



# CEST

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## Evolving open education in Brazil

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Open education is a collective term that combines the idea of knowledge sharing with the power of the internet to improve educational access and effectiveness worldwide, through the adoption of learning resources, tools and practices based on open sharing practices. The Open Education movement is presently moving forward from the concept of “opening up educational content” towards “opening up education as a whole”, in Brazil as well as in several other countries, with the support of the main global networks in the field. There is a strong demand for MOOCs (Massive Open Online Course) and other open education approaches, in a system where the existing education offer can-not cope with increasing demand for Higher Education. This is confirmed by a recent research by the University of Edinburgh which concluded that, out of almost 200 countries represented in the cohort of students of their own MOOCs, the majority came from US, UK, Spain, and Brazil.

In May 2014, CEST organized, with the support of the eMundus project, a Seminar titled “Open Education, Society and Technology” with the objectives of gathering the main stakeholders active in Open Education in the Brazilian panorama and of fostering dialogue on the main societal and technological issues which exist in the field of distance and open education. The event, which gathered networks such as the REA Brazil community and ABED, the Brazilian Association for Distance Education, together with several universities and private institutions, resulted in an appreciation of the richness of the Brazilian landscape in the field of learning innovation in general and open education in particular. Brazil, which has been at the forefront of several open movements in the last decades, is indeed

a leading country in the open education movement. What happened since the CEST Seminar fully confirms the vitality of the Open Education movement in the country.

At the policy level, the advocacy work conducted by Educadigital Institute, through OER-Brazil Project is going forward, with an International Seminar organized in August 2015 in the House of Representatives of the State of Sao Paulo to discuss how Open Educational

Resources can contribute to knowledge democratization in the country. Following the seminar, a letter has been issued to the Federal Ministry of Education advocating for several policy decisions in favor of openness. The way Open Education is

described in this letter explains how in Brazil the OE movement is working well beyond Open Educational Resources: “Open education covers the following concepts which are essential for accessing knowledge in today’s contemporary society: a) New compositions and teaching and learning spaces which can go beyond the rigid classroom format with rows of desks; b) Accessibility for people with special needs; c) Appreciation of different places to learn (including digital devices) and of the varied and autonomous learning pathways and d) Open Education Resources (OER) and free software that allow changes and adaptations for teachers and students”.

*The emergence of new challenges does not mean that the technological, legal and content related problems of Open Education have been fully solved.*

Among the conclusions of the Seminar in the House of Representatives, the following are particularly important:

- It is fundamental to promote access to knowledge to every Brazilian citizen creating social justice and helping overcome inequalities;
- Digital culture has brought attention to the need for flexible usage rights for educational resources to facilitate access for educators and students;
- The adoption and creation of OER have contributed to methodological innovation in education, creating leading roles for teachers, students and school;
- OERs can create other types of peer review, more horizontal and that guarantee the quality of materials. The authors themselves will give special attention to the resource deposited in repositories because they know that there is a huge potential from there to get lots of accesses;
- OERs may inspire new business models, based on the concepts of network society and collaborative economy.

What appears from these conclusions, which represents the “policy climax” of a movement that has seen other important public policy developments, such as some laws proposals at the Federal level, in the states of Sao Paulo, Parana and Distrito Federal as well as a city law of the City of Sao Paulo, is that the Open Education movement in Brazil is achieving important milestones and opening new advocacy and research fronts.

We can observe that the focus is moving from technological, legal and content challenge to a new set of challenges of pedagogic, sustainability and organizational nature. In terms of pedagogical challenges, experts, researchers and activists are realizing that the ways teaching, and learning must change in Open Education settings should be explored and mainstreamed. Approaches such as self-directed learning, cooperative learning, problem-based and project-based learning project and inquiry-based learning, together with issues like assignments approaches, motivation and assessment are all being transformed by the Open Education (r)evolution.

A successful example of an innovative business model in the field of Open Education can be found in UNIVESP, the Universidade Virtual do Estado de Sao Paulo, which – in partnership with the three State universities – leverages on public scholarships for students that can access education only online.

The emergence of these new challenges does not mean that the technological, legal and content related problems of Open Education have been fully solved. On the contrary, the debate

stays open on different fronts. Nevertheless, a recognizable positive impact of Open Education in Brazil, as well as in several other countries explored by the eMundus research – is that they have pushed institutions to engage in new educational activities and to discuss with a broad range of stakeholders, including practitioners, researchers and activists. Still, with very few institutions having fully gone through the organizational restructuring that would be needed to take advantage of the opportunities brought by Open Education, the tipping point is far from visible. But, as Lao-Tzu used to say, “a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”, and Brazil is certainly moving along the way.



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This article is a result of the author’s ascertainment and analysis, without compulsorily reflecting CEST’s opinion.