

OpenCourseWare and Open Education. Introduction to selected papers

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If our first issue in 2013 ([vol. 5 issue 1](#)) was focused on openness in higher education, again an *Open Praxis* issue is devoted to open education. In this occasion, the special issue is the result of an agreement between ICDE and the OpenCourseWare Consortium (OCWC) and a collaboration with *Open Praxis* since May 2013 to feature, in the journal, research presented at the 2014 OCWC conference, held in Ljubljana (Slovenia) in April 23–25.

The selected papers presented in this issue make visible at least two significant and complementing aspects:

- *The breaking relevance of openness as a concern in education.* In this sense, the recent election result deciding that the name of the OCW Consortium will change to the Open Education Consortium (<http://www.ocwconsortium.org/news/2014/04/election-process-and-results/>) is a meaningful shift that puts the focus in education and, specially, in the meaning of “open” in education. This emphasis in conceptualizing openness and translating it into policies and practices addresses us to both refine our epistemological position and widen our perspective when reflecting this approach in education.
- In this sense, this issue makes visible *the wide range of dimensions that openness relates to*; beyond OpenCourseWare and OER -traditionally- and beyond MOOCs -more recently-, openness expands its tentacles to very diverse pedagogical, technological and political issues, at the core of education: assessment, mobility, reuse, metrics, economical implications, among others. The potential that the arisen discussions and conclusions can have in education in general (and not only in open education) can be easily appreciated.

As stated in the website (<http://conference.ocwconsortium.org/2014/about>), the OCW Consortium global conference is the annual opportunity for researchers, practitioners, policy makers and educators to deeply explore open education and its impact on global education. Participants have the opportunity to share ideas, practices and discuss issues important to the future of education worldwide. The conference covers new developments in open education, research results, innovative technology, policy implementation, best practices and practical solutions to challenges facing education around the world. The convergence of these topics with those of interest for *Open Praxis*, as stated in our website (www.openpraxis.org), has facilitated the partnership for the preparation of this issue.

Papers submitted for publication in *Open Praxis* followed a separate review process. Submissions were first reviewed by the OCWC 2014 Programme Committee for inclusion in the conference; those accepted for presentation and best rated by the committee were then recommended to *Open Praxis* for peer review and possible inclusion in this issue. The papers followed the usual submission guidelines in *Open Praxis*; additional revisions were requested during the peer review process, and finally nine papers were accepted for publication. These papers fit the conference general strands:

- *Open Educational Policies*: policy issues and their impact on open educational practice, including licensing issues, alternative business models, cooperative efforts and governmental funding. Four papers relate to this track.
- *Pedagogical Impact*: novel uses of Open Educational Resources and their impact on education, analysis of the impact of Open Educational Resources on the learning process itself, as well as deployment of OERs in MOOCs, flipped classrooms, hybrid educational approaches and online education. Two papers deal with topics related to this theme.
- *Research and Technology*: new technologies allowing scaling and sharing of Open Educational Resources in a faster or more economical way, to index the multimodal and multilingual material, or to navigate and remix available material. Three papers fall within the spectrum of this strand.

Following the usual paper types published in *Open Praxis*, the papers have a research-oriented approach and/or an innovative practice character.

The first two papers focus on national open educational resources (OER) policies and strategies, located in a country in the first case (the Netherlands) and in a wider region in the second case (different Latin American countries).

Robert Schuwer, Karel Kreijns and Marjan Vermeulen (*Wikiwijs: An unexpected journey and the lessons learned towards OER*) analyze a five years program for the use, creation and sharing of OERs and identify seven valuable lessons learned. They do so based on three theoretical models and highlight aspects to consider in the future of this program or in similar ones, among which quality, support and clear policies are pointed out.

Amalia Toledo Hernández, Carolina Botero and Luisa Guzmán (*Public Expenditure in Education in Latin America. Recommendations to Serve the Purposes of the Paris Open Educational Resources Declaration*) also analyze some national contexts in relation to the use of educational content -mainly textbooks- and provide recommendations for developing policies supportive of the use of OERs, specially remarking economic aspects. The paper presents a summary of an extended report funded by UNESCO.

The third paper relates to strategies, benefits and policy implications of MOOCs. Andy Lane, Sally Caird and Martin Weller (*The potential social, economic and environmental benefits of MOOCs: operational and historical comparisons with a massive “closed online” course*) present a critical review of the impact of MOOCs and compare the analysis with those traditionally done with regards to open and distance education in general. The questions they formulate throughout the paper will surely promote reflection and discussion, in an effort to get further in the research and debate in the re-conceptualization of higher education.

The last paper on the open educational policies strand focuses on alternative forms of assessment and accreditation using OER. An international team composed by Rory McGreal, Dianne Conrad, Angela Murphy, Gabi Witthaus and Wayne Mackintosh (*Formalising informal learning: Assessment and accreditation challenges within disaggregated systems*) draws a new scenario, reflected in the case of the OER universitas. This partnership of 30 institutions conceives an accreditation model whose characteristics and challenges are explained in the paper.

A second set of papers is related to pedagogical impact of open education. Two papers deal with very different topics: maximizing student mobility with OER and making MOOCs truly open.

Frederik Truyen and Stephanie Verbeken (*Scenarios for the Use of OpenCourseWare in the Context of Student Mobility*), within the frame of a European project and handbook focused on student mobility, identify the roles that OpenCourseWare can play in the different phases of the mobility cycle, from helping students to choose a course to facilitating professional training. A specific section is dedicated to virtual mobility as an alternative.

José Vida Fernández and Susan Webster [*From OCW to MOOC: Deployment of OERs in a Massive Open Online Course. The Experience of Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (UC3M)*] relate the process of converting an already tested OpenCourseWare into a MOOC. They describe in detail the undertaken steps and compare the two experiences, identifying both drivers and difficulties.

The last section comprises three papers under the research and technology strand, dealing respectively with multilingualism in OpenCourseWare, MOOCs related research and usability.

Darya Tarasowa, Sören Auer, Ali Khalili and Jörg Unbehauen [*Crowd-sourcing (semantically) Structured Multilingual Educational Content (CoSMEC)*] propose a concept to create multilingual content with the participation of the crowd and not only experts. Based in previous works by this group and in an implementation developed with SlideWiki, they explain the CoSMEC concept and its evaluation. The results support the viability of the concept and suggest new possibilities to continue working in the conversion of educational resources into multilingual content objects.

Nelson Piedra, Janneth Alexandra Chicaiza, Jorge López and Edmundo Tovar [*An Architecture based on Linked Data technologies for the Integration and reuse of OER in MOOCs Context*] explore how to reuse, integrate and interoperate isolated OER repositories using Semantic Web Technologies. They present an OER recommender model and an example of implementation, with the purpose of helping MOOC designers in the process of selecting OERs.

Finally, Jaclyn Zetta Cohen, Kathleen Ludewig Omollo and Dave Malicke [*A Framework to Integrate Public, Dynamic Metrics Into an OER Platform*] narrate their experience of inclusion of dynamic metrics and analytics into their OERs. They have collected feedback from different types of people involved with these OERs (faculty, librarians, etc.) and highlight the benefits of the availability of the data, thus providing useful information to other OER platforms that don't have such a project for metric-sharing.

It is our wish to contribute to the current debate about open education with the papers compiled in this issue.

We specially thank from *Open Praxis* to the reviewers that have participated in this issue, whose useful comments the diverse authors have reflected in the final and published versions of their papers.