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EDITORIAL

Inclusion In, and Exclusion From, Open Education Communities

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This special issue is the fifth devoted to Open Educational Resources (OER) and the fourth to be drawn from papers presented at the annual UK-based OER conference. For this special issue, the editors selected papers from the OER14 conference, held in Newcastle in April 2014. The main conference theme was 'Building communities of open practice' with further themes on MOOCs and open courses; academic practice, development and pedagogy; open policy, research, scholarship and access; and students as users and co-creators. As open education matures it will be the communities we develop that make a difference to the success (or failure) of transforming education through openness. The five chosen papers in this special issue exemplify one facet of building communities of open practice – how people may, in theory and in practice, be included in or excluded from such communities despite the potential of the openness on offer.

Keywords: open education; open practice; open communities

The theme for OER14 was Building communities of open practice. Communities of practice are defined as:

> "*groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly*". (Wenger, 2011)

Open education has been born out of passion, but we must now work more effectively through our communities to realise the potential of openness to transform education.

A major premise of openness, in the context of open educational resources (OER) and the related open educational practices (OEP), is that of sharing knowledge as embodied in the resources themselves and of enabling others to retain, reuse, revise, remix and redistribute those resources for their own purposes (Wiley, 2009 & 2014). In effect the open licensing that makes this legally possible is aimed at creating a culture of inclusion within a global commons rather than exclusion by erecting various barriers. However, the fact that something is open and potentially inclusive does not necessarily imply that it is perceived as such by others (e.g. students, employees, civil society organisations) for all sorts of reasons (Lane, 2009).

The theme of the OER14 Special Issue retakes and extends the theme of the OER13 special issue, namely, the potential for openness in engaging communities. A year ago, we stated in the editorial that '*we agree […] that the benefits of openness to HE are real, and fit well with the academic endeavour that Universities aspire to follow. We also agree that the benefits of openness can extend to other individuals, communities and organisations beyond HE'* (Lane, Comas-Quinn and Carter, 2013). Whilst we still believe this to be the case, the papers in this special issue show some of the barriers to realising this potential.

In the first paper Bryant, Coombs and Pazio provide a detailed account of a novel approach to a very familiar issue in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), that of resistance to including new technologies in teaching and learning. In this case an institutional (University of Greenwich) mandate to innovate was met with varied and widespread resistance amongst faculty. Through supporting experimentation and play the authors were able to identify and model the main forms of resistance to sharing and openness. This institutional change project is still ongoing and, while some successes are evident, the authors conclude that there may be a notable disconnect between the rhetoric of an institution in terms of innovation, and its existing organisational (i.e. practitioner community) culture and practices.

The second paper by Perryman, Hemmings-Buckler, Seal and Musafir describes an example of linguistic and cultural adaptation, where the knowledge and experience in teacher education from a UK institution (The Open University) is being transposed to a very different cultural setting. The challenge of localising OER developed in the UK for use in India is also compared and contrasted to a

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similar project running in Sub-Saharan Africa. The authors detail the approaches used and how the project needed to completely reframe how it supported local educators in utilising the potential of OER for their own purposes. They also conclude that, as well as open educational practices offering freedoms to others, attention needs to be paid to removing real or perceived 'unfreedoms' (or barriers) created by the local culture and embedded practices.

The third paper by Lockridge, Levine and Funes offers a similar story in terms of taking the philosophy of a successful open, online course (DS106) into the heart of a major technology company (3M). Once again, and in spite of an organisational rhetoric and practice that promotes innovation and creativity, we find concern about the risk of compromising security and commercial interests that might result from creating an 'open organisational web' within the company that is partly open to the wider DS106 community. In common with the previous two papers, the fact that the project is ongoing is largely due to the presence of key individuals and activities which encourage and support inclusion in the (more) open community, and which try to remove barriers that seemingly exclude participation.

Bridging cultures and/or communities is also central to the fourth paper by Perryman and Coughlan. They reflect on the dominance of HEIs in the OER and OEP 'global community' and how that is excluding or marginalising OER and OEP originating in non-academic online communities (in their case those dealing with autism). They go on to explain how they have attempted to bridge this gulf through what they have termed 'the public-facing open scholar role' (Perryman and Coughlan, 2013). They conclude that one important part of that role should be online content curation in order to increase the discoverability and profile of OER and OEP from beyond academia.

Lastly, the paper by Lane offers some theoretical thought experiments that examine the value of two visual models dealing with the interaction of certain supply-side forces within education systems - the iron triangle and the interaction equivalence theorem. He goes on to propose the inclusion of additional demand-side forces in both models that attempt to represent the role of the student or learner. In particular, these demand side forces represent real or perceived 'unfreedoms' or barriers that might unnecessarily exclude students or learners from benefitting from OER (or OEP).

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