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Open Educational Resources and Practices for all

Thoughts captured during and shortly after a short-term SCORE Fellowship

by Chrissi Nerantzi

OER: What is it?

Let me start from the yummy strawberry and the motivational poster image created at <http://diy.despair.com/> using a quote shared by Salma Siddique, a



colleague from Edinburgh Napier University. The photograph was taken by me and has been uploaded to <http://www.sxc.hu/photo/363020>. The final product is a patchwork creation. A mini paper version of this yummy strawberry poster is hanging on my office door, and I have shared it with a few others but before I finish writing this article and soon after I have completed my short term SCORE Fellowship at the Support Centre for Open Resources in Education of the Open University, I will share the photograph with a wider audience under 1 of the 6 Creative Commons Licences (see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/>). For me, Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Educational Practices (OEP) are about openness and sharing within and beyond institutional boundaries; about having access to editable resources via open-access repositories; creating resources and programmes with others using open-source and open access- digital tools and social media, and acknowledging contributions under Creative Commons. In a way OER and OEP are about re-using, re-working, re-mixing and re-distributing by working together without trying to re-invent the wheel. Are they time-savers too and enable tutors to focus on facilitating learning? And do or should they engage learners more actively with content? Something to think about.

The OER movement, educational opportunities for all, is a philosophy of freely sharing content and resources in digital format now that this is possible through the available technology (see OER timeline at http://wikieducator.org/OER_timeline). However, the concept and practice of humans sharing ideas, stories, resources in everyday life as well as in education, formal and informal learning isn't new. The difference today is that technology has the potential to lead to the massification of sharing.

Contextualising OER

I see value in creating and using OERs in all disciplines and professional areas (for OER on-the-go, try the OER search app available at <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/oer-search/id358703397?mt=8>); recognising the importance of sharing and collaboration which enables us all to grow, to move forward and to create even greater things. Too often though, we focus on the product. We learn so much through the process and this is why I would suggest that there is value in developing OERs in partnership with colleagues and students. Academic Developers are agents of and for change. In our job, it is extremely important to model good

practice and I feel that it is our responsibility to engage with OER and OEP in our accredited and open staff development provisions in order to enable academics and other professionals who support learning to recognise the value, usefulness of these in their own practice and secure buy-in.

Today a lot of OER available for Academic Development Activities can be found at <http://labspace.open.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=5732>. A number of Academic Practice OER projects have received funding and this is great news for us all. One of them currently under development is **Learning to Teach Inclusively**, a multi-media open-access module for HE staff (project page available at <http://www.wlv.ac.uk/Default.aspx?page=24685>), by the University of Wolverhampton and funded by the HEA and JISC. I am looking forward to the completion of this project later this year to explore which elements we could use for our PgCert or CPD provision and also identify if and how we could contribute to give something back to the OER community. A recent development in my institutions is the an open access module in Flexible and Online Learning with a Swedish University. I hope and wish things will change and we will finally manage to break out of the silo culture. There is a need and desire to collaborate and co-create resources and programmes, to share expertise and resources. Let's start doing more of this!

The OER Foundation (<http://wikieducator.org/OERF:Home>) and initiatives such as the OER University (http://wikieducator.org/OER_university) aim to promote the value of open and free educational resources but also the vision of Open Education Practice (<http://opal.innovationpros.net/publications/guide/>). The OER Foundation is offering an online open access short course on OER (see http://wikieducator.org/Open_content_licensing_for_educators/Workshop_schedule). If you are interested in attending a face-to-face residential programme instead, and would like to apply for a SCORE Fellowship at the Open University, like I did, have a look at <http://www8.open.ac.uk/score/> for the next round. I found it really useful and thought provoking!

An open invitation

I feel passionate about what can be achieved through OER and there is so much we can do in Academic Development to model good and open practice! I would love to explore some of the opportunities in collaboration with others. If you would be are interested to develop OER together, please get in touch.



Let's share the yummy strawberry! Isn't learning sharing? (Now available in colour at <http://resources.jorum.ac.uk/xmlui/handle/123456789/14802> for everybody under Creative Commons)

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