

Chapter 3

Facilitating the Integration of Open Educational Courses

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ABSTRACT

The open educational movement is primarily about facilitating a philosophical view: the idea that universal access to quality education should be a global priority. Open educational courses are byproducts of the implementation of this philosophy. Unfortunately, the principles that are fueling the open educational movement are in direct opposition to the typical culture found in higher education institutions in the United States. The lack of awareness of or indifference to these cultural differences can hinder the integration of open educational resources. Successful integration of open educational courses into degreed programs requires an acknowledgement of the cultural dissonance that may result as well as a systematic plan for addressing it. This chapter highlights some of these cultural differences and outlines a framework for addressing them.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions across the globe have mission statements that tout their commitment to providing a high-quality education to more citizens at a lower cost. Unfortunately, in the United States a post-secondary education is often only available to those who manage to pay the increasing cost (Auguste, et. al., 2010). Open educational resources seemingly present a low-cost solution

to this complex and widespread problem (Open Educational Resources [OER] Commons, 2012). As a result, many institutions are developing open educational resources or integrating them into supplemental instruction. However, very few are integrating open educational courses into degreed programs (Ackerman & Zellner, 2012). Due in large part to the culture ingrained in higher education and the paradigm shift required to integrate open educational courses.

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The culture of most higher education institutions supports and rewards faculty autonomy and control. For example, copyright and intellectual property rights policies protect rights of course developers and restrict access and use of educational resources (Smith, 2009). Conversely, the open educational movement promotes universal access. The movement centers on the idea that educational resources should be free; specifically, educators should be free to reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute educational resources (Hilton et al., 2010).

Successful integration of open educational courses into degree programs requires a paradigm shift for many administrators, faculty members, and support staff. This chapter describes a framework for acknowledging and addressing higher education institutions' cultural conflict with the open educational movement's key principles. The intended audience is key administrators who believe open educational courses are a viable solution. The goal of the framework is to outline a structure for addressing the cultural dissonance that may arise with the integration of open educational courses into degree programs.

BACKGROUND

In 'Winning by degrees' McKinsey & Company, report that the United States' post-secondary education system is not producing enough graduates to sustain its' current economic growth (Auguste, et. al., 2010). In order to produce, the needed number of graduates the education system would need to produce approximately 23% more graduates each year. The top producing institutions are improving their degree productivity by increasing cost efficiencies. One of the five strategies these institutions employ is extensive course redesign.

McKinsey & Company described the strategies and tactics employed by the 8 of the top producing post-secondary institutions. Some of these tactics are contrary to the typical behaviors practiced and

expected in four-year post-secondary institutions. For instance, Rio Salado and Western Governor's employ a large number of part-time instructor or course mentors and centralized course development (Auguste, et., al., 2010). At four-year post-secondary institutions, the number of part-time faculty members are typically minimal and course development is traditionally left in the hands of the faculty members. Hence, many administrators are looking for other innovative ways to implement extensive course redesign. As a result of the mainstream media coverage and seemingly low cost, open educational courses seem to be a viable option. To date no institutions have integrated open educational courses into degree programs (Ackerman & Zellenr, 2012).

The open educational movement is well funded and supported. The announcement of MIT's OpenCourseWare (OCW) initiative in 2000 is generally considered the catalyst that spurred the open educational movement (Smith, 2009). Since MIT's creation of the OCW Consortium, the movement has gained momentum and popularity.

By 2005, the open educational movement was in full swing. Creative Commons and the OER Commons were created. Over 250 universities had joined MIT's OCW Consortium (2012), and many organizations became committed to developing, providing, and facilitating access to open educational resources. Currently, many well-established and highly regarded organizations are working on projects to promote the movement, such as the Open Learning Initiative by Carnegie Mellon, the Open Educational Resource Initiative by the Hewlett Foundation, and edX by Harvard and MIT.

What is notably absent in these initiatives is a focus on the utilization of open educational resources in degree programs. This is in part due to the culture of higher education institutions. Course development is most often faculty driven. Hence, key administrators are not aware of how many open educational resources are used in courses. This trend highlights one cultural behavior in higher education institutions that may

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