

EDITORIAL

Open Teaching: research and practice on open, innovative and engaging pedagogies

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I - When UNESCO introduced the OER concept and a couple of years later the OECD suggested to give knowledge away for free (OECD, 2007), we, as open educators, believed that this was the avalanche which we had been waiting for and which we had been expected to arrive for a long time. Today, at the end of a pandemic year 2020, we know that what we had been thinking of as avalanche, had just merely been a tiny snow drizzle compared to the huge and rapid, and unprecedented tectonic shifts in the landscape of our higher education institutions which had been caused through the near 100% substitutions of what had been the good old presential European university through online modes. We publish this special issue on teaching and learning in the open in this very special time and are aware that nothing safe and secure can be said in terms of uptake and how the next and new normal will look like in higher education. This is true for the use of digital technology

at large as well as for the further deepened uptake of open education practice in higher education in particular.

The current developments have hit our higher education institutions and will in due time challenge the nature of their organization, profile and mission as rigidly space and time bound institutions build around the metaphor of space expressing in terms like remote education and distance education. The pandemic avalanche has started already on the top of the mountain and finds its way downward. While we do not see it yet, it is moving faster and faster with great force underneath the surface. If you are experienced with avalanches you know that it will hit but you don't know when, and if you are experienced with higher education you know why: Higher Education institutions had to change their entire mode of operation into an emergency mode from which they will take away stronger impulses of innovation and change than all reform policies within the last 30 years had been possible to evoke.

Thus, this special issue comes timely when the world of learning and teaching is standing in front of a fundamental digital turn which had not been imaginable just a couple of months ago. When we drafted the call for paper for it not even one year ago we never thought that by the end of 2020 all learning in European higher education would be online and digitally supported. We are convinced that this is not just about digital learning. It will as well deepen the integration of open education

practice in higher education in Europe. This will give the movement of the open education community a push long desired, refresh our energies, and open new opportunities and avenues in front of us. The contributions we received show clearly that open education has made progress and convey that on the back of a severe Corona Pandemic we can now go beyond declaring the value propositions of openness into living them in the reality in our institutions.

II - Editing and publishing a special issue is representing also a moment of self-reflection for the community around the topic close to our heart – which in our case is teaching and learning in the open. For the community of open education practitioners and policymakers this is so relevant and valuable since the latest pandemic developments will progressively lead to greater and lasting use of digital – and also of open educational – resources in teaching and learning in all education sectors. However, we know that accessibility and availability of OER do not automatically lead to a well embraced and deep integration of openness into teaching and learning approaches. We hope therefore that this issue and the papers which we received, reviewed and published here serve as a landmark and orientation to support teaching and learning in our institutions in the light of a new paradigm. The positive community response to the call for papers shows the current demand for knowledge and experiences on how to make open work.

III - Following a couple of decades of rather intense advocacy, the Open Education movement obtained one of its most important achievements in 2019, when the UNESCO launched its Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (OER). The recommendation, apart from representing the ultimate recognition of the role that OER can play for more equitable and inclusive education systems, pushes forward the concept of OER-based teaching and learning innovation as well, by stating that

“the judicious application of OER, in combination with appropriate pedagogical methodologies, well-designed learning objects and the diversity of learning activities, can provide a broader range of innovative pedagogical options to engage both educators and learners to become more active participants in educational processes and creators of content as members of diverse and inclusive Knowledge Societies” (UNESCO 2019).

While we regard this to be a major achievement of the education practitioners and policy community around the world we come to realise that at the same it is a huge challenge. This challenge is becoming visible in the fact

that the resource-oriented concept when it wants to have a sustainable effect in education really needs to be translated into a pragmatic concept of educational practice – Open Educational Practice (OEP). Open pedagogies pose a great challenge to institutions which really demands for a shift in educational culture. Teaching and learning in the open therefore means much more than bringing OERs into the classroom but rather lead to a change of often long guarded underlying beliefs about education and ultimately demand the shift from teaching to learning which we are talking about since Barr and Tagg suggested it in 1995.

IV - Teaching and learning in the open is going beyond using OER and makes visible the need to change from an instructional paradigm to a learning paradigm. That such a restructuring is needed is beyond question: the gap between what we say we want of higher education and what we really provide is - unfortunately - quite large. To use a distinction made by Argyris and Schoen, the difference between our espoused theory and our theory-in-use is becoming distressingly noticeable. An “espoused theory”, is the set of principles people offer to explain their behavior. The principles we can perceive from how people or their organizations actually behave is their “theory-in-use”. Right now, the Instruction and closed learning resources paradigm is our theory-in-use, yet the espoused theories of most educators more closely resemble a teaching and learning in the open paradigm. And the dreadful problem is that the more we discover about how minds work and how students learn, the greater the perceived disparity becomes between what we say and what we do. The articles in this special issue show closely that teaching and learning in the open also leads to a stronger emphasis of the learning paradigm over the instructional paradigm.

Thanks to the UNESCO Recommendation, and to the work of a number of stakeholders who committed to monitor its actual implementation by governments around the world, at the beginning of 2020 the policy priority assigned to OER and Open Education was clearer than ever, still the risk was that this policy drive would not have been followed by a corresponding wave of systemic innovation, or at least systemic experimentation. The Open Education movement had experienced this slope of disillusion already after the creation of the OER idea in 2002 and had seen the MOOCs, and their promises to democratize education thanks to the internet, transforming into commercial ventures of questionable inclusion value. The COVID-19 pandemic led to the development of an online emergency mode, creating a sort of a global digital education laboratory, where – side by side with those teachers who are trying to keep up and survive the wave of forced innovation – a number of educators is actually experimenting with online teaching tools and approaches, trying to limit the education exclusion dynamics connected to the pandemic.

In this global digital education laboratory, the space for experimenting with OEP is large and mistakes are, to a certain extent, accepted. That is why it is important – now more than ever! – to facilitate the circulation of open teaching practices that work, to take the chance of the all-online mode to position open teaching into mainstream higher education. Also, the moment is propitious to keep on investigating what open teaching means, and how its meaning is changing during COVID-19 times. The feeling is that this wave of experimentation – and hopefully adoption – of open teaching approaches will help us anchoring the very concept of Open Educational Practices, that has been discussed extensively in literature (see Ehlers, 2011; Koseoglu & Bozkurt 2018; Cronin & MacLaren, 2018; Nascimbeni et al. 2018; Huang et al. 2020; Havemann 2020 among others).

V - An editorial piece allows reflection of the progress made – in our case within the *open community*. We believe that the progress is huge although no new paradigms have been introduced since the introduction of the concept of Open Educational Practices (in Ehlers 2011). The relationship between OER and OEP is made clear in one of the most used definitions of OEP, where we defined it as

“practices which support the (re)use and production of Open Educational Resources through institutional policies, promote innovative pedagogical models, and respect and empower learners as co-producers on their lifelong learning paths” (Ehlers, 2011, p. 3).

However, this in itself has provided a big step forward. The concept emphasises the importance to go beyond the resources concept of OER and emphasised the cultural dimension OER are built on - in the sense that they are transporting a learning paradigm rather than perpetuating the instructional (teacher centered) paradigm. The last ten years of work since its introduction have shown its importance and led to a collection of rich cases and a large body of experience. Today we come to realise that since its introduction in 2001 the concept of OER has matured, has emerged and moved into a practice concept through the introduction of OEP and thus resulted into a mature debate on teaching and learning in the open which more and more is also backed through empirical evidence, as this special issue is showing.

The main achievement of the OEP concept is the vision that allows open digital learning technology and open pedagogies to be working in relation and coupled with each other. Since the introduction of the concept in 2011 a number of related concepts have been developed and published which all play along this very relation and conceptualise open education practices as the space in which certain pedagogies, learning methodologies or

educational paradigms couple open technologies with open pedagogies. The concept of OEP thus has increasingly been coming to the fore of the open debate (Bali et al., 2020), complementing OER as another fundamental pillar of openness in education (Cronin & MacLaren, 2018; Havemann, 2020).

The often referred to OEP matrix presented below show the interrelation between pedagogies and technologies which is coupled in the concept of open educational practices. Different degrees of openness in the usage and creation of OER are outlined there and thus the dimension of technological innovation is coupled with pedagogical innovation.

		OER Usage		
		Low No OER (re-) usage	Medium OER (re-)usage or creation	High OER (re-)usage and creation
Learning Architecture	High Social practices, Collaboration, Sharing (Reflection in action). • „open“ objectives • „open“ methods	A	B	C
	Medium Dialog, Procedures, Rules (Know-how) • „closed“ objectives • „open“ methods	D	E	F
	Low Knowledge transmission (Know that) • „closed“ objectives • „closed“ methods	G	H	I

Figure 1 - Open Educational Practice Matrix (Ehlers, 2011, 2014).

Today, ten years after its introduction Huang et al. (2020) evaluated existing OEP concepts and suggest a further differentiation of openness as a central component in the concept. They collect four different dimensions of educational practices, as there are OER, Open Assessment, Open Collaboration and Open Teaching.

VI - It is important to note that the OEP has not yet become a mainstream in higher education or other education sectors. More energy is needed to convince and more organisational approaches to incentivise teaching in the open. The next era of bringing OEP in its various degrees of intensity into the reality of teaching and learning in our institutions will see the development of skill frameworks which help educational practitioners to put openness into practice.

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