

# Exploring Teachers' Perceptions of OER in Higher Education Institutions: A Case Study of Vietnam

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**Abstract:** *This research study investigates the perceptions of teachers at the University of Foreign Language Studies in Vietnam regarding Open Educational Resources (OER) by employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The study reveals varying levels of teachers' awareness of OER, with some being highly aware while others have limited knowledge. Teachers primarily use OER as supplementary materials in diverse ways, such as incorporating them into classroom instruction, homework assignments, and assessments. The pedagogical value of OER is recognized by teachers, as they enhance student engagement, support differentiated instruction, and offer flexibility in customization. The study also highlights the importance of social influence through peer interactions and external learning opportunities in promoting OER adoption. The findings have implications for educators, administrators, and policymakers, emphasizing the need for institutional support, professional development, increased awareness, quality assurance mechanisms, and evaluation processes to facilitate the effective integration of OER in educational settings.*

**Keywords:** *Open Educational Resources (OER)*

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## I. Introduction

With their unrestricted access to knowledge and emphasis on collaboration and sharing among educators, OER (OER) have become a revolutionary approach to educational materials (Tuite, 2018). OER are a broad category of publicly accessible resources that can alter how higher education institutions approach teaching and learning (Chen, 2020). Examples of OER include textbooks, lectures, and multimedia materials. However, despite the global significance of OER, there is a limited understanding of teachers' perceptions regarding their adoption and integration, especially in the context of higher education institutions in Vietnam. Research conducted in other countries has highlighted the potential benefits of OER, such as increased access to educational resources, cost savings, and the ability to adapt and customize materials to meet specific instructional needs (Pegler, 2012). Yet, there is a gap in knowledge regarding the perceptions and experiences of teachers regarding OER adoption in Vietnam.

Vietnam's higher education system has experienced remarkable growth and development in recent years. With a strong focus on improving educational quality, there is a need to explore innovative approaches that can enhance teaching and learning outcomes. OER was introduced in Vietnam nearly twenty years ago, with the Fulbright Economics Teaching Program publishing teaching and research materials online in 2002. The establishment of the Vietnam OCW program followed a visit by the Vietnamese prime minister to the United States in 2005, where he received MIT's OpenCourseWare material. The program launched a website in 2007 and was later renamed VOER. The OER@University Roadshow program was initiated in 2016 to train librarians and lecturers in universities across Vietnam on the use and creation of OER. Both international and national conferences on OER have been organized, including a recent event in Hanoi in October 2019 (Truong

et al., 2021). OER has gained increasing attention as a viable solution to address the challenges of traditional educational resources, such as limited access, high costs, and outdated content (Berti, 2018).

This case study aims to investigate the perceptions of teachers in higher education institutions in Vietnam towards OER. By examining their perspectives, we can gain insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with the adoption and integration of OER in the Vietnamese context. Subsequently, based on the findings, several recommendations and suggestions can be proposed to enhance the implementation of OER in a more effective manner.

## **II. Literature Review And Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. Open Educational Resources**

Open Educational Resources (OER) can be defined in various ways, but they all emphasize the open nature of the materials and the permissions granted for their use and adaptation. The Hewlett Foundation defines OER as "high quality teaching, learning, and research resources that are free for others to use and repurpose" (The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 2013). UNESCO describes them 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, 2019). The defining characteristic of OER is the open license that governs their use. Authors of OER must obtain an open copyright license, typically Creative Commons, which specifies how the material can be used, reused, adapted, and shared. This licensing distinguishes OER from other free resources available on the internet. OER materials can take various forms, including entire courses, textbooks, videos, modules, tests, courseware, journal articles, and more. These materials can be accessed online, and some can also be printed and distributed (Hilton & Laman, 2012). There are numerous providers of OER content, representing both the public and private sectors. Examples include Openstax, The Saylor Foundation, Lumen Learning, MIT OpenCourseWare, and Washington State's Open Course Library. These providers cater to the needs of K-12 education, higher education institutions, and the general public.

OER grant educators, students, and individuals the necessary legal authorizations to participate in five activities, often referred to as the 5Rs: reuse, revise, remix, redistribute, and retain, representing a set of permissions or freedoms granted by open licenses that enable users to engage with and adapt OER materials. The 5Rs of OER empower educators and learners to actively engage with educational resources, modify them to suit their needs, and contribute to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning materials. These permissions encourage a culture of openness, collaboration, and creativity in education.

### **2.2. Previous Studies on Perceptions and Adoption of OER in Higher Educational Institutions**

Over the years, there has been a growing interest in understanding the perceptions of OER among educators in higher education institutions. Previous studies have explored various aspects of OER adoption, including educators' attitudes, beliefs, motivations, challenges, and benefits associated with OER use. These studies provide valuable insights into the factors that influence the acceptance and integration of OER in higher education contexts.

One common theme that emerges from previous research is the positive attitude towards OER among educators. For example, a study by Hilton and Wiley (2010) found that many educators perceived OER to be of high quality and believed that using OER enhanced their teaching practices. Similarly, another study by Jhangiani et al. (2016) indicated that educators considered OER to be a viable alternative to traditional commercial textbooks, primarily due to their cost-saving potential and the ability to customize and adapt the resources to meet specific learning objectives. Furthermore, several studies have highlighted the perceived benefits of OER adoption. In a study by Kimmons and Veletsianos (2018), educators reported that OER increased student engagement and provided opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing among peers. OER were also found to facilitate the development of innovative and learner-centered instructional practices (Hodgkinson-Williams & Trotter, 2018).

However, despite the positive perceptions, previous studies have also identified challenges and barriers to OER adoption. One of the key challenges is the lack of awareness and familiarity with OER among educators (Christoforidou & Georgiadou, 2021). Educators may have limited knowledge of OER repositories, licensing,

and technical skills required to locate and integrate OER into their teaching materials (Hilton et al., 2017). Another significant challenge is the perceived lack of quality control and credibility of OER. Educators expressed concerns about the accuracy, currency, and reliability of OER materials (Pegler, 2012). Some educators preferred to use traditional textbooks due to their established reputation and peer-reviewed nature, while perceiving OER as less reliable (Rolfe, 2012). Additionally, studies have highlighted the issue of time constraints and the need for institutional support in promoting OER adoption. Lack of time to search for, evaluate, and integrate OER into existing curricula was reported as a barrier by many educators (Clements et al., 2017; Truong et al., 2021). Institutions need to provide professional development opportunities, technical support, and incentives to encourage educators to engage with OER (de los Arcos et al., 2016).

### **2.3. Emergence of OER in Vietnam's Education**

The current state of OER use and perception in the education sector of Vietnam reflects a growing interest in leveraging these resources to enhance teaching and learning practices (Truong et al., 2021). While OER adoption is still in its early stages, there is a notable increase in awareness and engagement among educators and institutions. Education is one of the eight important foci in the digital transformation process, according to Decision No. 749/QĐ-TTg issued by Vietnam's Prime Minister on the approval of the "National Digital Transformation by 2025 with visions towards 2030". The Central Party, State, Ministries, and Branches at all levels have taken an interest in the implementation of OER in Vietnam. As a result, a variety of policies have been adopted to encourage the creation of an accessible educational environment. The OER movement in Vietnam is predicted to grow in response to the new approach to education, democratization, and international integration (Nguyen et al., 2022).

The aim of 2030 is for Vietnam's education to reach an advanced level in the region, which includes the orientation of building an open education and modernizing education and training, according to Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW of the 8th Conference of the XI Central Committee, which was adopted at the Communist Party of Vietnam's 12th Congress. Based on that desire, the creation, growth, usage, and sharing of OER have turned into a must for the accomplishment of the fundamental and thorough reform of higher education in Vietnam. Numerous universities in Vietnam have joined the global OER systems in response to this movement. Local universities actively participate in Vietnam's open learning system, including Vietnam Open Courseware (Truong, 2015) and Vietnam OER (Do, 2013), in addition to participating in OER models from around the world. This demonstrates the rising awareness of the significance of OER for teaching, research, and learning in higher educational settings in Vietnam. Although there have been encouraging advancements in OER adoption in Vietnam, there remain significant obstacles preventing widespread implementation. These barriers may include a lack of engagement from certain institutions and a limited understanding of OER among teachers. Given this situation, it is crucial to conduct research to explore and analyze teachers' perceptions of OER in Vietnam.

### **2.4. Theoretical Model of Adoption**

Marcus' theoretical model of adoption, developed by Donald Marcus in 1985, is a valuable framework that complements Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory and holds relevance to the research topic of exploring teachers' perceptions of OER (OER) in higher education institutions in Vietnam. Marcus' model focuses on the individual-level factors that influence the adoption and use of innovations, including OER. It emphasizes three key constructs: perceived attributes, perceived consequences, and perceived contextual factors.

The first construct, perceived attributes, refers to how individuals perceive the characteristics and qualities of the innovation. In the context of OER, teachers' perceptions of attributes such as the quality, relevance, ease of use, and potential benefits of OER can significantly influence their acceptance and adoption of these resources. Understanding how teachers perceive the attributes of OER in the Vietnamese higher education context can provide valuable insights into their attitudes and intentions towards OER adoption. The second construct, perceived consequences, explores how individuals perceive the potential outcomes and consequences of adopting an innovation. Teachers' perceptions of the potential benefits, challenges, and risks associated with OER can impact their willingness to integrate these resources into their teaching practices. By examining teachers' perceptions of the consequences of OER adoption in Vietnam, researchers can gain insights

into the specific contextual factors that influence their decision-making processes. The third construct, perceived contextual factors, recognizes the importance of the situational and environmental factors that shape individuals' adoption decisions. These factors can include institutional support, available resources, technical infrastructure, and cultural considerations. Exploring how teachers perceive the contextual factors related to OER adoption in the Vietnamese higher education context can provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities that exist in implementing OER initiatives.

The relevance of Marcus' theoretical model to this research topic lies in its focus on individual perceptions and the specific contextual factors influencing the adoption of OER. By applying this model, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the factors that shape teachers' perceptions of OER in Vietnam, including their attitudes towards OER attributes, their expectations of the consequences, and the contextual factors that facilitate or hinder OER adoption. Moreover, Marcus' model complements Rogers' DOI theory by providing a more nuanced understanding of the individual-level factors influencing the adoption process. While Rogers' DOI theory focuses on the diffusion process at a broader level, Marcus' model offers insights into the psychological and contextual dimensions of OER adoption. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for investigating the perceptions and utilization of OER among teachers in higher education institutions in Vietnam.

### **III. Research Methodology**

To investigate the perceptions of teachers at the University of Foreign Language Studies in Vietnam regarding OER (OER), a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was employed. The quantitative component involved the administration of a survey adapted from Marcus' survey instrument, while the qualitative component involved conducting interviews with selected participants. This mixed-methods approach offers a comprehensive understanding of the research topic by capturing both numerical data and rich, contextual insights from participants.

This research study took place at the University of Foreign Language Studies, which is situated in Central Vietnam and is a university member of the University of Danang. This institution holds a prominent position in the country as a leading provider of training programs for foreign language teachers and experts. The study focused on collecting data from lecturers representing four faculties within the university. These faculties encompass various disciplines and subject areas, providing a diverse perspective on the perceptions of teachers regarding OER (OER). By including lecturers from multiple faculties, the study aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of teachers' OER perceptions across different academic fields.

The survey was designed to gather quantitative data on teachers' perceptions of OER attributes, consequences, and contextual factors, drawing on the theoretical framework proposed by Marcus (1985). The adapted survey included different sections to measure these constructs and their sub-dimensions. The survey was distributed to a target sample of 50 teachers at the University. Out of the 50 surveys distributed, 32 responses were received, representing a response rate of 64%.

To complement the survey findings and gain deeper insights into the underlying reasons and contextual factors influencing teachers' perceptions, qualitative interviews were conducted with a subset of 8 participants. The interviews allowed for open-ended, in-depth discussions with selected teachers, providing rich qualitative data that can uncover individual perspectives, personal experiences, and contextual factors shaping OER adoption and usage.

### **IV. Findings And Discussion**

During the coding process, several recurring themes were identified from the three sources of data used in this research. These themes encompass various aspects, including teachers, students, and the resources themselves. It is important to note that these themes emerged through a holistic analysis of the combined research methods employed. They were not limited to any particular research method and instead arose from the consideration of all the data sources. The findings from the interviews and survey responses were found to be complementary and, in most cases, consistent with one another, rather than conflicting.

#### **4.1. Teachers' Awareness Levels**

The findings of the study revealed several key themes related to teachers' awareness and use of OER. Firstly, there was a variation in teachers' awareness of OER, with just over two thirds of the survey respondents indicating that they were using OER in their classrooms. However, the results also showed differing levels of awareness among teachers, with some being very aware, while others were only somewhat aware or not aware at all.

A significant portion of survey respondents (25%) who were not using OER cited a lack of knowledge as the primary reason for their non-adoption. Interestingly, during the interviews, some teachers who were using OER were unfamiliar with the term "OER" and the broader open education movement. These teachers had discovered and utilized open sources through alternative means, such as social media, word-of-mouth recommendations from colleagues, or simple online searches.

The interviews also revealed that teachers believed many of their colleagues had some awareness of OER, even if they did not explicitly label them as such. Additionally, there was an expressed interest among teachers in receiving professional development opportunities to learn more about OER and how to effectively incorporate them into their classrooms.

#### **4.2. Complementary Use with Textbooks**

The study revealed that teachers employed OER (OER) in various ways, primarily as supplementary materials to enhance their instructional practices. The manner in which teachers used OER as supplemental material exhibited diversity, reflecting the different pedagogical approaches and subject areas. Some teachers incorporated OER into their lessons during class time, utilizing them to model concepts and engage students actively. For instance, they might use OER videos to present complex topics or utilize interactive games to reinforce learning.

Additionally, teachers integrated OER into their homework assignments, assigning tasks that involved the use of open sources offered on Creative Commons websites or similar sources. This approach allowed students to access additional resources and practice independently outside the classroom. Furthermore, OER were leveraged for assessment purposes, with teachers utilizing openly sourced systems like Kahoot to create interactive quizzes and assessments.

The survey findings provided further insights into the types of OER used by the teachers. According to the survey responses, 31.2% of the teachers reported using OER videos, while 46.9% utilized OER images. Worksheets (59.3%), lesson plans (21.9%), and interactive games (53.1%) were also mentioned as commonly used OER formats.

The diverse use of OER as supplemental materials highlights the adaptability and flexibility of these resources in enhancing classroom instruction. Teachers' integration of OER into their curriculum and instructional practices underscores their recognition of the value that OER bring to enriching the learning experience for their students. By incorporating a variety of OER formats, such as videos, images, worksheets, and interactive games, teachers were able to cater to different learning styles and engage students through multimedia and interactive content.

These findings emphasize the potential of OER to complement traditional textbooks and provide additional resources and activities to support student learning. The utilization of OER as supplemental materials allows for greater customization and personalization of instruction, enabling teachers to address diverse student needs and interests. By embracing OER as a supplementary resource, teachers can enrich their lessons, promote student engagement, and facilitate a more interactive and dynamic learning environment.

#### **4.3. Pedagogical Value**

The study revealed that teachers recognized the pedagogical value of OER (OER) and acknowledged their potential to enhance teaching and learning experiences. The findings indicated that teachers perceived OER as valuable resources that could support various instructional strategies and cater to diverse learning needs.

Teachers highlighted the pedagogical benefits of OER in terms of promoting student engagement. By incorporating multimedia elements, such as videos, interactive games, and images, teachers were able to create



interactive and immersive learning experiences for their students. These resources provided opportunities for students to actively participate in their learning, making lessons more dynamic and enjoyable.

Furthermore, teachers found that OER materials facilitated differentiated instruction, allowing them to adapt their teaching to meet the individual needs and learning styles of their students. The availability of diverse OER formats, such as worksheets, lesson plans, and interactive activities, enabled teachers to provide a range of resources and activities that catered to different learning preferences and abilities.

Teachers also expressed that OER offered flexibility in terms of customization and adaptation. They could modify and tailor the resources to align with specific learning objectives, incorporate local context, or address specific topics of interest. This flexibility allowed teachers to personalize their instruction and create learning experiences that were relevant and meaningful to their students.

#### **4.4. Social influence**

Teachers reported that conversations and collaborations with their peers played a crucial role in shaping their awareness and understanding of OER. Informal discussions during professional development sessions, department meetings, and informal gatherings provided opportunities for sharing experiences, resources, and best practices related to OER. These interactions served as a source of inspiration and motivation for teachers to explore and experiment with OER in their own classrooms.

Despite the significant influence of administrators and educational leaders discussed earlier, it is important to note that the findings revealed a lack of explicit encouragement and support for OER adoption at the institutional level. While teachers expressed their enthusiasm and interest in integrating OER into their instructional practices, they reported minimal institutional policies or initiatives promoting the use of OER.

Teachers indicated that there was a lack of specific guidelines or directives from administrators regarding OER adoption. This absence of clear policies and support systems created a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty among teachers, inhibiting their ability to fully embrace OER. Without explicit encouragement and institutional backing, teachers felt hesitant to invest their time and effort in exploring and implementing OER. In contrast, teachers had more opportunities to learn about OER through external channels such as seminars, conferences, and online platforms. These events and resources provided teachers with valuable insights, practical examples, and opportunities to connect with OER advocates and experts. Teachers expressed their appreciation for these external sources of learning, as they offered a space for collaboration, idea-sharing, and professional growth related to OER.

The contrasting dynamics between the lack of institutional support and the availability of external learning opportunities underscore the importance of advocating for institutional policies and initiatives that promote the use of OER. Establishing clear guidelines, providing resources, and offering professional development opportunities within the institution can foster a culture that values and supports OER adoption.

#### **4.5. Perceived compatibility**

The findings regarding the theme of Perceived Compatibility shed light on teachers' perspectives on integrating OER into their existing teaching methods. It became evident that teachers perceived both challenges and opportunities when aligning OER with their instructional approaches.

Some teachers expressed concerns about the compatibility of OER with their established teaching methods. They highlighted the need to modify their instructional practices and adapt their existing materials to incorporate OER effectively. This perceived challenge was mainly attributed to the additional time and effort required for curating, evaluating, and integrating OER into their curriculum.

However, it is important to note that despite these perceived challenges, many teachers also recognized the potential benefits of OER in enhancing their instructional approaches. They acknowledged that OER could provide a wider range of resources, support differentiated instruction, and foster student engagement and active learning. Teachers appreciated the flexibility and adaptability of OER, allowing them to customize and tailor resources to meet the specific needs of their students.

### **5.6. Perceived Barriers to Adoption**

Several obstacles were identified by teachers that hindered the widespread adoption and implementation of OER. One of the prominent barriers mentioned was the lack of awareness and understanding of OER among certain teachers. Some of them expressed a need for more information and training on OER to gain confidence in using and integrating these resources effectively.

Another significant barrier identified was the perceived quality and reliability of OER. Teachers expressed concerns about the credibility and accuracy of openly available resources, particularly in subjects requiring up-to-date and specialized knowledge. They emphasized the importance of rigorous evaluation and quality assurance processes to ensure the suitability of OER for educational purposes.

Furthermore, time constraints emerged as a significant barrier to OER adoption. Teachers expressed concerns about the additional time required to search for, evaluate, and adapt OER to align with their instructional goals and student needs. Limited time within the curriculum and competing demands on teachers' time were mentioned as factors that hindered their ability to fully explore and integrate OER.

Access to technology and digital infrastructure was also identified as a barrier. Teachers highlighted the need for reliable internet quality and stability as well as access to devices to fully utilize digital OER resources. Limited access to technology in some educational settings posed challenges in leveraging the benefits of OER.

In summary, while teachers recognized the potential benefits of OER, they also identified perceived challenges and barriers that hindered their adoption and implementation. These included concerns about compatibility with existing teaching methods, lack of awareness and understanding, perceived quality and reliability issues, time constraints, and access to technology. Addressing these barriers through targeted professional development, support systems, and infrastructure improvements can facilitate the wider adoption and successful.

## **V. Conclusion**

The findings of this study shed light on various aspects of teachers' awareness, use, and perceptions of OER. Teachers demonstrated differing levels of awareness of OER, with some being highly aware while others had limited knowledge. The study also revealed that teachers utilized OER as supplementary materials, integrating them into their instructional practices in diverse ways. Teachers recognized the pedagogical value of OER, acknowledging their potential to enhance student engagement, support differentiated instruction, and provide flexibility in customization. The study further highlighted the social influence on teachers' adoption of OER, with peer interactions and external learning opportunities playing significant roles.

## **VI. Implications**

The findings of this study have implications for educators, administrators, and policymakers. Firstly, it is crucial for educational institutions to provide comprehensive support and guidance to teachers regarding the adoption and integration of OER. Establishing clear policies, guidelines, and professional development opportunities within the institution can help address teachers' concerns and uncertainties, ultimately facilitating a more widespread and effective use of OER. Additionally, efforts should be made to increase teachers' awareness and understanding of OER. Institutions can organize workshops, seminars, and conferences specifically focused on OER, providing teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively utilize these resources. Collaborative platforms and networks can also be established to encourage peer-to-peer sharing of experiences, resources, and best practices related to OER.

Furthermore, the findings emphasize the need for quality assurance mechanisms and evaluation processes for OER. Teachers expressed concerns about the reliability and accuracy of openly available resources, particularly in specialized subject areas. Developing standards and guidelines for evaluating the quality and relevance of OER can help address these concerns and ensure that teachers have access to high-quality resources.

## VII. Suggestions For Further Studies

This study opens avenues for further research on the adoption and integration of OER in K-12 classrooms. One of the most feasible suggestions for future studies include longitudinal studies track the changes in teachers' awareness, perceptions, and use of OER over an extended period. This would provide insights into the long-term impact of OER adoption on instructional practices and student outcomes. Secondly, comparative studies comparing the experiences of teachers in different educational settings (e.g., urban vs. rural, public vs. private) to examine the variations in OER adoption and implementation. Such studies would help identify specific challenges and opportunities associated with different contexts. Another potential area of research could be exploring the effectiveness of different professional development models and approaches in supporting teachers' adoption and integration of OER as this would inform the design of targeted and effective professional development programs. Last but not least, conducting policy analyses to examine the existing policies and initiatives related to OER adoption at the national, state, and institutional levels would help identify gaps and areas for improvement in supporting OER integration in educational systems. By addressing these areas of further research, educators, policymakers, and researchers can contribute to a deeper understanding of OER adoption, implementation, and their impact on teaching and learning practices.

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