The OLCOS Roadmap 2012
for the further development of
Open Educational Practices and Resources

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Núria Ferran Ferrer¹, Guntram Geser², Julià Minguillón¹

¹Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain
nferranf@uoc.edu and jminguillona@uoc.edu
²Salzburg Research, Austria
gesen@salzburgresearch.at

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Overview

- Brief project information
- Road mapping activity
- Selected results
  - Educational policies
  - Business models and institutional frameworks
  - New tools in the box
- Key observations
OLCOS is a Transversal Action funded by the European Commission under the eLearning Programme

Function: A (virtual) observatory and information service

Focus: Promotes the production, sharing and re-use of Open Educational Resources (OER) with special respect to open (e-) learning practices

Duration: January 2006 – December 2007

Project partners

- European Centre for Media Competence, Germany
- European Distance and E-Learning Network, Hungary
- FernUniversitaet in Hagen, Germany
- Mediamaisteri Group, Finland
- Open University of Catalonia, Spain
- Salzburg Research Ltd., Austria = project co-ordinator
Project activities & products

(1) Road mapping to provide orientation & recommendations
   • OLCOS Roadmap 2012, will become available in January 2007

(2) Web-based services
   • OER tutorials, examples of best practice, awareness videos
     • http://wikieducator.org/Open_Educational_Content

(3) Co-operation with other projects and communities of practice
   • Consultation with other research and expert consultation activities
     • OECD – Centre for Educational Research and Innovation: OER project/survey
       http://www.oecd.org/document/20/0,2340,en_2649_35845581_35023444_1_1_1_1,00.html
     • UNESCO – International Institute for Educational Planning: Community of Interest in OER
       http://oerwiki.iiep-unesco.org
     • Exchange of experiences with leading projects that develop and provide access to OER

(4) Dissemination of information and “OER evangelism” beyond established communities
(1) Objectives

- Road mapping to provide orientation in the emerging OER landscape
- Identify drivers/enablers and inhibitors of open educational practices and resources
- Provide a set of recommendations for decision makers – from political and institutional level to individual teachers and students!

(2) Scope – in comparison to OEC-CERI and UNESCO-IIEP activities

- (a) Longer time-horizon: 2012(+)
- (b) Broader than Higher Education, also including Secondary Education and Lifelong Learning in general
- (c) Beyond “courseware” of the currently typical variety:
  - Any kind of relevant “open content” repositories
  - Content that is shared making use of Social Software tools (e.g. Wikis, Weblogs, online content and bookmarks sharing, etc.)
  - RSS-feed channels with or without an educational label
  - Sharable Learning Designs based (e.g. IMS LD based courses)
  - Knowledge resources such as ontologies – arguably the most valuable OER that domains of knowledge and learning can share
(1) Policy increasingly demands educational institutions to “change” and to “innovate”
  • Massive investment in ICT over the last 10 years, but little change in educational practices (teacher-centred “knowledge-transfer” model still dominates)
  • Concerns about non-alignment of educational institutions with demands of knowledge society

(2) Importance of easy access to OER and online learning for Lifelong Learning agendas
  • Securing high-value jobs in knowledge-base industries, but also issues of inequalities, social inclusion, integration of migrants, …
  • However, often e-coaches or “blended learning” will be required

(3) The Bologna Process could become a (longer-term) driver for cross-boarder collaborative development and sharing of study material in Europe
  • Particularly in the context of Joint Programmes and Degrees
Business models and institutional frameworks /1

(1) Healthy competition among leading institutions in providing free access to educational resources

- Many OER initiatives started after the extensive media coverage for M.I.T.’s Open Courseware project; e.g. the international Open Courseware Consortium at present has over 100 members
- Currently we see much provision of static “courseware” (in closed formats)
- First movers in OER have gained much recognition, now it is about more than “being involved in OER”

(2) Yet, business models in open educational resources are tricky

- The right mix of income streams must be found – public or/and private funding, sponsorships, donations, fee based services…Growing competition on scarce funding resources (also within institutions)
- Often lack of clear-cut regulations regarding IPR/copyrights for material that could be made available
(3) In order to see researchers and educators excel in OER, academic and educational institutions will need to implement incentives / reward systems

- Greater value is often attached to research than to teaching, in particular, when it comes to academic promotion
- Altruistic motivations or the possibility “to gain reputation” may not be strong enough drivers to invest the required time and effort to create OER
- Reliable and significant incentives are the factor that could make or break OER initiatives

(4) Repository initiatives will need to think more thoroughly about how to be useful for communities of practice

- This is of critical importance if OER initiatives want to grow based on user contributions and sharing of content among users
New tools in the box /1

(1) Widespread tried and tested know-how in distributed open access repositories
   • Allows repositories to become active information access providers
   • Main technological approaches are
     • Open Archive Initiative approach of metadata harvesting (OAI-PMH); e.g. OpenDOAR lists 760 quality assured OA repositories (from an initial selection of 1000)
     • Peer-to-Peer & Simple Query Interface (SQI) approach; e.g. GLOBE (Global learning Objects Brokered Exchange) consortium: ARIADNE (Europe), Education.au / EdNA Online (Australia), LORNET (Canada), MERLOT (USA) and NIME (Japan)

(2) RSS feeds enrich educational portals and learners can directly subscribe to thematic content feeds – including podcasts [audio] and videocasts
   • Students will also gain from feeds of non-governmental agencies, scientific organisations, business information services and individual consultants

(3) Licensing open content will become easier through plug-ins for widely used software packages and standardisation of licensing information for user
   • For example, in June 2006, Microsoft and Creative Commons announced the release of an add-in for Microsoft Office
New tools in the box /2

(4) Social Software tools and services empower learners to easily create and share content

• Tremendous use of Social Software tools and services (Weblogs, Wikis, social networking, content and bookmarks sharing, etc.) outside the educational sector.
• Even a smaller “spill-over” could have a considerable impact in terms of changes in educational practices
• There already exists some experimentation by individual teachers and educational projects

(5) New systems for creating, handling and sharing group-based Learning Designs are in the pipeline

• IMS Learning Design based applications are currently in prototype stage
• The somewhat simpler system of the LAMS Foundation (which is not based on IMS LD) has already been widely trialled

(6) Semantic applications offer new ways of accessing knowledge resources

• Allow for connecting teachers and students to the body of codified knowledge in certain domains (e.g. thesauri, classification systems, domain ontologies)
• Examples: concepts-based access, semantic filter & browser applications (e.g. Magpie [OU-UK], semantic Wikis [e.g. IkeWiki [Salzburg Research],…)}
Key observations

• Priority of open educational Practices rather than OE-Resources
• Focus on developing competences and skills for the knowledge society – students and (!) teachers
• The urgency of the Lifelong Learning agenda in Europe and beyond makes OER initiatives targeted at driving participation particularly welcome
• Need for much more know-how with respect to OER business models
• Important role of incentives/reward systems for institutional OER initiatives
• OER “latecomers” will need to convince through highly useful OER – active user communities are of critical importance
• Many new tools will allow for more open learning approaches and environments (in particular, Social Software tools and services)
• Think OER as an evolving Web of openly and easily accessible and reusable content, tools and services (often very different from typical current “courseware”)