

Introduction to selected papers on Open Education

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As it happened in 2014, when we published some selected papers from the OpenCourseWare Consortium Global Conference (vol. 6 issue 2), this special issue is the result of an agreement between ICDE and the Open Education Consortium and a collaboration with *Open Praxis* to feature, in the journal, research and innovative practice presented at the Open Education Global Conference 2015, held in Banff (Canada) in April 22–24.

The selected papers presented in this issue are a good example of some trends we currently find in the field of open education:

- *The increasing number of research and showcases with a focus on openness*, providing a rigorous basis for getting recommendations, lessons learned, highlights.
- The relevance of *open educational practices*, a step beyond open educational resources and open courses.
- The core *position of open education within the transformation of higher education*, and the relevance of institutional strategies which include “open” to do so.

As stated in the website (<http://conference.oiconsortium.org/2015/about-conference/>), the Open Education Global Conference is the annual opportunity for researchers, practitioners, policy makers and educators to deeply explore open education and its impact on global education. Conference participants will hear from thought leaders in open education and have the opportunity to share ideas, practices and discuss issues important to the future of education worldwide. Sessions cover new developments in open education, research results, innovative technology, policy development and implementation, and practical solutions to challenges facing education around the world.

The convergence of these topics with those of interest for *Open Praxis* has facilitated the partnership for the preparation of this special issue.

The conference features the following tracks:

- *Pedagogy & Design*: Highlights the design and delivery of open educational resources, use of OER, Open Access journals and open data, open MOOCs, learning science, instructional design, remixing resources and teacher training. According to the distribution of the conference presentations, three of the published papers relate to this strand.
- *Innovation*: Presents new and exciting developments in open education, big data and its use in education, new lenses for considering open education, educational trends, new technologies that enable learning, assessment and accreditation in open education. One paper is ascribed to this track.
- *Evidence of Impact*: Discusses research on all aspects of open education, including learner success, usage data, indicators of awareness, effectiveness of open policies, workforce development, and economic considerations.
- *Strategy*: Includes policy development and considerations, working with policy makers at institutional, governmental and intergovernmental levels, developing an institutional strategy, business models, and cooperative efforts and funding. One paper relates to this topic.

- *Implementation*: Showcases examples of successful open educational practices and projects from around the world, putting policy into practice, developing collaborative networks on and off campus. One paper relates to this track.

Papers submitted for publication in *Open Praxis* have followed a separate review process. The Open Education Global Conference 2015 Programme Committee first reviewed submissions 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 six papers were accepted for publication.

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

Considering the conference tracks, the first three papers relate to *pedagogy and design*.

Carina Bossu and Wendy Fountain (*Capacity-building in open education: an Australian approach*), describe a micro open online course, *Curriculum design for open education*, showing how openness has been present in the different stages of the project: content, process, pedagogy, platform, . . . The analysis of the pilot experience extracts some opportunities for capacity-building in academics to incorporate Open Educational Resources and Open Educational Practices in higher education, both in Australia or in a broader context.

Colin Elliott and Elaine Fabbro (*The Open Library at AU (Athabasca University): Supporting Open Access and Open Educational Resources*), also in the pedagogy and design track, move in the field of open access and open publishing. They describe in detail the experience of the *Open Library*, a new web portal they are involved in, as a means to support students' learning and researchers by facilitating access to open educational and research resources. Besides the inclusion of open and free content, the *Open Library at AU* focuses on promoting information literacy skills on users.

Closing this section, a research paper by Nikolaos Floratos, Anna Espasa and Teresa Guasch (*Recommendations on Formative Assessment and Feedback Practices for stronger engagement in MOOCs*) first extracts, from literature, a set of requirements that formative assessment and feedback should have. Then they analyze the reviews and comments related to feedback and formative assessment made by learners of 7 top-rated MOOCs, and identify and order a set of recommendations related to the previously stated framework, such as to base assignments on practical problems or to include feedback on performance (rather than just a mark) in automatic quizzes in MOOCs. The findings and conclusions are relevant for MOOC designers.

Within the *innovation* track, Susan Huggins and Peter Smith (*Using an 'open approach' to create a new, innovative higher education model*) introduce the case of the Open College at Kaplan University—which offers open courses, a suite of services for personalized learning and an open degree format since 2014—and share their reflections on the future of education. It's remarkable that Open College at Kaplan University has received one of the 2015 Open Education Awards for Excellence in the category of Outstanding Site, and Peter Smith is the recipient of one of the two Leadership Awards for Open Education Excellence 2015, both awarded by the Open Education Consortium.

The *strategy* track is covered by Thomas Carey, Alan Davis, Salvador Ferreras and David Porter (*Using Open Educational Practices to Support Institutional Strategic Excellence in Teaching, Learning & Scholarship*). Based on their experience at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, they identify relevant points to consider when developing an institutional strategy that incorporates Open Educational Practices. Their reflections about opening up pedagogy, faculty work, etc. and their anticipation of potential benefits for the institution are of interests for other organizations that are initiating a work towards the integration of OEP into their institutional strategies.

In the *implementation* conference track, Tony Coughlan and Leigh-Anne Perryman (*Learning from the innovative open practices of three international health projects: IACAPAP, VCPH and Physiopedia*) present a research on three case studies in innovation and OER, which share a concern on training public health practitioners in low-income countries using OEP, and do so outside formal education. A detailed description of the cases and the research process leads to an analysis using two complementary frameworks: the OPAL matrix and the OEP social configuration framework. This leads to a complete review of both the cases and the analysis frames, highlighting their limitations as evaluation models.

Finally, this issue includes a book review that totally fits the scope of both *Open Praxis* and the Open Education Consortium. Daniel Domínguez presents a review of *The Battle for Open: How openness won and why it doesn't feel like victory*, a book by Martin Weller published in 2014.

We wish our readers will enjoy this compilation and contribution to the debate about open education.

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