Chapter 72
Open Education Resources:
Content without Context?

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the possibilities for Open Education Resources (OERs) to be developed in ways that allow independent, self-directed adult learners to engage with the resources with the use of their own learning contexts. Using examples of open education resources currently available from some of the better-known OER providers, the author seeks to demonstrate what is currently available. The chapter then explores ways in which open education and OERs can be further developed to support varying and changing learner contexts.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on independent, self-directed learners (learners who seek knowledge to directly address a personal situation) and how their needs can be considered in discussions of open education and OERs. It is argued that the social context of learners, their particular knowledge requirements and ways of learning, need to be addressed in the discussions around open education. The author promotes the value of OERs and seeks to discover ways in which OERs can rise to the challenge of providing *meaningful* resources, in a manner that optimises the use of online learning.

The chapter is written in three major parts. In the first section are three examples of repositories of OERs with a description of an example of a resource from each, as explained above. The

second section argues for an extension of OER from content repositories to application within context–open education. The third section proposes a means for achieving engagement and learner interaction for learning.

THE EXAMPLES

Three examples of OER have been chosen for discussion. These examples were chosen from the options resulting from a search for suitable OERs to be repurposed by faculty making curriculum revisions to their current programs. The emphasis within these units is towards embedding sustainability in the core units of a business degree. Although the examples chosen may not be the best exemplars of the repositories offering

them, they are publically and readily available and were among the first results returned in a basic search on the keyword sustainability within each repository site.

Selected Examples of OER Repositories

Three different repositories were chosen to provide contrasting examples of OER. These repositories are the Massachusetts Institute of Technology OpenCourseWare (MIT OCW) site (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002b), the Open University United Kingdom OpenLearn Learning Space (OU Learning Space) site (The Open University, 2006) and the WikiEducator site (WikiEducator, 2006). Each of these sites offers content under the Creative Commons suite of licences (Creative Commons, 2002): MIT OCW using Attribution Non-Commercial Share-Alike version 3.0 (CC-BY-NC-SA v3.0) in combination with a qualifying Terms of Use policy available on the site (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002a); OU Learning Space using Attribution Non-Commercial Share-Alike version 2.0 (CC-BY-NC-SA v2.0) with an acknowledgement of the site being powered by Open Source software; and WikiEducator using Attribution Share-Alike version 3.0 (CC-BY-SA v3.0) and including a notice acknowledging WikiMedia as the base software for the site. The use of the Creative Commons licences allows third-party users to quickly and easily understand the usage rights of the sites.

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- **Attribution:** The original author/s and publisher must be attributed in any usage of the work.
- **Non-Commercial:** The work is not able to be used for commercial purposes without the express permission of the copyright holder (MIT OCW further defines this clause in their site Terms of Use).
- **ShareAlike:** The work and its derivatives, must be available under the same conditions as the original work.

These repositories were chosen as they are well-known in the field of OER, both for pioneering the ideas of OER creation and for the provision of high-quality materials (Bonk, 2009; Iiyoshi & Kumar, 2008; Klein, 2010). It must be noted that WikiEducator is not backed by a tertiary institution that can provide a ready supply of materials suitable for OER production (such as MIT or OpenUK). As such, all materials are contributed by members of a wider community united by a common goal to contribute to the development of OERs worldwide. Any individual can join this community and in exchange for an OER of their creation (and choice of subject matter), they can learn how to use the site through the Learning-4Content program (Randy Fisher (wikirandy) & and other WikiEducator users, 2011).

Open Educational Resource Examples

Example 1: Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) - Course 17.181/17.182 Sustainable Development Theory and Policy (Professor Nazli Choucri & Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2009)

The course offering package is comprised of:

- A list of readings presented in a table on a web page,

Related Content

Novice Language Teachers' Selection Criteria and Uses for Digital Voice Recording Software
Pete Swanson (2014). *International Journal of Open Source Software and Processes (pp. 66-79).*
www.irma-international.org/article/novice-language-teachers-selection-criteria-and-uses-for-digital-voice-recording-software/104680

Web 2.0 as Potential E-Learning Tools for K-12 English Language Learners
Lucy Greenand Fethi Inan (2011). *Free and Open Source Software for E-Learning: Issues, Successes and Challenges (pp. 222-240).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/web-potential-learning-tools-english/46317

Prospects of Open Source Software for Maximizing the User Expectations in Heterogeneous Network
Pushpa Singhand Rajeev Agrawal (2021). *Research Anthology on Usage and Development of Open Source Software (pp. 257-271).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/prospects-of-open-source-software-for-maximizing-the-user-expectations-in-heterogeneous-network/286576

A Model for the Successful Migration to Desktop OSS
Daniel Brink (2007). *Handbook of Research on Open Source Software: Technological, Economic, and Social Perspectives (pp. 154-167).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/model-successful-migration-desktop-oss/21186

Open Source Developer Layer Assessment: Open Onion
Aminat Abiola Showole (2015). *International Journal of Open Source Software and Processes (pp. 31-48).*
www.irma-international.org/article/open-source-developer-layer-assessment/170475