OER Declaration defines OER as

*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. (UNESCO, 2012)*

Even with this definition, what constitutes an OER can still be subject to interpretation, and OER are sometimes confused with other learning resources. However, a more practical description of OER was provided by Hoosen, Moore and Butcher (2016),

giving a clearer indication of the range of possibilities under this definition:

*They are educational materials and resources that are offered freely, are openly available to anyone and, under some licences, allow others to reuse, adapt and redistribute them with few or no restrictions. OER can include lecture notes and slides, lesson plans, textbooks, handouts given to students, videos, online tutorials, podcasts, diagrams, entire courses, and any other material designed to be used in teaching and learning. Thus, the scale of OER can vary significantly. They can be as large as a textbook or as small as a single photograph. They can make up an entire course or curriculum or can be used to enhance existing textbooks. (Hoosen, Moore, & Butcher, 2016, p. 2)*

Butcher (2015) has explained the meaning of OER in simpler terms:

*the concept of Open Educational Resources (OER) describes any educational resources (including curriculum maps, course materials, textbooks, streaming videos, multimedia applications, podcasts, and any other materials that have been designed for use in teaching and learning) that are openly available for use by educators and students, without an accompanying need to pay royalties or licence fees. (Butcher, 2015, p. 5)*

According to Weller (2010), OER can be classified as "big" and "little." The former contain explicit teaching aims, are produced institutionally, are usually of high quality, can often be used without adaptation but are translated into other languages. Conversely, little OER are produced individually with low-cost resources, have low production quality and are shared through a range of third-party sites. Little OER are usually adapted because they can easily be used in different contexts.

Kurelovic (2016) has claimed that OER improve the quality of education, accelerate the flow of knowledge and increase the number of people involved in educational processes such as informal and lifelong learning. Another main value of OER is that *"they can be used worldwide independently of the system of education and national curricula frameworks"* (Grodecka & Śliwowski, 2014, p. 30). Caswell, Henson, Jenson and Wiley (2008) have claimed that the move towards the use of OER can significantly reduce the costs of learning. Thus, OER have the potential to broaden access and provide equity in education. This is especially important for developing countries within the Commonwealth.

## The Study

The study was conducted as part of COL's OER for Skills Development initiative, supported by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The objective was to collect baseline data from Commonwealth institutions with respect to the development, use and reuse of OER, the availability of support for OER, and the challenges that education practitioners face in fostering the use of OER.

**TABLE 1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

| RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PARIS OER DECLARATION | RESEARCH QUESTIONS |
| --- | --- |
| Foster awareness and use of OER. Support capacity building for the sustainable development of quality learning materials. | 1. To what extent are teachers trained in reusing, revising, remixing and redistributing OER? 2. What are teachers' perceptions with respect to the quality and cost-efficiency of OER, and what are the various quality assurance mechanisms used? |
| Promote the understanding and use of open licensing frameworks. | 3. What is the level of facilitation in the reuse, revision, remixing and redistribution of educational materials across the Commonwealth through open licensing? 4. What are the opportunities and challenges faced when developing, using, evaluating and re-contextualising OER? 5. How have institutions taken advantage of evolving technology to create opportunities for sharing materials which have been released under an open licence in diverse media? |
| Facilitate the finding, retrieving and sharing of OER. | 6. What are the tools used to locate and retrieve OER that are specific and relevant to particular needs? |

The UNESCO Paris OER Declaration provides ten recommendations on how to foster and promote OER in a global context. To analyse the status of OER within the Commonwealth, we formed six research questions based on the Declaration's four recommendations and our review of past studies (Table 1).

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

We developed a survey instrument to collect data after reviewing several studies and documents available in the field. These included: *Quality Assurance Guidelines for Open Educational Resources: TIPS Framework* (Kawachi, 2014), *Exploring Faculty Use of Open Educational Resources at British Columbia Post-secondary Institutions* (Jhangiani, Pitt, Hendricks, Key, & Lalonde, 2016), and *A Study of the Current State of Play in the Use of Open Educational Resources in the Asian Region* (OER Asia, 2012). After the tool was drafted, it was sent to 12 experts in the field for review. The tool was finalised after we incorporated the suggestions and feedback received from the reviewers. The finalised tool is provided in the Appendix.

## SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

As part of the data collection strategy, 20 champions were engaged to represent the Commonwealth. The champions were responsible for collecting data from their respective institutions and other targeted institutions in their countries. The online survey, which was hosted on Fluid Surveys,[2] was open to respondents from 1 to 25 May 2016.
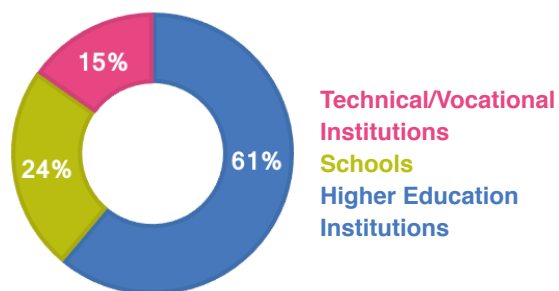


**Technical/Vocational Institutions** — 15%
**Schools** — 24%
**Higher Education Institutions** — 61%

A total of 1,220 people responded to the online survey, resulting in 657 complete responses. Of these, 374 respondents were women (56.92%), 282 were men (42.92 %) and one chose not to select a gender category. They belonged to 214 institutions from 28 countries across the Commonwealth regions, as shown in Figure 1 and Table 2.

2    See http://fluidsurveys.com/.

**TABLE 2. NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS**

| REGION | COUNTRY | NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS |
|---|---|---|
| Africa (11 Countries, 93 Institutions) | Botswana | 3 |
| | Kenya | 42 |
| | Malawi | 9 |
| | Mauritius | 8 |
| | Namibia | 2 |
| | Nigeria | 9 |
| | Rwanda | 11 |
| | South Africa | 3 |
| | Swaziland | 1 |
| | Tanzania | 4 |
| | Zambia | 1 |
| Asia (5 Countries, 57 Institutions) | Bangladesh | 3 |
| | India | 18 |
| | Malaysia | 20 |
| | Pakistan | 14 |
| | Sri Lanka | 2 |
| Caribbean (2 Countries, 24 Institutions) | Jamaica | 9 |
| | Saint Lucia | 15 |
| Pacific (7 Countries, 32 Institutions) | Australia | 4 |
| | Fiji | 5 |
| | Kiribati | 1 |
| | Samoa | 5 |
| | Tonga | 6 |
| | Tuvalu | 5 |
| | Vanuatu | 4 |
| Europe (1 Country, 6 Institutions) | UK | 6 |
| Americas (2 Countries, 4 Institutions) | Belize | 1 |
| | Canada | 3 |
| **Total:** | **28 Countries** | **214 Institutions** |
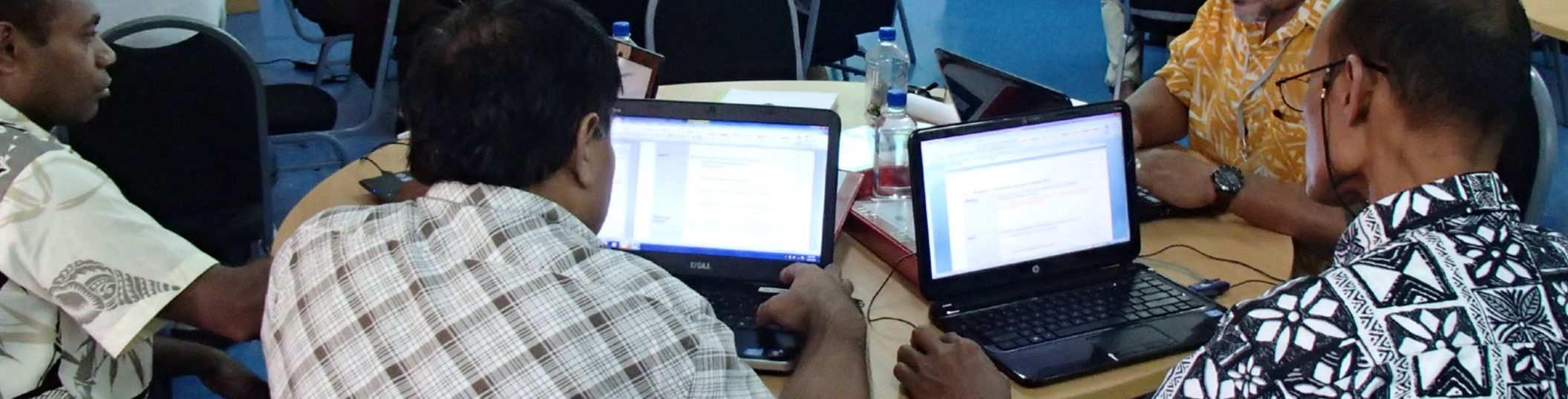
# Profile of Survey Respondents

Figure 2 indicates the Commonwealth regions' perspective. The highest number of respondents were from the African region (11 countries), followed by Asia (five countries) and the Pacific (seven countries). This is partly because there were variations in the number of countries and institutions that participated in these regions, as indicated in Table 2.

The respondents' ages varied from 20 to 60+ years. Figure 3 shows that almost 67% were in the 30–49 age group, which is probably the most critical period for this profession, corresponding to the establishment and maintenance stages in Super's theory on the Stages of Career Development (Gordon & Steele, 2015).

As Figure 4 indicates, the majority (51%) of respondents held a master's degree and 24% held a PhD, together constituting 75% of the respondents.



**FIGURE 2. RESPONDENTS BY COMMONWEALTH REGIONS**
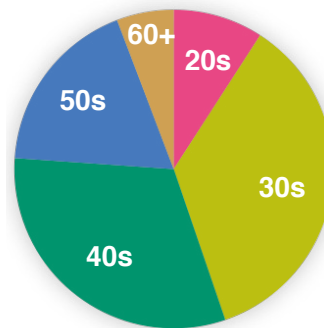


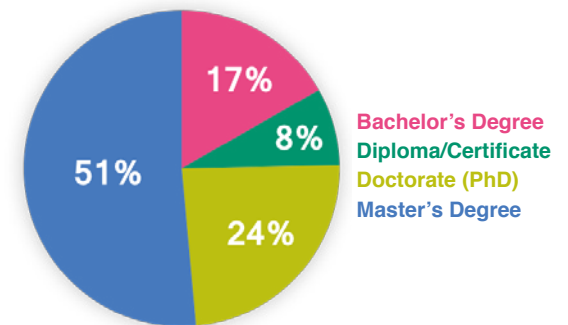**FIGURE 3. AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS**



**FIGURE 4. RESPONDENTS' LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION**

Sixty-eight per cent of the respondents were teachers, working at different levels of educational institutions. Researchers, administrators, curriculum developers and instructional designers constituted almost 25%; this category represents the essential support staff of educational institutions (Figure 5).
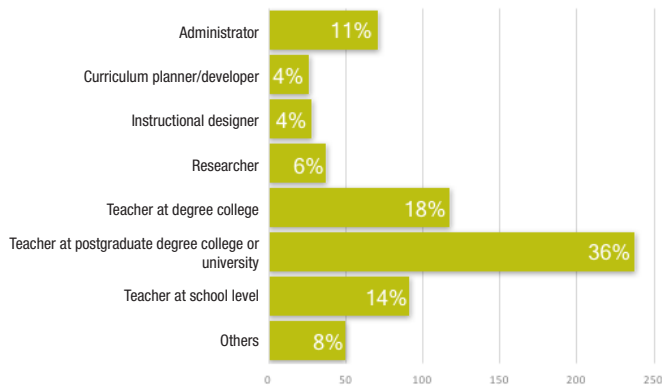
Fifty-five per cent of respondents indicated that their main job involved delivering courses in a face-to-face environment, 43% presented courses in a blended environment, and 36% delivered their courses online. Additionally, 39% were involved in conducting workshops and training programmes (Figure 6).

Figure 3 shows that 67% of the respondents were in the 30–49 age group, whilst another 18% were in the 50–59 age group. Hence, almost 57% of the respondents had more than nine years of teaching experience, whilst about 17% had between six and eight years (Figure 7).



FIGURE 5. RESPONDENTS' JOB POSITION
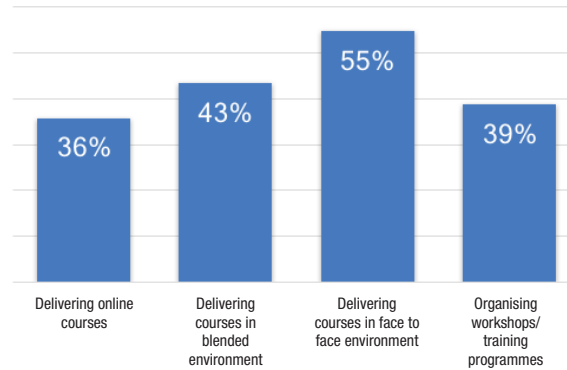


FIGURE 6. THE NATURE OF THE WORK BEING CARRIED OUT BY RESPONDENTS
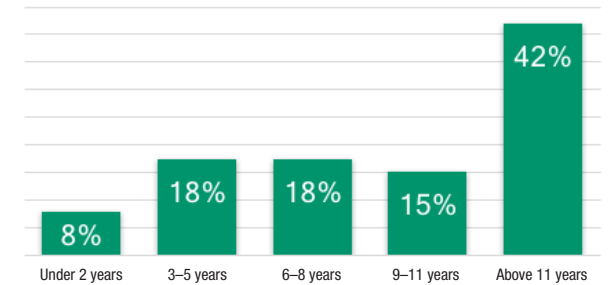


FIGURE 7. RESPONDENTS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE

The profiles of the respondents indicated that a large percentage of them were experienced and highly qualified. We therefore believe that their perceptions and responses are indicative of the present status of OER in the targeted institutions of the Commonwealth.

# Key Findings

Table 1 outlines the research questions of the study with reference to four of the ten recommendations made in the 2012 Paris OER Declaration (UNESCO, 2012). In this section, we attempt to answer the research questions based on the survey findings, with a view to assessing the extent of the four recommendations' implementation.

## QUESTION 1: To what extent are teachers trained in reusing, revising, remixing and redistributing OER?

With respect to the percentage of participation of teachers/faculty in OER-related training activities (Figure 8), the participation of the staff in vocational institutes is highest (64%), followed by staff in open universities (54%).

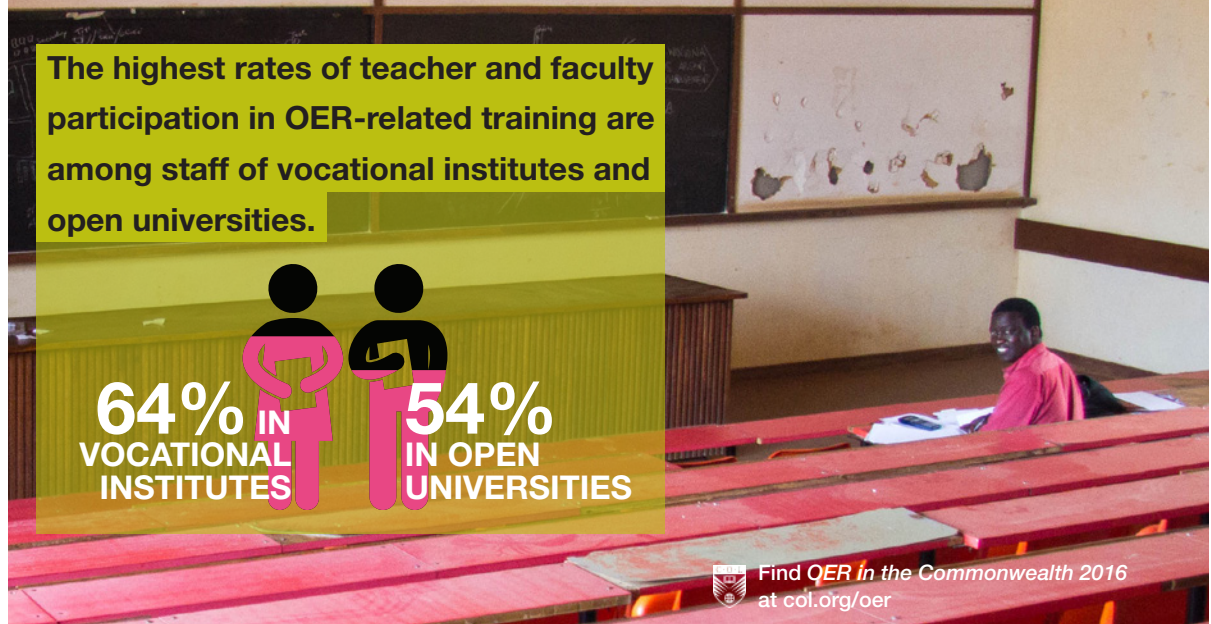As Figure 8 indicates, the percentage of respondents who had participated in OER-related training varied amongst the institutions. However, from Figure 9 we see that the respondents who had not participated in OER-related training programmes were the highest users or consumers of OER, at 47%. Further probing showed that 39% of this cohort had learned about OER through self-study, whilst 43% had learned about OER by working with other colleagues on related activities.

**The highest rates of teacher and faculty participation in OER-related training are among staff of vocational institutes and open universities.**

**64% IN VOCATIONAL INSTITUTES**

**54% IN OPEN UNIVERSITIES**

Find *QER in the Commonwealth 2016* at col.org/oer

With respect to contributions to OER, Figure 9 shows that training does empower teachers to develop and help others develop OER. We also found that most of the workshops were short and emphasised only the basics, with few hands-on activities.

We further realised that there are gaps in the development of OER throughout the Commonwealth (see Figure 10).
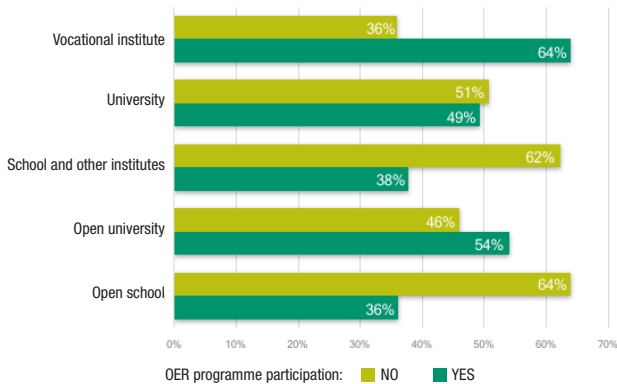


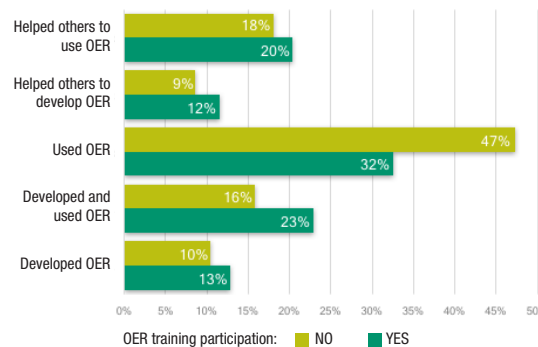**FIGURE 8. PARTICIPATION IN OER TRAINING ACTIVITIES**



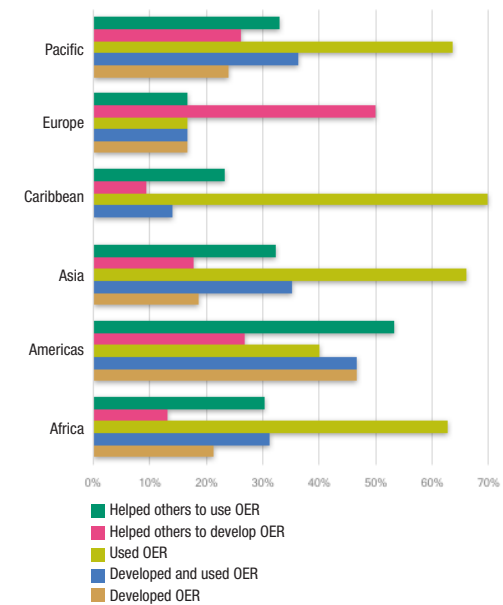**FIGURE 9. PARTICIPATION IN OER ACTIVITIES**



**FIGURE 10. PARTICIPATION IN OER ACTIVITIES BY REGION**

## Question 2: What are the perceptions of the quality and cost-efficiency of OER, and what are the various quality assurance mechanisms used?

In response to the question "For which of the following purposes have you used OER in the context of your teaching/training," 65% of respondents indicated that they did so for teaching and for learning, and 60% for supplementing existing lessons. Only 22% used OER to download a course, as shown in Figure 11. Further probing found that 68% of the respondents felt using OER results in cost savings for students, 5.7% felt this was not the case and 26.3% did not know.

Figure 12 shows us that the respondents perceived OER to be a good solution for improving quality and minimising costs related to a course or programme. Figure 13 shows that 82% found OER to be of good or excellent quality.
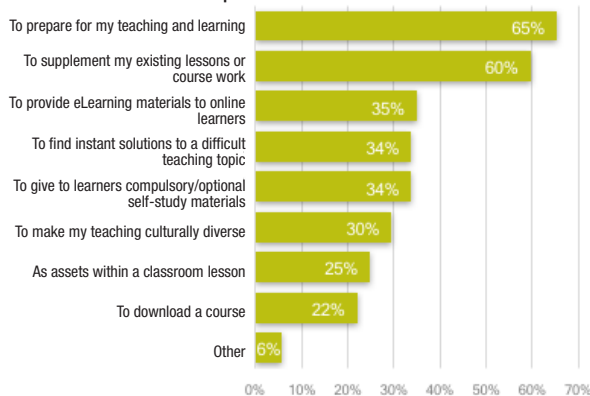


**82% OF RESPONDENTS FOUND OER TO BE OF GOOD OR EXCELLENT QUALITY.**

Find *OER in the Commonwealth 2016* at col.org/oer

In terms of the perceived quality of OER, the participants preferred to check the authenticity and credibility of a resource first (see Figure 14). OER originating from a reputable institution with established quality assurance mechanisms were generally perceived as good OER. Surprisingly, only 26% checked whether a resource had previously been used by others.



- **Very good** 32%
- **Good** 50%
- **Not very good** 4%
- **Poor** 1%
- **Not sure** as I have not done any comparison 13%

**FIGURE 13. PERCEIVED QUALITY OF OER**



To prepare for my teaching and learning — 65%
To supplement my existing lessons or course work — 60%
To provide eLearning materials to online learners — 35%
To find instant solutions to a difficult teaching topic — 34%
To give to learners compulsory/optional self-study materials — 34%
To make my teaching culturally diverse — 30%
As assets within a classroom lesson — 25%
To download a course — 22%
Other — 6%

**FIGURE 11. PURPOSES FOR USING OER**



Improve quality — 72% / 73%
Minimise the cost of offering a course/programme — 59% / 63%
Enhance institutional reputation — 59% / 53%
Increase inclusiveness — 49% / 49%
Enhance personal reputation — 47% / 44%
Other — 6% / 5%

- Benefits of developing OER
- Benefits of using OER

**FIGURE 12. PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF DEVELOPING AND USING OER**



Discussion with colleagues — 46%
Comparison with standard books or proprietary materials — 49%
Reflecting on the content based on your earlier readings — 50%
Checking whether the material was used by others — 26%
Authenticity and credibility of the material — 56%

**FIGURE 14. CHECKING THE QUALITY OF OER**

## Question 3: What is the level of facilitation in the reuse, revision, remixing and redistribution of educational materials across the Commonwealth through open licensing?
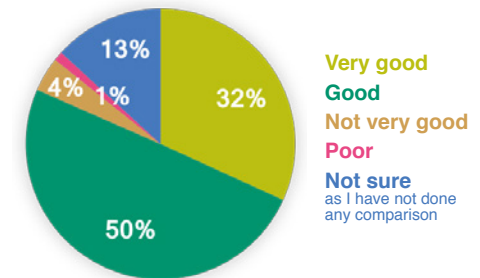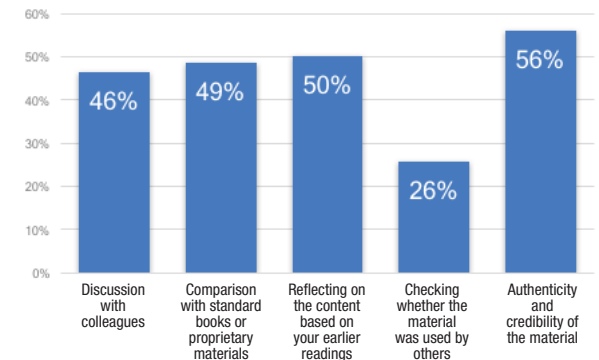
With respect to open licensing, we found that 94% felt it was important when using a resource in their teaching. In terms of Creative Commons licences, we found that the respondents were most confident in explaining the CC BY (37%) and CC0 Public Domain (36%) licences. They were not very comfortable (15%) with explaining the CC BY-NC-ND licence (see Figure 15).

In general, the confidence level in explaining the meaning of different types of licences was low. Our findings are further confirmed through Figure 16, which shows that 72% of the respondents did not openly share their teaching materials publicly. Only 12% allowed reuse and revision of their teaching materials, whilst 15% did not allow
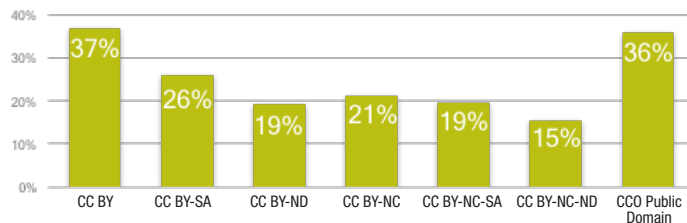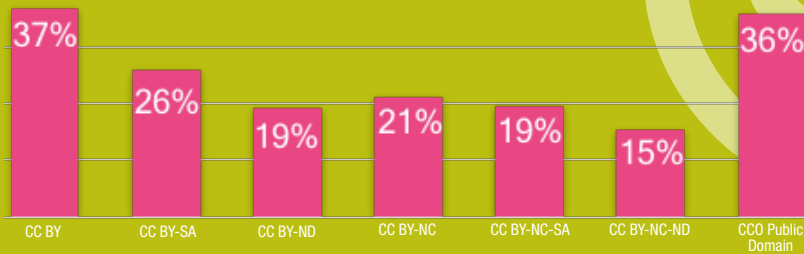


**Confidence explaining Creative Commons licences is low.**

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reuse and revision, even though the materials were publicly available.

The following are some of the reasons mentioned by the respondents for not sharing their teaching materials publicly:

» *"I don't know how to share OER."*
» *"I lack the knowledge to integrate them in the system."*

» *"Personal work and effort should not be copied; only resources can be shared."*
» *"I don't know how to make a document viewable by the public."*
» *"I have received no training on how to share them."*
» *"I am not confident."*



**FIGURE 15. CONFIDENCE IN DEFINING AND EXPLAINING LICENCE TYPES**

**Do you share any of your teaching materials publicly?**



YES, they are publicly viewable but I don't have a licence on them that allows them to be revised and reused — 15%

YES, they are publicly viewable and I put a licence on them that allows them to be revised and reused — 12%

NO, I don't share any of my teaching materials with anyone but students — 18%

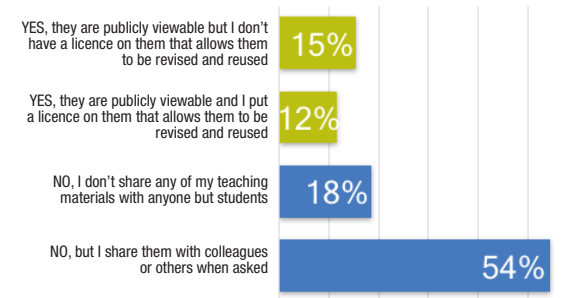NO, but I share them with colleagues or others when asked — 54%

**FIGURE 16. SHARING OF TEACHING MATERIALS AS OER**

## Question 4: What are the opportunities and challenges faced when developing, using, evaluating and re-contextualising OER?

Respondents indicated that "not having information about the quality of OER" (46%) and "not having enough OER in video and audio format" (44%) were the biggest challenges they faced in using OER, as shown in Figure 17.

As Figure 18 indicates, lack of time, lack of awareness and low Internet connectivity were the main barriers to using OER. However, lack of software, hardware or rewards and recognition were not considered major barriers.
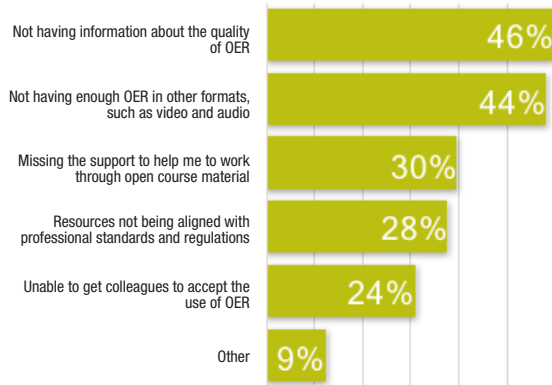


## Time, awareness and low Internet connectivity are the main barriers to using OER.

*Lack of software, hardware or rewards and recognition were not considered major barriers.*

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**FIGURE 17. CHALLENGES FACED IN USING OER**

| Challenge | % |
|---|---|
| Not having information about the quality of OER | 46% |
| Not having enough OER in other formats, such as video and audio | 44% |
| Missing the support to help me to work through open course material | 30% |
| Resources not being aligned with professional standards and regulations | 28% |
| Unable to get colleagues to accept the use of OER | 24% |
| Other | 9% |



**FIGURE 18. BARRIERS TO USING OER**

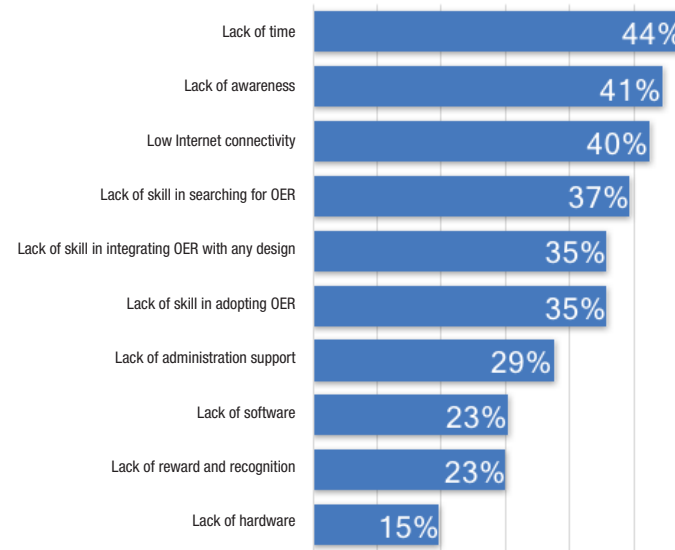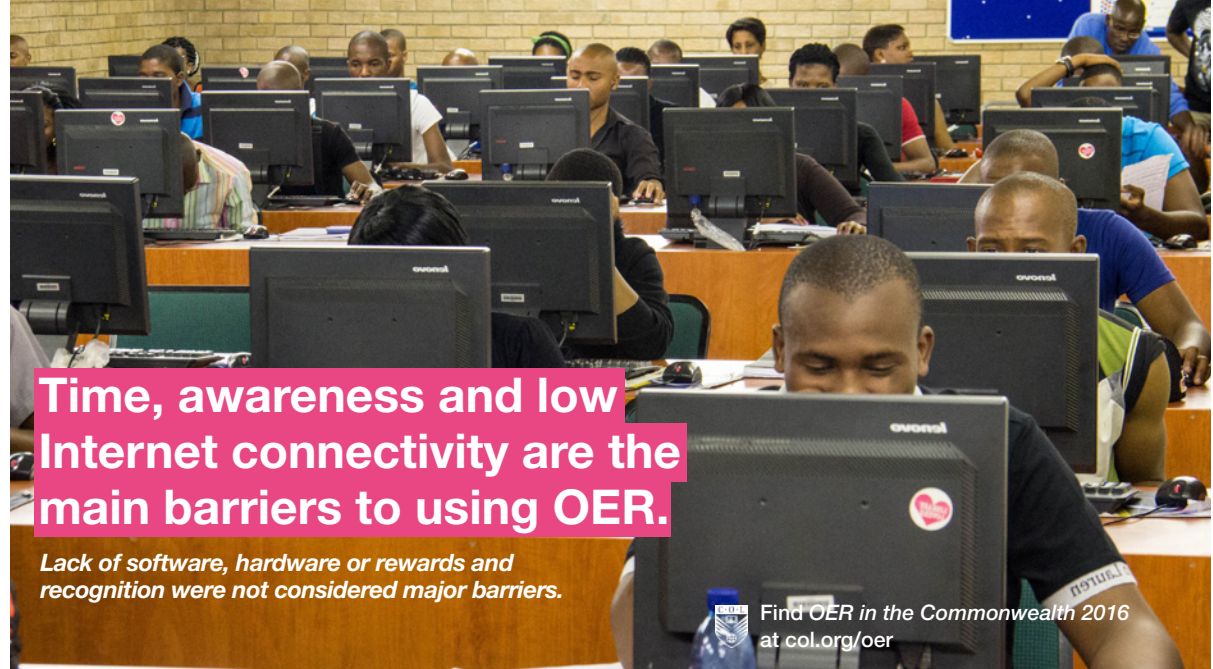| Barrier | % |
|---|---|
| Lack of time | 44% |
| Lack of awareness | 41% |
| Low Internet connectivity | 40% |
| Lack of skill in searching for OER | 37% |
| Lack of skill in integrating OER with any design | 35% |
| Lack of skill in adopting OER | 35% |
| Lack of administration support | 29% |
| Lack of software | 23% |
| Lack of reward and recognition | 23% |
| Lack of hardware | 15% |

## Question 5: How have institutions taken advantage of evolving technology to create opportunities for sharing materials which have been released under an open licence in diverse media?

Amongst the different OER types available, the respondents believed that text materials were the easiest to adopt and reuse (76%), followed by lecture notes (54%) and slides (53%), as shown in Figure 19.

We also found that 62% considered "easy to download" to be the most important factor for adopting OER (Figure 20). Surprisingly, only 32%
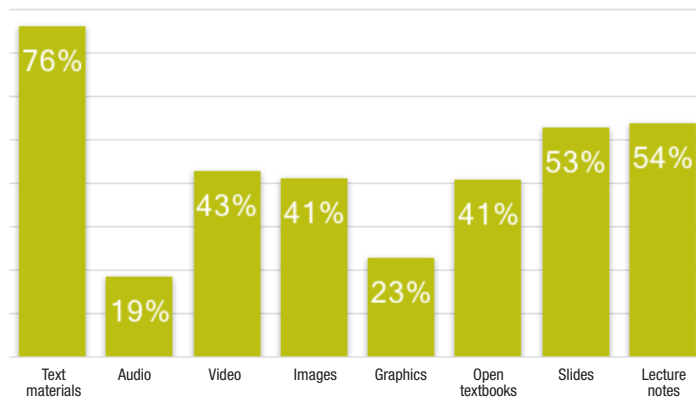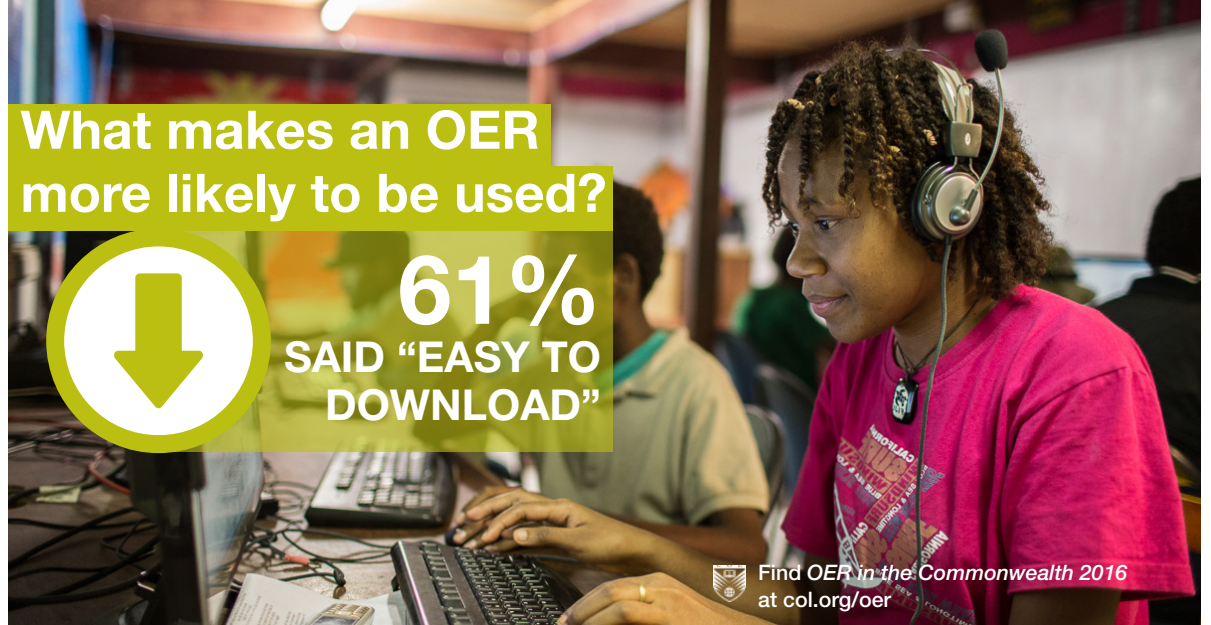
**What makes an OER more likely to be used?**

**61%** SAID "EASY TO DOWNLOAD"

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felt that positive user ratings or comments about the resource were important. Further, the Word format was identified as the easiest to adopt, at 85%, followed by PDF at 52% and HTML at 21%, making it the least favourite.
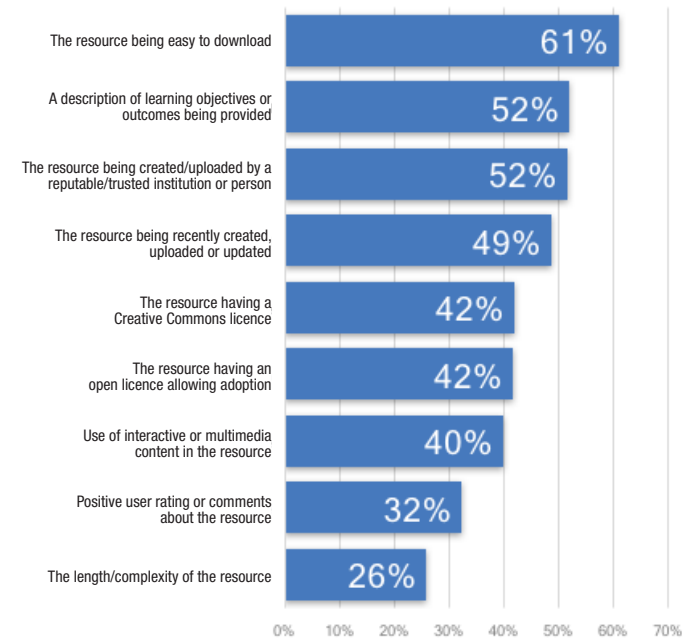


FIGURE 19. TYPES OF OER THAT ARE EASY TO ADOPT AND REUSE



FIGURE 20. FACTORS CONSIDERED WHEN ADOPTING OER

## Question 6: What are the tools used to locate and retrieve OER that are specific and relevant to particular needs?

Seventy-eight per cent of respondents frequently used search engines to locate OER, whilst only 22% used repositories. Amongst the search engines, the participants used Google more frequently (89%) than other search engines, as shown in Figure 21.

Amongst the repositories, the most commonly used was OER Commons (36%), followed by Wikimedia Commons (32%) and COL-DOER (23%), as shown in Figure 22.

Based on their experience, respondents felt that open textbooks (46%), course modules (40%) and videos (39%) were the most difficult to find (Figure 23).
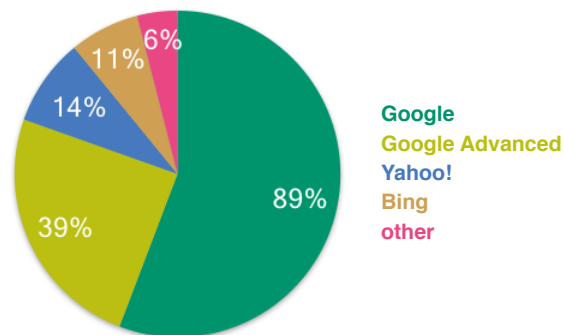
## What are the most difficult OER to find?

**46%** SAID OPEN TEXTBOOKS

**40%** SAID COURSE MODULES

**39%** SAID VIDEOS

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**FIGURE 21. SEARCH ENGINES USED**

Google
Google Advanced
Yahoo!
Bing
other

89%
39%
14%
11%
6%



| | |
|---|---|
| OER Commons | 36% |
| Wikimedia Commons | 32% |
| COL-DOER | 23% |
| NROER | 10% |
| MERLOT | 10% |
| Connexions | 7% |
| Jorum | 4% |
| Boundless | 2% |
| Others | 16% |
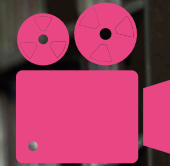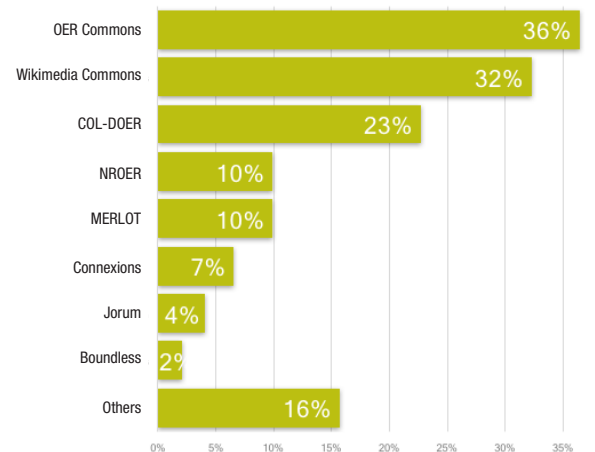
**FIGURE 22. OER REPOSITORIES COMMONLY USED**



| Video | Audio | Quiz items | Images | Open books | Course modules |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 39% | 24% | 31% | 18% | 46% | 40% |

**FIGURE 23. OER MATERIALS THAT ARE HARD TO FIND**

# Summary
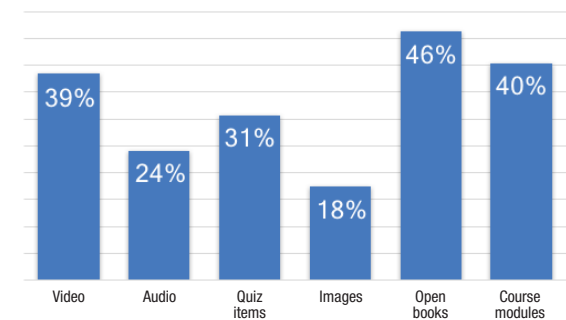
This *Open Educational Resources in the Commonwealth 2016* report provides the current status of the development, use and reuse of OER, the availability of support for education practitioners, and the challenges to fostering the use of OER in the Commonwealth. The key findings from the 657 completed responses from 28 countries, across 214 institutions, portray the OER landscape in these regions and highlight the shortcomings that need to be addressed through future COL interventions. The findings show that training and capacity building in OER increase OER production. However, gaps remain in the development of OER within the Commonwealth.

It is encouraging to see that faculty/teachers are using OER for their teaching and learning. Furthermore, they perceive OER to be of good quality and view them as a means of reducing costs related to courses and programmes. Respondents consider that the biggest challenge to OER use is not having information about the resources' quality. The participants prefer to use OER from reputable institutions that have some form of established quality assurance mechanism. The findings also show that the general understanding of open licensing is low, which in turn has contributed to teachers not sharing their material publicly. Lack of time, lack of awareness and low Internet connectivity are the main barriers to using OER. Interestingly, lack of rewards or recognition is not considered a major barrier. Ease of download is considered to be the most important factor for adopting OER. In this context, search engines are used more than repositories to locate the necessary resources. Based on their experience, the respondents felt that open textbooks, course modules and videos were the most difficult OER to find. Text materials in Word format are preferred above others when it comes to adopting OER.

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# Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

**Baseline Survey Study of the Capacities of Teachers with Respect to the Development, Use and Reuse of Open Educational Resources (OER) within Targeted Institutions of the Commonwealth**

Welcome to this baseline survey study on open educational resources, conducted by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL).

COL is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to promote the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.

Hosted by the Government of Canada and headquartered in Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada, COL is the world's only intergovernmental organisation solely concerned with the promotion and development of distance education and open learning. COL is helping developing nations improve access to quality education and training.

The expected outcome of this survey study is to understand the current state of education/higher education institutions, open schools, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, and open universities across the Commonwealth with respect to OER development, use and reuse issues, challenges and available support systems.

We thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this survey. The survey will take about 30 minutes to complete. Your responses are voluntary and will be confidential. Responses will not be identified by individual. All responses will be compiled together and analysed as a group.

Your feedback will contribute to enhancing the understanding of OER practices and is likely to provide input for potential future collaborations between COL and your institution.

Please complete the survey by 20 May 2016. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Dr Ishan Abeywardena, Adviser, Open Educational Resources, at the Commonwealth of Learning, at +1 604 775 8263 or iabeywardena@col.org.

I look forward to your cooperation and support.

Regards,

Professor B. Phalachandra
Consultant to the Commonwealth of Learning

## About You

Name:

Designation/Position:

Qualifications (academic and professional). Please list all:

Institution:

City:

Country:

Address for correspondence:


Email address:

Phone number with country code:

### Age

☐ 20-29

☐ 30-39

☐ 40-49

☐ 50-59

☐ 60 and above

### Gender

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Other

### Your highest educational qualification

☐ Diploma/Certificate

☐ Bachelor's degree

☐ Master's degree

☐ Doctorate (PhD)

☐ Other, please specify _____

### Which of the following apply to you?

☐ Working in open school/institution

☐ Working in vocational school/institute

☐ Working in open university

☐ Other, please specify _____

### Which of the following apply to you?

Please choose all that apply

☐ Teacher at school level

☐ Teacher at degree college

☐ Teacher at postgraduate degree college or university

☐ Researcher

☐ Administrator

☐ Curriculum planner/developer

☐ Instructional designer

☐ Other, please specify _____

**For how many years have you been in this profession?**

☐ Under 2 years

☐ 3-5 years

☐ 6-8 years

☐ 9-11 years

☐ Above 11 years

**Did you attend any programmes (seminars/workshops) relating to OER organised by the Commonwealth of Learning?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

*If your response is "Yes," please answer the following questions.

• Which local institution organised the programme?

• When was it (month and year) organised?

Programme duration:

• Where was it conducted (place/location)?

• What were the inputs/issues discussed?

• Were there any hands-on activities in the programme?

    ☐ Yes

    ☐ No

**Did you attend any programmes (seminars/workshops) relating to OER?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

*If your response is "No" for the question above, how did you acquire knowledge about OER?

☐ Self-study

☐ Working with colleagues on OER-related activities

☐ Other, please specify _____

### Your experience of OER searching

**While searching for OER, which of the following would you use more frequently?**

☐ Search engines

☐ OER repository

**From your experience of searching for OER for study/teaching, which types of materials are very hard to find?**

Please choose all that apply.

☐ Videos

☐ Audios

☐ Quiz items

☐ Images

☐ Open books

☐ Course modules

**Which of the following search engines do you usually use?**

☐ Google

☐ Google advanced search

☐ Yahoo!

☐ Bing

☐ Other, please specify _____

**Which of the following OER repositories do you usually use?**

Please choose all that apply.

☐ Connexions

☐ MERLOT

☐ Jorum

☐ Boundless

☐ Wikipedia Commons

☐ OER Commons

☐ COL Directory of Open Educational Resources (DOER)

☐ National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER)

☐ Others, please specify _____

**Which of the following apply to you?**

Please choose all that apply.

☐ Developed OER

☐ Developed and used OER

☐ Used OER

☐ Helped others to develop OER

☐ Helped others to use OER

**In which of these situations have you used OER?**

☐ Teaching (classroom/tutorial)

☐ Course development

☐ Training

☐ Research/Publication

☐ Others, please specify _____

**In which of these ways, if any, have you created OER?**

Please choose all that apply.

☐ Created open educational resources for students' study or teaching

☐ Created resources and published them on an open licence

☐ Added a resource to a repository

☐ Added comments to a repository regarding the quality of a resource

☐ Added comments to a repository suggesting ways of using a resource

☐ Organising workshops/training programmes

☐ Have not created any open educational resources

☐ Other, please specify _____

**Which of the following are barriers in developing and using OER?**

Please choose all that apply.

☐ Lack of time

☐ Lack of awareness

☐ Lack of skills in searching for OER

☐ Lack of skills in adopting OER

☐ Lack of skills in integrating OER with my design

☐ Low Internet connectivity

☐ Lack of hardware

☐ Lack of software

☐ Lack of reward and recognition

☐ Lack of administrative support

**Which, if any, of the following types of OER have you used for teaching/ training/course development?**

Please choose all that apply.

☐ Curriculum/Syllabus

☐ Assessment

☐ Open textbooks

☐ Whole course

☐ Elements of a module or a course

☐ Videos

☐ Audio podcasts

☐ Images

☐ Infographics

☐ Interactive games

☐ Lecture notes

☐ Lesson plans

☐ Tutorials

☐ Quizzes

☐ E-books

☐ Data sets

☐ Learning tools, instruments and plug-ins

☐ Others, please specify

_____

**Which of the following apply to you?**

Please choose all that apply.

☐ Delivering online courses

☐ Delivering courses in a blended environment

☐ Delivering courses in a face-to-face environment

☐ Organising workshops/training programmes

**What benefits do you envisage in developing OER?**

Please choose all that apply.

☐ Enhance personal reputation

☐ Enhance institutional reputation

☐ Minimise the cost of offering a course/programme

☐ Improve quality

☐ Increase inclusiveness

☐ Others, please specify _____

**What benefits do you envisage in using OER?**

Please choose all that apply.

☐ Enhance personal reputation

☐ Enhance institutional reputation

☐ Minimise the cost of offering a course/programme

☐ Improve quality

☐ Increase inclusiveness

☐ Others, please specify _____

**From your experience of using OER, how difficult are they to adopt (use/reuse)?**

☐ Difficult

☐ Not difficult

☐ Don't know as I have not used/reused

**For which of the following purposes have you used OER in the context of your teaching/training?**

Please choose all that apply.

☐ To prepare for my teaching/training

☐ To supplement my existing lessons or coursework

☐ As "assets" (e.g., images or text extracts) within a classroom lesson

☐ To give to learners as compulsory/optional self-study materials

☐ To provide eLearning materials to online learners

☐ To download a course

☐ To make my teaching more culturally diverse

☐ To find an instant solution to a difficult teaching topic

☐ Others, please specify _____

**Before using OER, what steps do you follow to check their quality?**

Please choose all that apply

☐ Discussion with colleagues

☐ Comparison with standard books or proprietary materials

☐ Reflecting on the content based on your earlier readings

☐ Checking whether the materials have been used by others

☐ Authenticity and credibility of materials

**Based on your experience, which of the following are easier to adopt and reuse?**

Please choose all that apply

☐ Text materials

☐ Audio

☐ Videos

☐ Images

☐ Graphics

☐ Open textbooks

☐ Slides

☐ Lecture notes

**Based on your experience, which of the following formats are easier to use/adopt and reuse?**

Please choose all that apply

☐ Word

☐ PDF

☐ HTML

☐ Others, please specify _____

**Which challenges, if any, did you face in using OER?**

Please choose all that apply.

☐ Resources not being aligned with professional standards or regulations

☐ Unable to get colleagues to accept the use of open educational resources

☐ Missing the support to help me work through open course materials

☐ Not having information about the quality of OER

☐ Not having enough OER in other formats, such as video and audio

☐ Others, please specify _____

**Which of the following factors would make you more likely to select a particular resource while searching for open educational content?**

Please choose all that apply.

☐ The resource being recently created, uploaded or updated

☐ The resource being easy to download

☐ A description of learning objectives or outcomes being provided

☐ The resource being created/uploaded by a reputable/trusted institution or person

☐ The resource having a Creative Commons licence

☐ The resource having an open licence allowing adaptation

☐ The length/complexity of the resource

☐ Use of interactive or multi-media content (e.g., video or quiz) in the resource

☐ Positive user ratings or comments about the resource

**Which of the following Creative Commons licences are you confident in defining and/or explaining?**

Please choose all that apply.

☐ CC BY

☐ CC BY-SA

☐ CC BY-ND

☐ CC BY-NC

☐ CC BY-NC-SA

☐ CC BY-NC-ND

☐ CC0 Public Domain

**How important is open licensing to you when using resources in your teaching?**

☐ Very important

☐ Important

☐ Unimportant

**In the context of your role as an educator (teacher/researcher/course developer), what barriers, if any, have you encountered when using OER in your institution?**

Please write your answer here:

**Do you share any of your teaching materials publicly?**

Please choose all that apply.

☐ No, but I share them with colleagues or others when asked.

☐ No, I don't share any of my teaching materials with anyone but students.

☐ Yes, they are publicly viewable, and I put a licence on them that allows them to be revised and reused.

☐ Yes, they are publicly viewable, but I don't have a licence on them that allows them to be revised and reused.

☐ Other, please specify _____

If you have answered "Yes" to the question above, please explain the reasons behind your answer here:

**Based on your experiences, how would you rate the quality of OER when compared with traditional, proprietary materials?**

☐ Very good

☐ Good

☐ Not very good

☐ Poor

☐ Not sure as I have not done any comparison

**While delivering offline/online courses, what kind of materials do you use?**

☐ Developed by self

☐ Developed in the institution

☐ Downloaded from OER repository

☐ Downloaded from the Internet

☐ Others, please specify _____

**Did you share the OER developed by you with others?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

If your response is "No," what were your reasons for not sharing?

**Do you believe that your students have saved money by using OER?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

**Does your institution have an OER policy?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Being developed

**Did your institution organise any programme to orient faculty about OER?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

If your response is "Yes," list the content/title of the programme.

**What are the different policies and practices, if any, your institution has in relation to OER?**

Please write your answer here:

**In the context of your role as an educator, what kinds of policies would help you to be more open?**

Please write your answer here:

**Would you be willing to provide more information related to your work on OER, if contacted?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

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