Educational technologies: Challenges to intellectual property ownership and academic freedom of higher education teachers and researchers

Call for proposals

Recent research commissioned by Education International has underscored the rapid growth in the use of educational technology services in higher education (HE), as well as an increase in trends of marketisation, privatisation and commercialisation in education systems around the world that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic[1]. The fast introduction of educational technologies brought several benefits to HE, but also serious challenges to teachers, researchers and to the teaching profession. Educational technologies typically come with terms of service and licensing agreements that govern their use. These agreements may include clauses that limit or assign intellectual property rights related to the content created or shared through the platforms. During the pandemic, for example, higher education teachers and researchers were increasingly concerned about higher education institutions claiming the ownership of teaching materials produced by their employed teaching staff. Similar concerns have been raised about private and student platforms where teachers' intellectual property rights have been violated and materials and lectures have been shared without consent or choice. Similarly, edtech byproducts such as data analytics, AI and predictive technologies have hazarded academic freedom and the rights of HE staff to make professionally informed judgments and decisions. This research aims to develop an in-depth analysis of the terms and conditions of popular educational technology platforms and systems in order to identify possible threats to HE teachers' and researchers' intellectual property ownership and academic freedom.

Objective(s) of the research

Analyse the possible threats to intellectual property ownership and academic freedom of HE teachers and researchers caused by the use of educational technology platforms and compliance to their terms and conditions.

Suggested methodology

The research will include a desk-based review, as well as interviews with key informants (e.g., technical experts and HE educators and researchers). It is suggested to identify a group of educational technologies that are mostly used by HE teachers and researchers (e.g., Google classroom, Moodle, Canvas, etc.) and analyze clauses or provisions that are found in their terms and conditions.

Outcomes of the research

- Research report of 30-40 pages maximum that details an introduction, a brief literature review, methodology of the study, main findings, conclusions and recommendations oriented to policy and advocacy stakeholders as well as to member organizations.
- A Power Point presentation with a synthesis of the study and the main results.

Suggested timeline

23 June 2023   Deadline for applications

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[1] Pandemic Privatisation in Higher Education: Edtech & University Reform (ei-ie.org)
Commercialisation and privatisation in/of education in the context of Covid-19 (ei-ie.org)

July 2023   Start of research and elaborate the detailed work plan.

July/August 2023   Desk-based review and interviews.

Mid-September 2023   Elaborate and finalize the final research report.

Proposed budget

The total budget available for this research is a maximum of 15,000 EUR.

Education International will bear the costs related to copyediting, layout and the launch of the paper.

Schedule of Payments

1/3 on receipt of detailed work plan (July 2023)
2/3 on receipt of the final research report (September 2023)

Terms of the Contract

The contract should run for up to three months. The contractor will liaise with EI on the progress of the brief. The research will remain confidential to EI and the contractor until the publication of the research.

Application

Send curriculum vitae with description of relevant experience to Gina Pancorbo (gina.pancorbo@ei-ie.org) **before June 23**.